

FOR YOUR INFORMATION

NORTH PARK CHURCH
SUMMER 2024. VOL 197



FYI IN FOCUS

by Pastor Ken Priddy

The FYI focuses on highlighting the ways that God has been at work at North Park Church. Of course, the ways that God is working here at NPC are many and varied, too numerous to capture in one short publication. So, I make no claim in capturing ALL that God is up to at NPC, just SOME of what He's doing.

In my role as transitional senior pastor, I'm particularly dialed into God's movements among us, which are specifically tied to the transitional season that is upon us. As I've mentioned many times, this transitional season is about two separate but related transitions: **1.** the transition from former long-term senior pastor Dan Hendley to a newly called permanent senior pastor, and **2.** the transition from being a church with dynamic and effective in-reach ministries to a church that also features dynamic and effective outreach and evangelism ministries.

Transition 1, from former senior pastor to next senior pastor, is led by the Pastor Search Committee, a team of highly dedicated folks who have served in this capacity for many months. Their recent update to the congregation spoke of the dramatic decrease in the number of applicants from the pastor search that led to calling Pastor Dan. However, while quantity might be down, the update provided the encouraging news that the quality of applicants is quite high. There is great comfort in the knowledge that, ultimately, this is in God's hands, and there is great trust in His guidance and in His timing.

So, what does summer hold for **Transition 2** with its emphasis on Impact? NPC's Mission

Statement features Worship, Connect, and Impact, articulated in the Mission Statement as an objective to Impact the world in word and deed. Sermons throughout the summer draw their Scripture texts from the Book of Acts, the Bible's narrative concerning the birth, growth, and expansion of the early Christian church, Exhibit A in outreach and evangelism's birth, growth, and expansion.

Also, major efforts are underway with the newly formed Welcome Team and the follow-up to the Mission in Action Strategic Planning Workshop held on May 5 among staff teams. The Welcome Team emerged from the Spring Sunday School Class based on the book "Welcome: Loving Your Church by Making Space for Everyone." This team is putting a system together to ensure that newcomers are very well received upon their early visits to NPC.

On May 5, the NPC staff brought their ministry teams together for a strategic planning workshop. A tool that I have used for many years, The Great Commission Matrix, was interfaced with the NPC Mission Statement to create a planning grid to enable our ministry teams to develop and deploy Impact strategies that will ultimately intersect with Worship and Connect. Seven teams attended this training and are now at work preparing to launch their strategies on or before September.

There's more to this story, but I'll leave it at that for now. Jesus is still seeking and saving the lost, and NPC is increasing its efforts to answer His call to go and make disciples. It's going to be a great summer!

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In April, we welcomed eight new members to our church family! Say hello and introduce yourself to our new members. Left to right: Mark and Nancy Franzen, Katie Burke, Ghesika Agambila, Megan and Drake Pedersen, Lee Naczynski and Rachael Miller.

HISTORY CORNER

by James Yoder



Bill Crowder of Our Daily Bread

"In the U.S., the Fourth of July outdoor grills are heated up; beaches are packed; and cities and towns have parades and fireworks displays, picnics, and patriotic celebrations. All of this is in remembrance of July 4, 1776, when the 13 American colonies declared their independence.

Independence appeals to all ages. It means "freedom from the control, influence, support, and aid of others." So it's not surprising that teenagers talk about gaining their independence. Many adults have the goal of being "independently wealthy." And senior citizens want to maintain their independence. Whether anyone is ever truly independent is a discussion for another time and place—but it sounds good.

Craving political or personal independence is one thing; daring to pursue spiritual independence is problematic. What we need instead is a recognition and acceptance of our deep spiritual dependence. Jesus said, "I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing" (John 15:5).

Far from being self-reliant, we are totally and eternally dependent on the One who died to set us free. Every day is our "dependence day." — **Bill Crowder, Our Daily Bread**

GIVING THROUGH 4/30

Unified Giving of \$755,000 for our church year was 5% less than last year and 10% less than revised forecast.



O'BRIEN FAMILY

by Jim Ludwig

JESS AND ROB O'BRIEN have become integral to North Park Church in less than nine years. Jess is a vital part of our Worship team, and Rob is a Deacon on the Mercy Team. They have three children: **LUKE** (3rd grade), the curious scientist who reads the National Geographic for Kids; **ETHAN** (5th grade), the artist who loves Super Mario and runs Ninja courses; and **ELLIE** (7th grade), who inherited her parent's soccer skills and sings in school and the church Youth Band.

Rob's parents divorced when he was young, but they both remarried. Rob grew up in Monongahela and attended a liberal Disciple of Christ Church. For most of his schooling, he attended a Christian School by the Library Baptist Church and attended the "Straight Street

Youth Group." He enjoyed playing soccer and basketball in high school.

The Baptist Christian high school influenced him to attend Cedarville University in Ohio, where he majored in finance. Although this was a Baptist university, it was through relationships at Cedarville that Rob was first exposed to reformed theology.

After graduating, he got an internship with a commercial lending start-up in Dayton, OH, which unfortunately didn't make it. Rob's stepfather was a mason contractor and must have taught him much growing up because his next job was as a project manager with Centex Homes in Washington, DC.

The great financial crisis of

2007-2009 caused the building bubble to burst, but Rob was able to transition. He got a job with S.A.I.C., a defense contractor in Alexander, VA, as a budget analyst and eventually transitioned into project management. After moving back to Pittsburgh, Rob began his 15-year career with Tenova, first as a project controller, then as a project manager, and finally as director of project services.

Jess's parents are Joe and Elaine Monteleone. She went to school in Shaler Area School District (where her father was a middle school math teacher). Jess played soccer and was in Concert and Jazz Choirs during high school. This was because her parents were gifted in music. Her father played the trumpet, and her mother sang. Her mom would lead the family, singing songs in rounds while traveling in the car.

Jess graduated from Edinboro University, majoring in secondary education, which prepared her to teach Earth Science. Her first teaching opportunity was at Butler Jr. High as a long-term sub.



Then, she worked full-time in Hilton Head, SC, teaching Physical Science and AP/International Baccalaureate Environmental Science.

While in Hilton Head, Jess' mom was diagnosed with metastatic breast cancer that would lead to a year-or-so battle. After the diagnosis, Jess moved to Arlington, VA, to be closer to her mom. Jess began teaching at a majority-minority school where many students were ESL students. Jess said the students were "anything and everything except white," and she got to appreciate cultural differences. She was even engaged in tutoring homeless students.

While teaching in Arlington, she earned a Masters in Curriculum and Instruction at VA Tech. During her time there, her parents were part of NPC when Bob Hopper and Bob Schull were the pastors. During that first year in Arlington, Jess's mother lost her battle with cancer in November 2003. Jess never forgot how NPC supported her parents through that time or the altar call her mother had requested Bob Hopper to give at her memorial.

After the memorial, back in Arlington, Jess worked evenings as a bartender, and one of her coworkers kept inviting her to McLean Bible Church. The Sunday evening service was geared toward young adults

and was led by Todd Phillips. Remember that Rob was also in the DC area? The church's co-ed soccer team brought Rob and Jess together.

After the first game, Rob asked Jess if she wanted to go camping with him and his friends. After looking at him like he was crazy, she politely declined. The team planned another social activity: watching a Steeler game. As luck would have it, they were the only two who went. After dating for a year and a half, Rob eventually got Jess to camp. On that trip, while overlooking the Red River Gorge, Rob proposed to Jess. Events continued at a rapid pace for Jess and Rob after that.

They decided to plan a wedding for that summer (in less than four months) to be able to go on a honeymoon before the start of Jess's next school year. The date was set for August 16, 2008. Two weeks before the wedding, her father had an aneurysm and spent four months in rehab. Due to his recovery, they didn't go on their planned honeymoon to Costa Rica until a year later.

Shortly after their wedding, Rob's mom was diagnosed with cancer. They moved back to Pittsburgh to be closer to both families and settled in Baldwin. Rob's mother passed away six months after their wedding and three months after their return

to Pittsburgh. A year later, Ellie was born, and then eventually Ethan and Luke. They now live in the North Hills.

Many factors led the O'Briens to NPC, including Jess's parents, reformed theology, and proximity. But the first visit was the clincher. On their first visit, Ellie was excited to see her preschool friend Moriah in Sunday School. Then Jen Burkholder contacted Jess and invited them to the Gingerbread House Construction Co. event. Thank you, Moriah and Jen! Thank you, O'Briens, for blessing our North Park Church family.

FAVORITE VERSES

Rob

Romans 8:37-39

Jess

Psalms 73:26

If you read the O'Brien's favorite verses, you'll see a similarity. They've been through a lot, but they both cling to God's sufficiency.



By Matt Bender & Amber Stites

Consider the places where you have recently traveled, either near or far. Have any of them been strange and maybe hard to navigate? Maybe you recently traveled overseas to a place where a foreign language is spoken. Have you ever considered that the church may be a "foreign place" to many? We even have a language that is largely unknown to those who did not grow up in the church. Maybe we don't fully grasp the meaning behind many of our words: propitiation, atonement, justification, incarnation...right!?

Here we are in May, and the spring Sunday School classes have wrapped up, and summer isn't too far in the distance, but we'd like to share a bit about how God has been continuing to work through one of our winter term Sunday School classes: The Radical Welcome of Jesus. Throughout the class, we worked through the book, "Welcome: Loving Your Church by Making Space for Everyone," and we talked about many topics, including the "foreign language" of the church, learning together how to better welcome guests into NPC.

Though the class wrapped up at the end of February, a smaller group from the class recently met together on two occasions to workshop how we, at NPC specifically, can be more welcoming to guests whom God is leading to enter the doors of our church. We began to outline an intentional

strategy for hospitality at NPC. In a dynamic welcome experience, we desire our actions to communicate: You are welcome here; We want you here; We planned for your arrival; We prayed for your arrival, and you're an answer to prayer; We worked hard to make you feel comfortable and at home; We're so glad you're here; You're important to us; Thanks for coming.

In our first meeting, we walked through the newcomer experience, thinking through fresh eyes about topics such as the drive-in, the building entrance, the happenings pre-, during- and post-service, the children/youth component, the exit, the drive-out, and a follow-up component. We hope to create a "host" type role, which will be intentional but informal, meaning not a scheduled volunteer position.

There are two reasons we are motivated to share this with you:

1. To say GREAT WORK, NPC! Over the last few months, we have received substantial feedback from first-time guests, who have shared that they received a warm welcome when they first visited.
2. We would like to extend a warm invitation to any of you who were not able to join us for the Sunday school class to prayerfully consider being involved with our DYNAMIC WELCOME team. Contact Matt Bender or Amber Stites to be added to our list, and we will include you in our invitations to learn more about upcoming brainstorming meetings and hospitality training.

COMPASS

IN THE REARVIEW AND LOOKING FORWARD

By Pastor Ben

So far this year, the COMPASS team has had a lot of fun with several different events. We started off January trying to get plane crash survivors off a tropical island. Most escaped by launching their fireworks flares in a timely fashion. In May, we watched as Brooke and Ken gave us a stunning rendition of dueling pianos (or should I say piano vs. keyboard). Not only did they regale us with their humor, but they also recounted how music had woven its intricate way through their life stories in similar and different ways. If you missed out on some of those events, look at the pictures from these memorable moments.

NPC @ PNC PARK

SUNDAY, JULY 7

1:30 P.M. | PNC PARK

We have another exciting event planned—a trip to the Pittsburgh Pirates. We've reserved 125 tickets and we're eager for you to join us. This is also a great opportunity for you to extend our sense of community beyond the COMPASS team. Consider inviting your neighbors, friends, and coworkers to join in the fun.

The tickets are \$32 per person (a group rate and include a \$10 food voucher). We'll be seated in Section 130 along thirdbase on the lower level.

Go to www.northparkepc.org/events to purchase your tickets.

Even if you cannot join us for the game, you can still join us for some games and food right after church. We'll grill burgers and hot dogs and have yard games for friendly competition. So, instead of running off to your favorite lunch spot on July 7, plan to stick around and make some new friends.



Escape Room: Can You Get Off The Island?



Todd Murphy, Kevin Sanders, and Jonathan Mycyk served delicious mocktails.



Pastor Ken and Brooke Hopkins in their two-man show "Downstage Dialogues."



Next July's COMPASS event is at PNC Park.



MOTHER-DAUGHTER GROUP

By Kristin Barnes

In early 2024, five mother-daughter pairs from NPC and the surrounding area began meeting weekly for a book study.

The book is called “What Every Girl Should Know,” by Victoria Barnes and is a mother-daughter Bible study designed to foster open communication and increased connection between moms and daughters on several important subjects.

Another goal of the study is to help the girls, typically aged 10 to 15, begin to build intentional relationships with one another characterized by vulnerability, humility, intimacy, and trust. At the same time, each young lady begins to build an open and trusting relationship with all the other mothers in the group, thus widening the net of safe and trusted people invested in her life.

Finally, the mothers become a support group for one another during a sometimes challenging time of transition.

The hope is that in fostering and strengthening relationships, the girls will recognize that they are not alone in their beliefs, commitments, and standards.

They will realize that they are not the only ones striving to be different than the world. They can share their struggles, open their hearts, feel felt, and then be encouraged to stand firm in what they believe. They can also receive comfort in the hard places we find while choosing to go against the cultural flow.

This affirmation happened in the first meeting of the study. One of the young ladies made a discouraged comment about being the only one in her social sphere who didn’t have a smartphone and free access to social media. Immediately, the other four girls chimed in with the same lament!

It was delightful to see them recognize the unity they experienced when they realized they had each felt something similar and were not alone. There was a shift from lamentation to a

discussion about the problems associated with social media in their generation. The girls could connect on a very significant subject to each of them and offer one another support and understanding.

As Christians, we may find ourselves in awkward social situations. We love the people around us and desire to connect with compassion and humility, yet we are often unable to fully participate in what they are doing because we have different standards and goals.

Rather than serving ourselves or pursuing pleasure and happiness, we serve God and pursue His glory and His plans for our lives. With such different foundational worldviews, we can sometimes feel isolated and alone.

That is why we need to form open, honest, trusting relationships with other believers. It helps us to stand firm in our commitments to serve the Lord and make Him central in our lives. When we find

ourselves sliding into temptation or frustration at the differences between our lifestyle and the lifestyle of our unbelieving friends, we can get together and encourage one another. This type of honest and loving support is crucial at every stage of life but possibly more noticeable in the transition from childhood to young adult.

Additionally, we talked about friendships and what characteristics make up a healthy and strong friendship. In this segment, we discussed peer pressure and how it can both positively and negatively

influence relationships.

Everyone was invited to explore their own friendships and begin to become more intentional about the kind of friendships they would want to cultivate for themselves moving forward.

We also talked about our bodies. We explored the concept that God designed the human body to be a temple honoring Himself and made in His image.

We talked about how bodies change and the challenges associated with change in general. We discussed how we can all strive to overcome some

body image idolatry put forth by our hearts and the world around us.

We hope that the conversations are not over, though the group meetings have come to a close. During our season of meeting together, mother-daughter relationships were strengthened, friendships were allowed to grow in vulnerability and trust, and we realized once again that we are not alone!

MERCY MINUTES

COLLEGE CARE PACKAGES

By Stacy Tessaro



The Mercy deacons of North Park Church delight in facilitating excellent care of our people. One way we care for others is by overseeing and sending college care packages to college students three times a year. The packages include school supplies, snacks, treats, homemade cookies donated by NPC attendees, and a scripture card. Often, special notes are also included, such as the card last school year from Gary Laird, the Young Adults group leader, who encouraged the students to send prayer requests throughout the school year.

While some of the students who receive these packages are those who've been raised within the walls of NPC, and they're still greatly encouraged, knowing their church family is supporting them in prayer and remembering them, quite a few of our packages are sent to grandchildren, nieces, nephews, and our supported missionary kids who

may have never set foot on NPC's campus, but are deeply touched by the reaches of this ministry. It has also been an outreach to the unchurched roommates or friends across the hall with whom the recipient shares the contents of their box.

Even others in the post office can be witnessed to because of the care packages. This past fall, as Laura was shipping about 50 boxes at the post office, another customer came in and asked what all the boxes were for. She explained that her church, right up the road, sends care packages to college students and that members bake cookies and supply other treats to send. She explained that three of these recipients are missionary kids whose parents are ministering in other parts of the world, so they don't even get home for a homecooked meal during the school year. Thus, these packages are important. The sweet woman went into her purse and gave Laura all the cash she had. She asked Laura to please go purchase gift cards for the three missionary kids. She apologized for not having more cash on hand and finished by saying, "God is at work here." Laura separately mailed gift cards to each of these three students with a note explaining what happened at the post office. We never know how many lives can be touched by something as simple as a college care package.

Thank you to the many faithful bakers and shoppers who continuously support this ministry year after year, making a difference in the lives of our college students and those around them as they carry their boxes across their campuses. May God continue to be glorified and draw others to Himself through NPC's caring for college students.

Here are some of the comments Laura Osmond, who sends the boxes, has received recently:

"I was completely out of an item, with no time to go replace it, and then the package arrived with exactly what I needed. God answered my prayer."

"My roommate is not a believer, and when the package arrived from my church, my roommate started asking me questions about church, as they were really impressed that a church would care enough about me to send this package while I am away at college."

"I do not go to church, but my grandmother signed me up to get packages. I thought the church was not a welcoming or caring place, but one of judgement. Receiving these packages has made me stop and take a closer look at what the church is all about."

A banner for the 'Mugs & Muffins' event. The background is a close-up photograph of a cup of coffee with a dusting of brown powder, surrounded by coffee beans and several golden-brown muffins. The text is overlaid in white. The title 'Mugs & Muffins' is in a large, bold, sans-serif font, with a small white cloud icon above the second 'M'. Below the title, the text 'WEDNESDAYS @ 9:30-11:30 A.M. | ROOM 112' is in a bold, sans-serif font. Below that, 'JUNE 26 - AUGUST 14' is in a bold, sans-serif font. At the bottom, 'Go to www.northparkec.org/womens for details.' is in a smaller, sans-serif font.

Mugs & Muffins
WEDNESDAYS @ 9:30-11:30 A.M. | ROOM 112
JUNE 26 - AUGUST 14
Go to www.northparkec.org/womens for details.

CHILDREN'S MINISTRY

By Kelly Laird

SUNDAY SCHOOL

The kids in the 2nd and 3rd Grades Class had fun recently building and knocking down the Walls of Jericho! Thanks to Laura & Brian Osmond for using their very own Ark of the Covenant to show the kids what it might have been like to be an Israelite. Somehow, a Flat Stanley ended up on the top and at the bottom of the pile! Fun times!

Also, we celebrated our final day of Sunday School and the great year we had with our Ice Cream Sundae Sunday! Many sprinkles and jimmies were enjoyed by our kids in Sunday School! Thanks to Jeff & Barb Buirge for serving.

TREKKERS

Trekkers is now on summer break, but we had so much fun over the past year learning about God, His word, and what He has to say! Check out these great lessons that we covered last year.

- Life Contains Information and Information Always Comes from an Intelligent Source
- The Information in Life Points to a Purposeful Cause of the Universe
- God Purposefully Designed Humans in His Image
- Humans are both Body and Soul
- If Jesus is God, Why did He Come as a Man and Why did He Have to Die?
- A Worldview is Like a Map:
Biblical Worldview
- We Follow What We Believe is Most Important and We are Designed to Worship

Also, we welcomed our new second-grade friends and said goodbye to our fifth-grade friends, as these preteens will now transition to be a part of the Student Ministry. We had a special send-off for 16 fifth graders, each receiving a special gift, including their study Bible and a character award. Special thanks to Jonathan & Kim Mycyk and Chad & Beth Morley for leading this group and all of our many teen helpers too.





ASHTON EASTER PARTY

NPC partnered again with Ashton Commons to co-host an Easter party. In March, right before Easter, about twenty folks from the church went to the facility and met about twenty residents who were ready to celebrate Easter.

We had an Easter egg hunt (kids and residents), a cute bunny sock craft, a rousing game of Pictionary, musical performances, and storytelling by our very own folks, and we also enjoyed fellowship and snacks together. What a fun time it was! Join us for our next event this summer: JUNGLE JOY VBS. We're taking VBS to Ashton. Contact Kelly Laird for details.

KIDS' QUESTIONS FOR GOD

Each week, our kids in the 1st & 2nd Grades Kids' Worship class are given time to ask God questions, teaching them a little about prayer. Here are some of our recent musings.

- Praise - my aunt is pregnant!
- Dear God, please help me to overcome my fears.
- I hope that glasses help me see better.
- Jesus, please help Tristan & Lincoln to come to know You.
- Help me know You better.
- I pray for my mom and dad.
- We love you, Jesus!
- That I can have a better attitude and my sister does too!
- Dear God, please help me learn more about You.
- For my best friend's parents who are going through a divorce.
- I love you
- Help me get through the school year because I have a crazy class.



OVERNIGHT BACKPACKING HICKORY CREEK WILDERNESS AUGUST 2-3

Join Mark Franson for a primitive camping trip which will be a 16-mile hike over two days. Go to www.northparkepc.org/events for details.

STUDENT MINISTRY

By Travis Finley

MARCH – OVERNIGHT

On March 8-9, the Student Ministry hosted a memorable overnight event at the church. It was a night filled with laughter, friendly competition, and shared experiences. The girls enjoyed dance parties, while the boys, in true spirit, stayed up all night. The morning brought us together again for a delicious pancake breakfast, made possible by the kind assistance of our Deaconesses. This event truly showcased the strong sense of community and camaraderie within our Student Ministry.



Students went bowling as part of the Overnight.

APRIL – YOUTH SUNDAY & FUNDRAISING



Fiesta For Christ Student Group

I am thankful for the opportunity the Students and I had to serve the congregation through our Youth Sunday, April 7. The students did a fantastic job greeting, hosting, and leading the congregation in praise of our God. I am thankful for the opportunity I received to preach about the Student Ministry. I hope to continue to direct the Student Ministry with the congregation of North Park into our mission to Worship, Connect, and Impact those in our congregation, the surrounding community, and the world.

Thank you to all who attended the Fiesta For Christ Fundraiser on Sunday, April 21, for the Student Ministry summer mission trip. A big thank you to all those who helped to make this Fundraiser a success: Laura Osmond and those who helped her cook and prepare the food, Deb McKinney for her great organization and execution of the Silent Auction, and the students who helped to set up, serve, and clean up afterward. Because of your generosity, we have raised a lot of funds to help see our students able to go on this trip to help those in need and support those who are helping them in Whiteville, North Carolina.



SUNDAYS | 6:30 P.M.

We'll start with a welcome for the upcoming 6th graders and continue with fun summer days together in low-key hangouts hosted at some of our church families' homes. For details check the Youth Group Weekly Newsletter.

CLASS OF 2024

By Travis Finley

We have five Graduating Seniors this Year, and we are so thankful for their presence in the Student Ministry and for their aspirations to continue to seek after the Lord and to use the gifts they have received from God to further his kingdom in many ways. We look forward to hearing how you live for God in all your endeavors.



VICTORIA HARRER

High School: Homeschooled

College: Liberty University

Major: Accounting



BETHANY OSMOND

High School: North Hills

College: Grove City College

Major: Biology



ISADORA PINKERTON

High School: Homeschool

College: Geneva College

Major: Writing



DANIEL SATARIANO

High School: North Hills

College: Messiah University

Major: Nursing



CALEB STITES

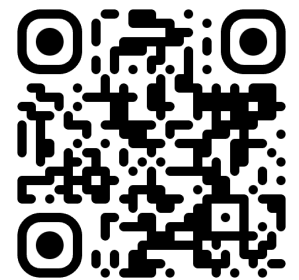
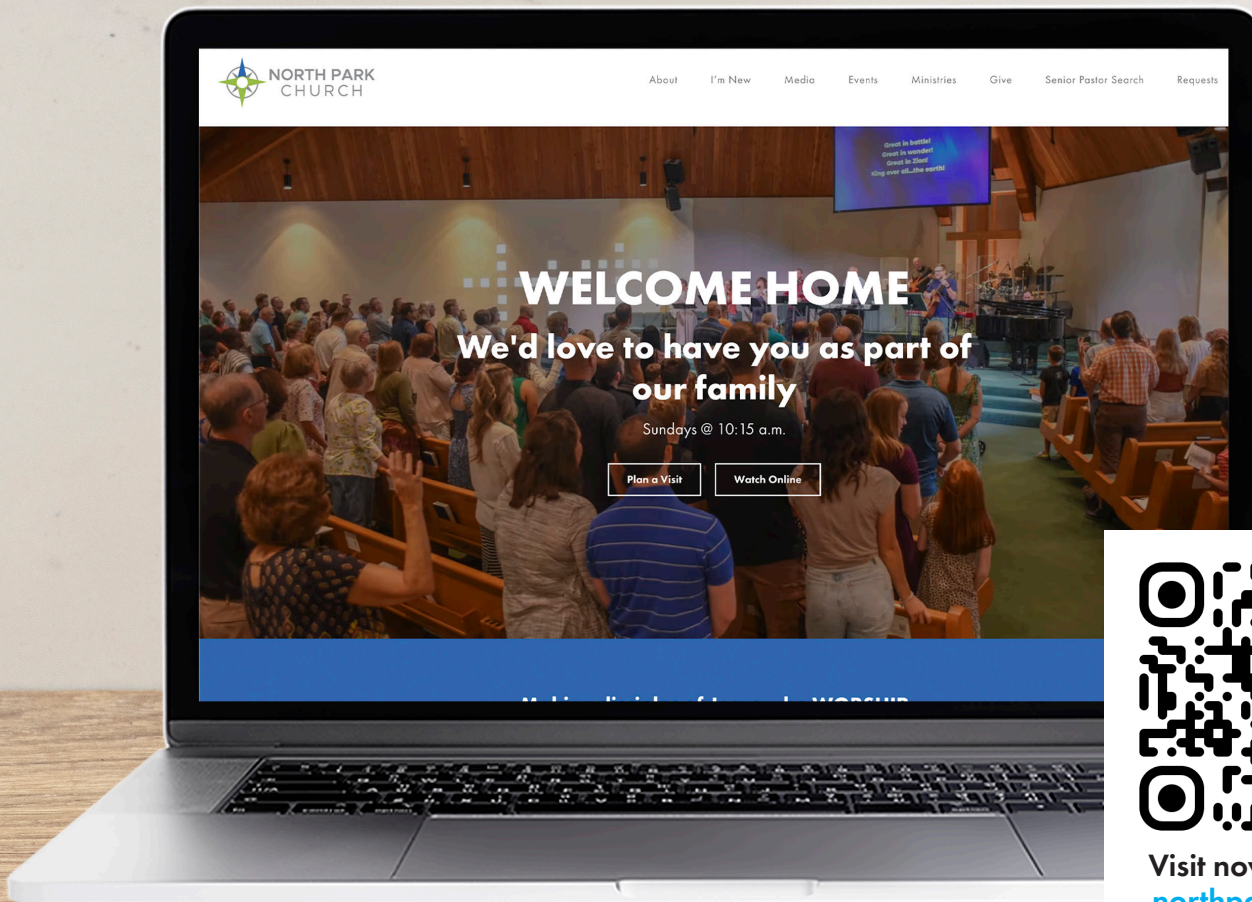
High School: North Allegheny

College: Geneva College

Major: Psychology/Social Work

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**NORTH PARK
CHURCH**

North Park Church
600 Ingomar Road
Wexford, PA 15090

(412) 367-5000
@northparkepc
www.northparkepc.org

Making disciples of Jesus who WORSHIP God passionately,
CONNECT with each other in caring community, & IMPACT the
world through word and deed.