

# FOR YOUR INFORMATION

NORTH PARK CHURCH | WINTER 2025 | VOL 203





# PASTOR'S LETTER

BY PASTOR DAVID O'LEARY

"In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins."  
— 1 John 4:10

"He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world."  
— 1 John 2:2

Propitiation is a hard word. It may be difficult to pronounce because it is unfamiliar to us, difficult to understand because we don't use it very often, or difficult to accept because we don't like what it means. Describing Jesus as "the propitiation for our sins" emphasizes the way that his death turns away and satisfies the fury, wrath, and anger of God against our sins.

God's anger against the evil we have done is taken out against Jesus in such a way that it is ended for us. This is difficult to accept because it means acknowledging that God hates sin, that he hates our sin, and that we personally deserve his displeasure, anger, and punishment because of our sin.

At the same time, this understanding of propitiation helps to bring the mercy and grace of God into clear and beautiful focus. God's forgiveness costs something; his love drives him to do something; and what he has done was not in ignorance, but in the full sense of what our sin is and what our forgiveness and acceptance would mean for his Son.

"God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8). In Christ, a sober view of sin and the punishment it deserves shines a light on the majesty, beauty, richness, and value of God's grace and love for us. Cherishing grace goes hand in hand with the clearest sense of the sinfulness of sin. This is a basic and profound lesson for each of us to continually apply in our own lives.

This lesson will also propel a loving sympathy toward sinners around us. When we see deep and obvious sin in others, we already know from our own lives that this is

precisely what God's grace is for. When we hold out the glorious hope of God's grace in Christ Jesus, we are not making light of sin but making much of the saving work of Jesus, our propitiation.

This enables us to hold on to two realities that, apart from the cross of Christ, would seem to be contradictory: on one hand, we have an honest and clear grasp of the sinfulness of sin; on the other hand, we display an eager, winsome, and powerful awareness of the free grace and forgiveness in Christ's saving work.

All of this is a somewhat long introduction to a Sunday school class I plan to teach in January and February. Our focus will be to appreciate the grace of God in our own lives so that we can powerfully hold out that same grace to those around us. Along with teaching, we will emphasize a workshop-style approach so that we are equipped to actually speak the truth of the gospel to others.

After building a foundation for understanding and articulating the work of God for us, in us, among us, and through us, we will apply this understanding to some of the particularly challenging and contemporary forms of sin and suffering that we encounter in those around us.

My prayer is that we will be filled with love, sympathy, clarity, boldness, and gentleness as we engage in a relevant and grace-filled gospel witness in this world. I hope to see you there.

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"All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God." — 2 Corinthians 5:18-20



# CONTENTS

- 04 HISTORY CORNER**  
Explore a meaningful quote from Michael Green.
- 05 CHILDREN & STUDENT MINISTRY**  
Catch up on what's been happening with the next generation.
- 06 A HEART FOR GLORY**  
Brooke Hopkins shares a reflection on his 2022 health crisis.
- 08 FEATURE FAMILY**  
Get to know the Franson family.
- 10 MINISTRY AT ASHTON COMMONS**  
Discover a powerful testimony from our Sonshine Ministry.
- 11 CAMPUS REVITALIZATION**  
Learn about our three-year plan to refresh our campus.

## SUNDAY SCHOOL CLASS

**THE GOSPEL FOR YOU  
AND FOR THE WORLD**  
LED BY PASTOR DAVID

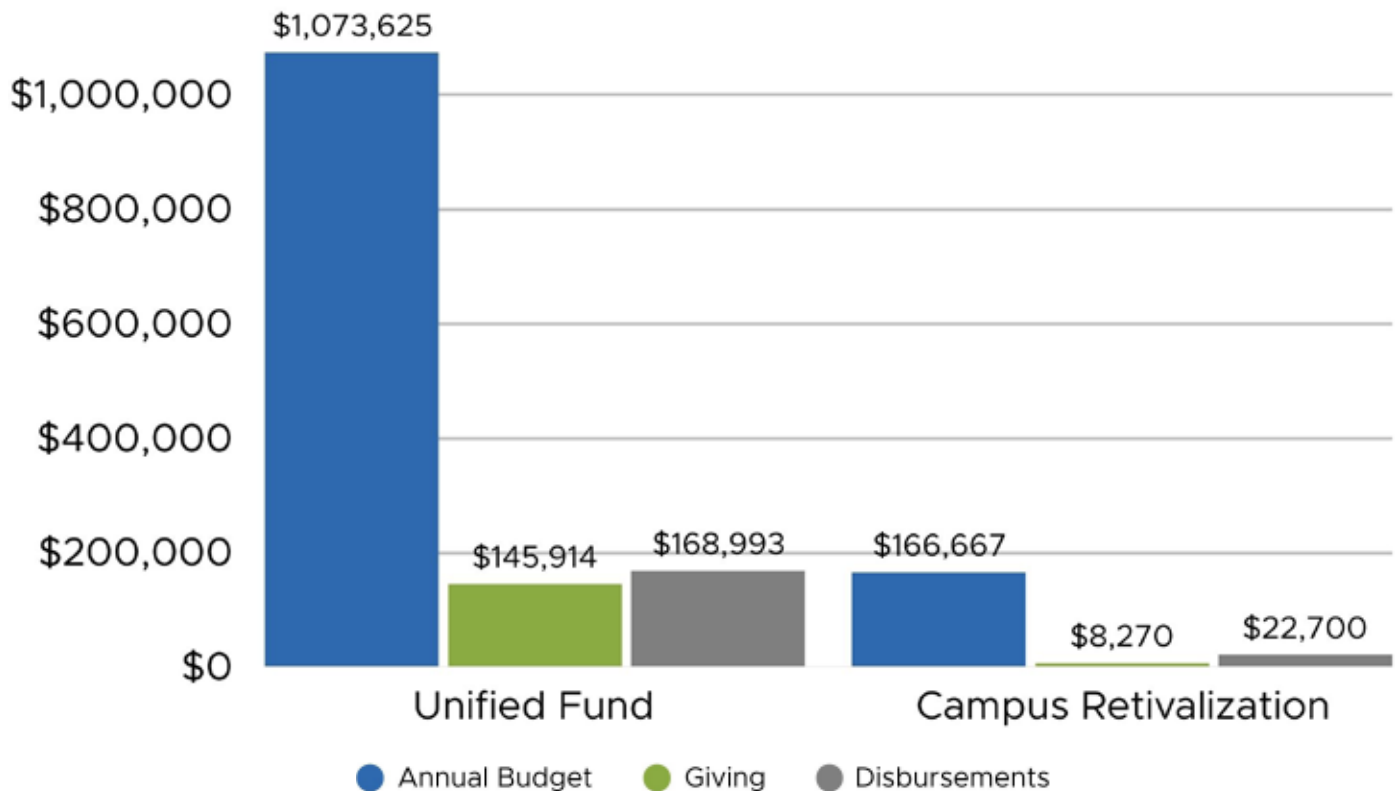
**JANUARY 4-MARCH 1**  
**SUNDAYS | 9:00 A.M. | ROOM 112**

Learn more at [www.northparkepc.com/events](http://www.northparkepc.com/events)



# FINANCE UPDATE

SEPTEMBER—OCTOBER | TWO MONTHS OF FISCAL YEAR

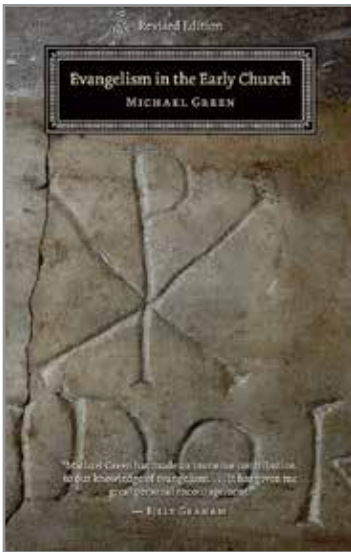


The church fiscal year is from September 1, 2025—August 31, 2026

# HISTORY CORNER

by Jim Yoder

In an early apologetic work, Trypho, a Jew, makes this charge: “This is what we are at a loss about: that you, professing to be pious, and supposing yourselves better than others, are not in any particular separated from them, and do not alter your way of living from the nations, in that you observe no festivals or Sabbaths, and do not have the rite of circumcision; and, further, resting your hopes on a man who was crucified, you yet expect to obtain some good thing from God, while you do not obey his commandments. Have you not read that the soul shall be cut off from his people who shall not be circumcised on the eighth day?”



We today may easily forget the shock of Christianity to the Jewish mind: that the Most High does not live in temples built with human hands; that the Jewish law was too much for anyone to bear, removing the sacrificial system and distinctions of food; and, the sacred rite of circumcision was left behind.

Early missionaries were nobodies, without formal rabbinic training and were attempting to correct the theology, let alone the religious practices of professional religious leaders, standing on an oral tradition reaching back to Moses.

On the other hand, Roman authorities opposed Christians as anti-social, atheistic, and depraved. Their message proclaimed a crucified criminal. There was Roman tolerance for many religious systems in the Empire and Judaism was given an exception for protection. But, in the Roman faith tradition, there was a distinction between *religio* and *superstitio*. *Religio* was a form of contract for the gods to maintain security and progress of the nation in exchange for proper public sacrifices and worship. It was not necessary that people should believe in the ancient gods. Belief was a private matter. But they were expected to participate in the state cult. Worship was a public matter and the safety of the state depended on it.

Roman authorities turned against Christianity because it was not a *religio*. It did not link any particular nation to the gods. Rather it was a *superstitio* which embraced people of all races and backgrounds and therefore had to be considered on its merits.

## In the midst of these many conflicts, several features of early evangelism stand out:

- Communicating the Gospel was a privilege and responsibility of every Christian to give a reason for the hope within them; each was accountable to Christ in His last command.
- Their sense of gratitude resulted in their love, their joy, their changed habits and progressively changed character, which, in turn, gave their words authority.
- They had a deep indwelling eschatology, of the seriousness of the issues involved, that those without Christ would suffer eternal and irreparable loss; and,
- Since they were sent out by the One who has power over life and death, they knew that their dependence on the Holy Spirit would bear fruit.

The *religio* of today is that of the autonomous self in regards to gender identity, destruction of marriage, eliminating the unborn who might interfere with one's personal agenda, and focusing on things which gain power for the few against the needs of the many, such as climate change. The elites and intelligentsia of today do not mind Christian *superstitio* as long as it does not enter the public square. What might early evangelism have to teach us about our own times?

— Michael Green, Eerdmans (1970, 2003) *Evangelism in the Early Church*

# CHILDREN & STUDENT MINISTRY

*by Kelly Laird*



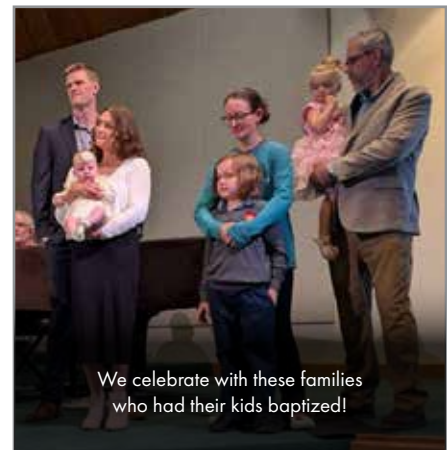
Students at the Fall Retreat

Student Ministry is cruising along this year and running very smoothly with our stellar volunteer team that God has raised up! Did you know that we also have a Student Ministry Student Leadership Team? These teens meet twice a month to help the adults catch what's going on with the youth and help to plan events and games. They are Will Fowler, Claire McKinney, Spencer Mitchell, Anna Shimeall, Lily Stites, and Abryanna & Elijah Whittington, led by Kim Mycyk & Gary Laird.

Thirty-three students and six adults recently attended the Fall Retreat! The group went to Pine Springs, in Boswell, PA, for a weekend getaway. While there, they had lots of fun, from football games to a hike in the woods, to campfire time and sharing meaningful ways God has been at work in their lives, to hearing from our very own speaker, Alex Treser, who gave four talks throughout the weekend. The group came back more unified, more excited to see what's next, and definitely more sleep-deprived.



Mr. Steve brings his guitar for the kids to sing!



We celebrate with these families who had their kids baptized!



Our Sunday School kids are learning about some of the classic Old Testament stories this term.



Marching around the walls of Jericho until they came tumbling down!



A red cross and a white heart are drawn on a black background. The cross is on the left, and the heart is on the right. The text is overlaid on the bottom left of the image.

# A HEART FOR GLORY

BY BROOKE HOPKINS

**On** Wednesday, December 7, 2022, the NPC singers and I had just finished our vocal practice and were heading upstairs to the worship center for a joint rehearsal with the worship band. **That was my last memory.**

The rehearsal commenced; we were about four songs in. Then, from what I have been told, I began the introduction to "Hark, the Herald Angels Sing." I started to play some strange notes, and then my hands slid off the keyboard as I fell backward, hitting my head on the piano behind me (or maybe the bench? I don't know), and collapsed to the floor of the stage, convulsing. Chris, our bass player (trained in CPR), along with Evan, our sound tech, jumped into action; not able to find a pulse, they began working on me to keep me alive. Someone called 911, and other team members notified the various groups meeting in the church that evening, and all engaged in prayer.

McCandless EMS arrived in five minutes and began resuscitation. I don't know everything that transpired, but they used the AED paddles to shock me **five times** (another EMS friend of the family told me that they usually give up after three). About 25 minutes later, my heart finally began beating, and I was whisked away to UPMC Passavant. To God be the glory!

Earlier that day, Gayla had flown to Hendersonville, NC, to spend some time with our daughter Ruby and her family. When they received the news that evening, Ruby's husband Keith immediately brought her all the way back to PA, driving through the night.

I was heavily sedated and given a surgical cooling vest, along with a breathing tube, IVs, and various cocktails of medication, including fentanyl. My son from Scotland flew over to see me, though I didn't see him. The prayers of our faithful church family persevered, and after about four days, I finally regained consciousness with no clue where I was or what had happened. To God be the glory!

In all, I spent 12 days in the ICU and another four in recovery. Those days were filled with almost constant, vigilant attention by my wife and children, numerous visits from our beloved NPC family—the worship team, the staff, our care group (and taking over a large visitation room with tables full of refreshments), physical therapy 101 (trying to master a flight of stairs and a hallway), and a dogged determination to eventually go to the bathroom by myself.

I had no idea my heart suffered from a congenital issue—*mitral annular disjunction*—which caused it to

beat irregularly and race out of control during times of stress (*oh, maybe the Christmas holiday season as a church worship director, for instance?*). Until it suddenly didn't race—and stopped altogether. Near the end of my hospital stay, I had my last-ever MRI, because an IED/pacemaker was implanted in my chest to aid in maintaining a normal rhythm.

I was released from the hospital on Dec. 23, brought back to our house, walked up the stairs, went to the piano and fulfilled a vow by playing "I'll Be Home for Christmas." By Jan 15 I was back leading worship at NPC. Have I said, "To God be the glory" yet??

That was three years ago. Since then, I have been in and out of A-fib; I've had an ablation and a cardioversion. My implanted IED has shocked me once—during a Sunday morning rehearsal, right at the same location of my cardiac arrest—at the keyboard. But I am now, by the grace and goodness of God, in good health and out of A-fib. I am SO thankful for my worship team, the McCandless EMS, and the folks at Passavant who all played a part in saving my life. I am also thankful for my wife Gayla and our family, who are dearer to me than ever, and the faithful support of our beloved NPC family. I am MOST thankful to God who saved me and rescued my heart, giving me a constant reminder of the power of his saving grace, available to all, because Jesus gave his life for me—for us—on the cross, to make our hearts alive again. And again:

## TO GOD BE THE GLORY!



Brooke, Gayla, Ruby, and Olivia

# FRANSON

MARK & NANCY

by Jim Ludwig

I knew Mark was part of the safety and security team. I knew Nancy could give a great congregational prayer. I knew they enjoyed sitting up in the front left box seats, where we all can enjoy Kevin's joyful noise of praise.

But I'm glad Mark and Nancy Franson agreed to be a Family Feature. I learned so much more about what drives them and how God is using them than I could in the 60 seconds Brooke gives us to greet those sitting nearby.

Both Mark and Nancy grew up in Christian homes. Nancy grew up in Grove City, PA, with an older sister and two younger brothers. It was at a neighborhood kids' Bible club that she gave her life to Christ. She was in the marching band, ran track in high school, and was also active in Young Life. She entered Penn State to be an engineer, but would graduate with a degree in Individual and Family Studies/Human Development.

Mark was born in New Jersey but has spent most of his life between Pittsburgh, PA, and Hartford, CT. He did a little wrestling and track at North Hills High School. While in high school, Mark and his friend Dale would plan outdoor adventures together. Most notable was a 2-week backpacking trip in Glacier National Park. Mark fortuitously also went to Penn State to study Environmental Engineering. He is both a Licensed Professional Engineer and a Licensed Environmental Professional for 17 years. Mark ran his own environmental consulting company, working primarily with water, waste,

and contaminated sites. Mark would describe himself as a "problem fixer" dealing with environmental regulations.

At Penn State, Mark and Nancy traveled in some of the same circles. They went to the same church (Faith Church) where Dan Dupee was employed. Dan worked with Intervarsity and the CCO at Penn State. They didn't start dating until their senior year. Their most memorable trip was a spring break backpacking trip in Pisgah, NC, with friends from Intervarsity.

Nancy borrowed boots that were too small and lost two toenails, but the relationship survived. Dan Dupee, their friend and spiritual mentor, was the best man at Mark and Nancy's wedding in 1984 at Faith Church in State College.

Mark's first job was in Hartford, CT. They were able to find a tiny 600 sq ft converted cottage in a lake community. Nancy took a job in residential life at the University of Hartford, which also paid for her master's in public administration. She went on to some other jobs but wanted very much to be a mother. God's plans didn't seem to include biological children.

Mark has two adopted sisters, and they decided to pursue adoption. They adopted Emma at three months in 1990 and three years later, Owen, a 1-year-old from the Philippines.

Nancy stopped working and did homeschooling. This was convenient because at the time, Mark was



Dan Dupee, their friend and spiritual mentor, was the best man at their wedding in 1984 at Faith Church in State College.





working on a large job in Salt Lake City, UT. He could do most of the work from Hartford, but when he had to travel to Utah, he could take the whole family.

Mark's consulting jobs became such that he could work from anywhere, so they considered moving back to Pittsburgh, where their children and grandchildren live. They contracted with Traditions of America to build on the red belt in Gibsonia. Their home in Hartford sold before their new home was ready.

Nancy chose to spend this in-between time helping and living with her aging mother in Grove City. Mark stayed with his parents in CT while he continued to work and transitioned to Pittsburgh.

The Fransons began attending NPC after moving to Gibsonia. They had visited the church often while in the area, spending time with their children. Also, their son Owen started attending NPC when he moved to the area and has participated as a musician with the worship team. They joined NPC in 2024 and are in a care group with the Shriver's, Craft's, Siger's, and Gaugler's.

Nancy is a gifted writer who works for NICABM in CT, developing and marketing training programs for health and mental health practitioners. She has also contributed to a PCA denominational magazine. She did a fantastic article about Mark's outdoor adventure ministry at their church in CT (*Ask her for a copy*).

Nancy also shared her talents at the Women's Tea last year, speaking on the "Ridiculous Joy of Christmas." For the last 10 years, she has volunteered in CT and Pittsburgh as "Buddy the Elf" ringing a bell for the Salvation Army kettle.

Mark recently completed a 5-day expedition with two other guys in Baxter State Park in northern Main, where they carried all their gear via sled. The pinnacle of the trip was an eight-hour winter mountaineering climb to Baxter Peak (elevation 5268) on Mt. Katahdin, using crampons, with a high temperature of 17 degrees and a low of -5.

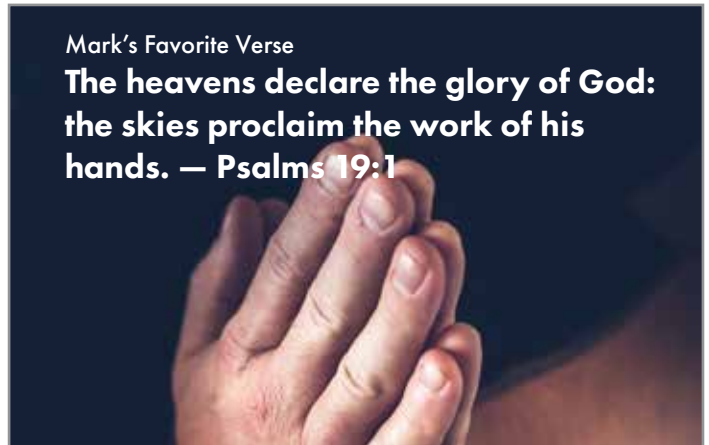
Mark sees these types of experiences as opportunities to draw closer to God. Ask Mark and Nancy about the part of their marriage contract that included them to go to Glacier National Park for two weeks.



Mark on the top of Mt. Katahdin

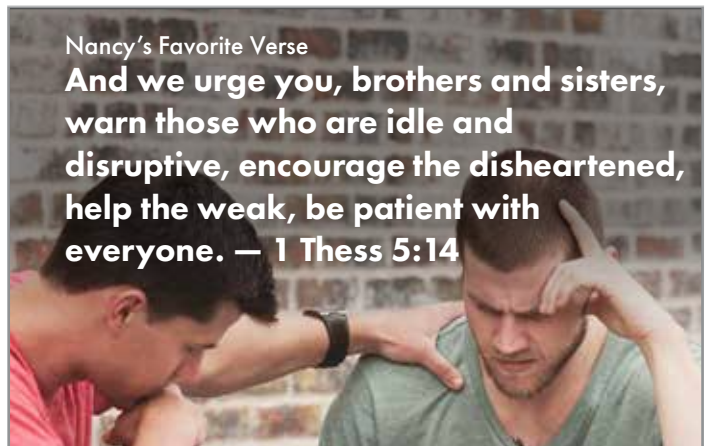
Mark's Favorite Verse

**The heavens declare the glory of God:  
the skies proclaim the work of his  
hands. — Psalms 19:1**



Nancy's Favorite Verse

**And we urge you, brothers and sisters,  
warn those who are idle and  
disruptive, encourage the disheartened,  
help the weak, be patient with  
everyone. — 1 Thess 5:14**





*by Joyce Kish*

**Did you know North Park Church has a vital ministry to folks across the street?** We have five rotating teams that provide a Sunday afternoon service in the chapel at Ashton Commons. The residents welcome us and are grateful to have a church service each week without having to leave their facility!

Len and Linda Siger have had a special connection to one lady in particular. Diane started attending the services on her own. She sat in the back row by herself but didn't participate much. One day, when taking prayer requests, Diane asked for prayer for her doctor, Dr. Ken. Len and Linda were there that day. Len said, "I have a Dr. Ken!" It turns out they had the same doctor, and that both of them had a Jewish background! If you know Len, he has a wonderful way of sharing about his Jewish faith and what it means to now be a "completed Jew."

Len asked Diane how she felt about Jesus being the Jewish Messiah. Diane said she had to think about it, but she kept coming to the Sunday services. In the meantime, Scott Shriver offered Diane her own bible the week he was serving. The next time Len and Linda were doing the service, they spoke with Diane again afterwards. Len asked Diane, "How are you coming with Jesus?" Diane said she was still thinking about it. In response, Linda asked if she would like to pray to receive Jesus as her savior. Diane looked down and thought for a moment, and then, with confidence, said yes. Linda and Len led her in prayer and then shared God's promises with her. There was much Joy in the chapel that day!

**Faithfully serving in the Sonshine Ministry at Ashton Commons are:**

- Jim Yoder & David Arnold
- Dale & Laura Wiggins
- Scott & Kate Shriver
- Len & Linda Siger
- Joyce & Andy Kish
- Rick & Barb Beideman

Since accepting Jesus, there has been a quiet but noticeable change in Diane. Now, when we are there, she sits with a gentle smile and focused look, anticipating the messages we bring and the praises that we sing! She has developed a strong relationship with the other Christian residents.

It is such a blessing for all of us to serve there. **If you are ever free on Sunday afternoon from 3:00-4:00 P.M.**, stop in at the chapel across the street at Ashton Commons and see how the Lord is working!

# CAMPUS REVITALIZATION

## WHY?

God has given our campus as a remarkable gift and tool for the ministry of North Park Church. Our building and property are heavily used by ministries within our church, as well as by others we host. We build memories here in worship, fellowship, and ministry. Many form their first impression of us through their experience with our facilities. As stewards of this resource, we are committed to maintaining an environment that is welcoming, functional, beautiful, safe, and enduring. Just as we have benefited from God's blessings to previous generations, so our desire is to care for what God has given as we look toward his continued work and faithfulness in this place for generations to come.

Campus Revitalization is a three-year plan to refresh, repair, and upgrade certain campus features to further this vision and maintain our focus on meaningful, gospel ministry in our church and its community. Would you pray for this effort and consider how you might contribute financially above and beyond your current tithe and offerings?

## FINANCES

Our three-year funding plan involves raising ~\$167k per year to cover each year's scope of work and save for some of the more costly projects in year three.

FISCAL YEAR	GIVING	SPENDING
2025-2026	\$167,000	\$75,000
2026-2027	\$167,000	\$142,000
2027-2028	\$166,000	\$283,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$500,000</b>	<b>\$500,000</b>

\*Funding needs are based on quotes and estimates, subject to market changes.

## HOW TO GIVE

Regular tithes and offerings should continue be given as normal. The best way to give to the Campus Revitalization Fund is by writing "Campus Revitalization" on the memo line of a separate check, or by selecting "Campus Revitalization" when giving online. Thank you for supporting our Campus Revitalization and the ongoing ministry of NPC!

### HIGHLIGHTED PROJECTS



**UPDATED ROAD SIGN  
& DIGITAL SIGN**



**AUTOMATED DOORS**



**PARKING LOT &  
DRIVEWAY**



**SANCTUARY SCREENS  
& STAGE**





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