



HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE HEIGHTS

NORTHMINSTER EVANGELICAL PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Experiencing and sharing God's love to transform our homes, community and world.

FEBRUARY 2024

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A Slow But Steady Process

“Come now, let us reason together,” says the Lord: “though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall become like wool.” — Isaiah 1:18

Being the snow lover that I am, I delighted in our most recent winter storm. While far from the largest snow, it was the most we’ve received in a couple of years and more than enough to blanket everything in a beautiful coating of white. It was a slow process that took most of the day, so slow you almost couldn’t see it happening. But surely enough, as the hours ticked by, the world was transformed into a beautiful winter wonderland.



As I watched the snow falling and the slow transformation of everything, I thought of the passage from Isaiah quoted above. No matter how deep our sins, God’s grace will cover them like snow. Isaiah uses the color red for sin because “without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins” (Heb 9:22). The more crimson the color, the worse the sin. And yet, no matter how crimson our sins might be, they’ve all been paid for, atoned for, by the shed blood of our Savior, Jesus Christ. Our souls are made as pure white as a fresh snowfall.

But we aren’t finished with our sin, are we? Even though our forgiveness and salvation are assured, as long as we’re on this side of Glory, we continue to wrestle with our sinful nature. As Martin Luther famously said, “We are at once justified and sinful.” Our journey with Jesus is a journey of becoming ever more sanctified (which means holy, or more like Jesus) and ever less sinful. Sometimes we make great strides toward holiness; sometimes we slide back into our sins. It’s a process, a journey, and it takes time – kind of like how it takes time for the world to turn white while the snow falls.

When the snow first started, the ground was still fairly warm. Most of the snow melted immediately. In fact, a lot of the snow melted before the ground cooled enough for the snow to begin to stick. The tree branches were the first to collect the snow, but roads took a lot longer, and even when the snow began to stick, the roads first turned to a mushy grey. Puddles in the yard where the already melted snow collected held out for as long as they could, but even they eventually froze and were covered over with snow. Yet the snow was persistent and relentless, persevering until all was remade under a beautiful white blanket.

It is the Holy Spirit that is restoring our souls, one day at a time, moment by moment. Just like the snowfall, the Holy Spirit is persistent and relentless with you. Often, you might not notice that anything is changing at all. But over time, as we continue to walk with the Lord in faithfulness and pursue Him in all things, we'll begin to notice that we aren't who we used to be, that our soul is gradually becoming more and more pure and white. Set your mind and your heart on the things of God, and freely confess your sins — old, new, even the repeats — so He can “purge you with hyssop” so you can “hear joy and gladness” in your soul.

Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones that you have broken rejoice. — Psalm 51:7-8

Blessings,
Rev. David Garrison

YOUTH MINISTRY NEWS – February 2024

In February, we'll wrap up our series, “Old Timers,” enjoy a little football (or at least crazy commercials and yummy football related treats), and start a new series, “Hooked.” Money. Sex. Pride. Drugs. Glory. The lure of temptation is strong, and all it takes is one bite to get hooked - sometimes for life. Temptation is everywhere! Even if you're not experiencing temptation at this moment, it will be knocking on your door in no time. Through this series, we're going to get a big-picture perspective on how God wants to help us deal with temptation. We'll explore some very practical steps we can take to prepare us to deal with tomorrow's temptations and protect us for years to come. And if you've already fallen for temptation? What happens then? We'll talk about that, too.

Temptation is never easy to deal with, and it's always more insidious than we expect. This is a don't-miss series. Be sure and be there.

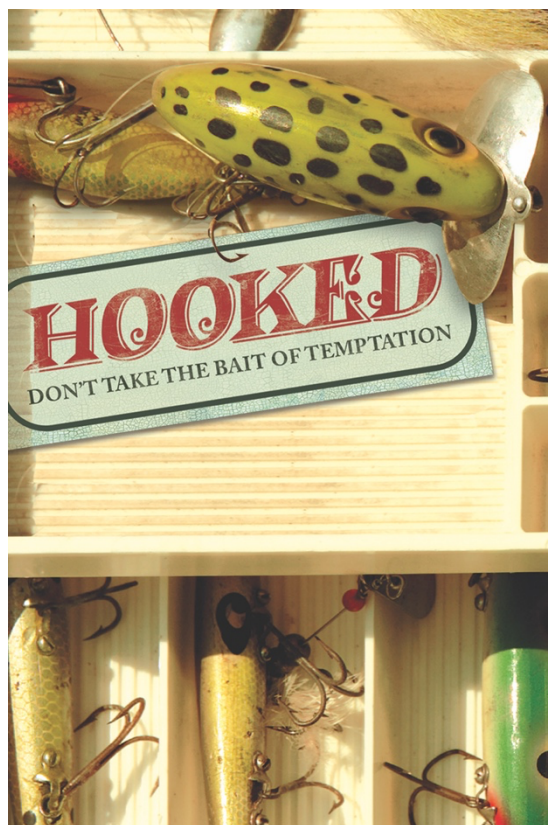
Youth Group meets Sundays at 6:30pm at Northminster

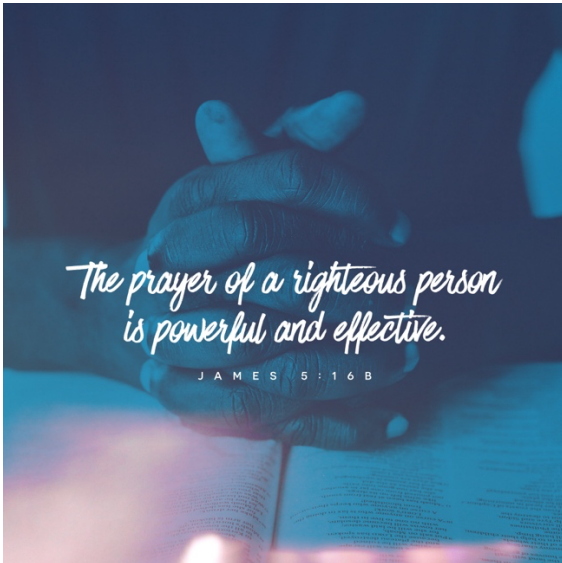
February 4 – Old Timers: Esther

February 11 – Super Bowl Party @ The Garrisons' House (through halftime)

February 18 – Hooked: Don't Bite!

February 25 – Hooked: Swim in Schools





PRAYER REQUESTS

*I sought the Lord, and He answered me;
He delivered me from all my fears. -Psalm 34:4*

Several members have asked for prayers for needs that they'd prefer not to share publicly. Please lift up these prayers, knowing that God knows for whom you pray and what they need.

Lorraine Ledden entered the Kingdom Triumphant on Thursday, January 11, 2024. Please keep her family in your prayers as they grieve her passing.

Janet Garrison is doing well following knee replacement surgery on Wednesday, January 17.

Remember others who cannot be with us in church: **Pat Callahan, Arlene Horton, Margie Seal, Dot Stinnett, Dolores Wright and Peggy Wright.**

**All active servicemen and women.
Law enforcement personnel, first responders.**

FINANCIAL STEWARDSHIP REPORT		
<u>2023 GENERAL FUND</u>		
	December	Year End
Income	10,292	116,010
Expenses	<u>9,744</u>	<u>124,904</u>
Balance	548	-8,894

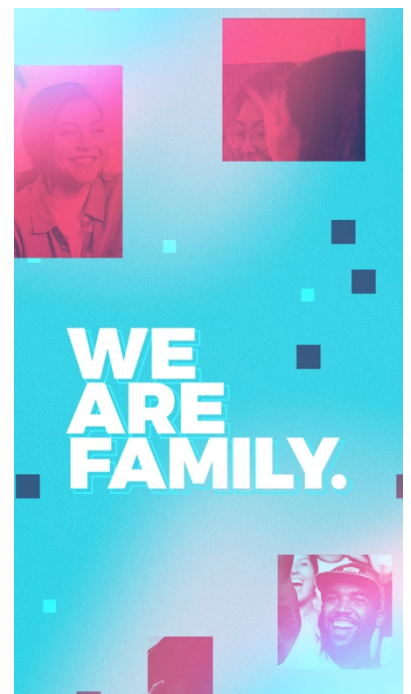
Don & Joan Ricketts Body Life Fund

Following the lead of Pastor Ray Steadman in his book, *Body Life*, Northminster seeks to be the body of Christ. One way of doing this is by reaching out not only to people in our community, but also assisting members of our own congregation who find themselves in a financial crisis.

When a family in the church has special needs that they are unable to meet, perhaps due to losing a job, or some sort of crisis, money from the Body Life Fund can be requested to help. While money does not usually solve people's problems, it can be a source of great encouragement to a family that is struggling through a crisis. Although the church cannot fully support a family that is out of work, any financial help is usually appreciated greatly, and tells them that the church truly cares.

Northminster's "Body Life Fund" was established in 2002 and named in honor of Don & Joan Ricketts.

Funding for the Body Life Fund occurs through contributions made directly to Body Life, not from the general income. Over the past several years, we been blessed to be able to provide special assistance to many in our congregation. As a result, the balance in the fund right now is very low. We invite you to consider prayerfully making a special donation, above and beyond your regular giving, to help replenish this fund so that we might be able to bless others in our church family should the need arise.





Minute 4 Missions: Burundi Hope Project

“Open My Eyes,” a hymn written by Panam Percy Paul, comes to mind when thinking of Burundi and the mission we help to support there. The song begins with a plea to God saying, “Open my eyes that I may see, glimpses of truth Thou hast for me.” It continues on with the words: “Open my ears that I may hear voices of truth Thou sendest clear.” This is what is happening with the Burundi Hope Project at the Kanura School for the Blind and at the Ephphatha Deaf School. The students literally cannot hear or see!

In 2004, Mark and Susan May had a vision to establish the Burundi Hope Project which enabled them to establish schools for 220 deaf or blind students and their teachers. Mark and Susan have a heart for serving children with special needs; now they both serve as short-term missionaries in Burundi. Living in Amherst County and being one of our own, makes this project special to us. Therefore, Northminster has supported them in their mission for a number of years. We have seen them here at our church many times when they have given us updates on how the work there is progressing. They are our friends. And most importantly, supporting their work is one way Northminster can fulfill God’s mission of spreading the Word throughout the nations of the world.

Mission strategy has changed through the years. In the past, missionaries went and never came back home. Today’s strategy allows the people in Burundi to take ownership of their projects, with missionaries becoming more or less advisors. When in Madison Heights, Susan and Mark work with folks in Burundi by way of the Internet. Then, at least twice a year, sometimes more, they do short-term mission trips. Besides the schools, Mark and Susan have also seen the people establish a fish farm, a sewing center, a chicken business, and new churches. Burundi Hope also provides training for pastors and teachers.

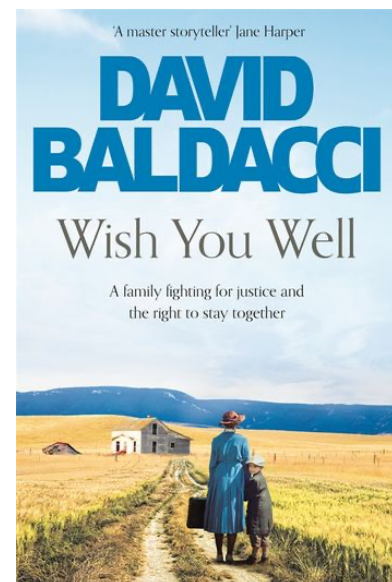
Burundi Hope Project is our Mission Focus for February. If you would like to support this ministry, please put “Burundi Hope” in the memo field of your check or donation.

The Women’s Book Club February 15 at 10:00 AM

The Book Club will meet on Thursday, February 15 at 10:00 a.m. We do not know where we are meeting yet, but we will let you know as soon as we do know. The book we are reading for February is Wish You Well by David Baldacci.

Following a family tragedy, siblings Lou and Oz must leave New York and adjust to life in the Virginia mountains-but just as the farm begins to feel like home, they'll have to defend it from a dark threat in this New York Times bestselling coming-of-age story.

Come join us as we discuss our book of the month! Bring a friend, too!





2024 Schedule

Date	Host Church	Preacher	Topic/Scripture
Feb 14	Amelon UMC	Derik Hamby (RMBC)	Mary Gives Her Perfume Matthew 26:6-13
Feb 21	Randolph Memorial	Dave Edinger (AUMC)	Simon Gives His Strength Mark 15:21
Feb 28	Northminster Pres.	Josh Beeler (MHBC)	A Family Gives Their Home Luke 22:7-13
Mar 6	Rose Chapel BC	George Harris (MHCC)	Joseph Gives His Tomb John 19:38-42
Mar 13	MH Christian Church	Rose Chapel BC	A Widow Gives Her Mites Luke 21:1-4
Mar 20	MH Baptist Church	David Garrison (NPC)	The Thief Gives Nothing Luke 23:32-43

Notes

- A meal will follow the **March 20 service** at Madison Heights Baptist Church--all churches will be contacted as to what they can provide for the meal.
- On all other weeks, participants are encouraged to go out to lunch with one another!
- All services will begin at 12pm each Wednesday and will last approximately 30 minutes.
- An offering will be collected weekly for the **Helping Hands community ministry**.
- *In the case of snow, the host church for the week will decide if the service will continue.*

From New Year's Resolutions to Lenten Activities: 40 Items in 40 Days

As I write this newsletter article, it is late January. Often at this time, many of us who made New Year's resolutions a month ago now begin to assess how well (or poorly) the new changes we've made are going. One of my favorite resolutions (I make it every year!) is to declutter my home.

It was almost 30 years ago when my husband and I first married and combined two households of possessions into one home. All this stuff, along with new furniture, electronics, clothing, cat toys, and other belongings acquired over the years have really piled up. (The garage has **never** had room for a car!)

I've made progress with my New Year's decluttering resolution this January and like the results! When I mentioned this to my sister, she told me about a Lenten activity she recently read about. Here's how it works:

40 Items in 40 Days

Each day from Ash Wednesday (Feb. 14) until Easter (March 31), gather one item from your home to donate. This can be clothing, books, furniture, household items, or anything in good condition which you no longer need and that others can benefit from. Collect the items in a bag (or bags), and when Easter comes, donate them to a worthwhile charity or to someone in need.

This idea intrigued me, so I did internet research for more information and found tons of articles. There are many variations on this decluttering activity. For example, one involved filling up one trash bag each day during Lent with items to toss (**40 Bags in 40 Days**). That's just too ambitious for me!

One of the most useful articles I found, published by Guideposts, is entitled *Decluttering as Part of Your Lenten Spiritual Practice*. It can be found at: <https://guideposts.org/prayer/decluttering-as-part-of-your-lenten-spiritual-practice>.

Here is an excerpt from the article:

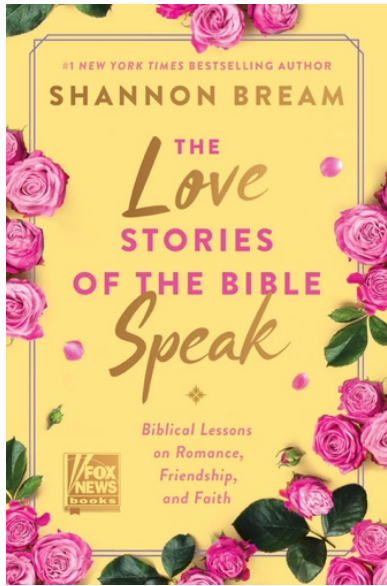
(Lent)... can also be a time to do a spiritual reset by decluttering and re-focusing on what really matters.

The purpose of Lent is to give up the things keeping you back from God. Decluttering can be a way to release physical and spiritual clutter and focus on developing your relationship with God.

I've started collecting articles on Lent and decluttering and would be happy to share them with anyone who is interested. Happy Decluttering!

Liz Boothe





Women’s Bible Study Monday, February 5 at 7 PM!

The Women's Bible Study will meet on Monday, February 5th at 7:00 p.m. at the church. Cindy Copp will be our facilitator and hostess this month. We are using the book, The Love Stories of the Bible Speak by Shannon Bream. We will also be using the workbook that goes with the book. You can get a copy of the book online, Mardel, Barnes and Noble or wherever books are sold.

We will be studying Adam and Eve - The Original Love Story. (This is pretty timely with Valentine's Day right around the corner.) Ladies, read your book and complete your workbook! Bring a friend. As always, if you don't get your homework done, come anyway!! Looking forward to seeing everyone on the 5th!

As always, feel free to bring friends or neighbors with you to this Bible study group.

Our meetings for the year are as follows:

February 5 - Adam and Eve - The Original Love Story - Cindy Copp

March 4 - Esther and Xerxes - Marriage to a Monarch - Judy Reyburn

April 8 - Ruth and Boaz - Second Chances - Barbara Baker

May 6 - David and Abigail - The Rebel and the Peacemaker - June Hedrick

Please join us as we study the Bible and learn to apply its teachings to our life!



GLEANING
FOR THE WORLD

Wednesday, February 21

Meet @ Northminster, 8:30 AM

Our next trip to serve at the warehouse for Gleaning For The World in Concord is on Wednesday, February 21. Meet in the church parking lot and we'll carpool together, returning around 11:30 AM. We look forward to serving with you.

Ever wonder how our livestream makes it onto YouTube, the camera is operated, slides & words change on the screen, the service gets recorded, and the sound gets mixed so well each and every week? It's thanks to these two – Meg Garrison & Dani Caplinger. They do a great job, but would love some help! If you're interested, let them or Pastor David know.



Easter Lilies for the Sanctuary



It is the beginning of February 2024 already. The Lenten Season, Holy Week, Palm Sunday, and Easter all come early this year. Northminster members and friends will soon have an opportunity to provide Easter lilies in honor of, or in memory of, a loved one. These lilies will decorate the sanctuary on Easter Sunday, March 31, and then be available to take home. Details on cost and deadline will be available in the coming weeks.

If you would be interested in helping with setting up Easter lilies this year, please check with Liz Boothe - assistance is much appreciated!

