



NEWCOMER'S BOOK

WELCOME NEWCOMERS!

We are very happy you are here, experiencing the Northfield Conference for the first time! You are embarking on a week of living in community, meeting new people, listening to speakers, being part of a “family,” attending workshops, sitting in Sacred Circle, enjoying music, laughter, dance, and so much more! We hope you feel welcomed by the community and that you will ask for help from any of us at any time.

The Northfield Conference can be a bit overwhelming at first and so this Booklet is designed to help you find your way and learn about our history, etc.

The first thing you may notice is that there is an inordinate amount of hugging going on. People return to this Conference year after year after year, just to reconnect with dear friends for this one week, to let go of the stress of our regular lives, to be vulnerable and “real.” This is what we hope you will discover for yourselves.

Perhaps the most important thing for you to remember, as you watch folks reconnecting with big hugs, is that we were all Newcomers at one point, we all remember that initial feeling of discovery.

We hope you will enjoy your week, that you learn things about yourself you may not have been aware of, that you make wonderful connections, that you discover the joy of being a part of this special community. Welcome!

“Northfield, a place where any kind of individuality of any individual is embraced, and home of my 130 extended family members.” Sam

THE NORTHFIELD Conference

Welcome to Northfield: a community continuously redefining itself. We honor the diversity of human experience; we respect the gifts of our elders; we look with joy to the future through our children; and we continually seek to affirm life creatively and thoughtfully.

This week is devoted to growth: personal, spiritual, social and communal. There is time to learn, to question, to doubt, to affirm, to explore what gives our lives meaning and depth. According to Wikipedia, to be multi-faith is to feel an affinity with aspects of more than one religion, philosophy or world-view, and to believe that none is superior to the others. Our goal is to enable people of all ages and backgrounds to experience their fullest selves in the midst of a loving, supportive and nurturing community.

Essential to our community is the participation of each and every member of the Conference. Year after year, we learn anew to care for ourselves and each other through sharing our gifts, appreciating the uniqueness of every human being, and striving to recognize and accommodate the needs of all. In this way, Northfielders share in the responsibility for the success of the Conference. It is our hope that this intentional week provides an opportunity to be challenged, to celebrate our differences, to honor who we are and who we can become.

"Northfield makes me feel like I'm with my own family. The family and friends I can count on." Eleanor

"It means, new friends, new people, and new adventures. I like the food. I like that there's a lot of play space" Cooper

"It means friends, fun and happiness" Taylor

"I've been coming to Northfield since I was born. To me, Northfield means happiness and family." Kara

OUR HISTORY

The Conference was founded in 1893 as a Christian Conference for young women by May Whittle Moody, daughter-in-law of evangelist Dwight Moody. For a week each year they met on the campus of the Northfield School (situated on the grounds of the Moody farm). During war time in the 1940's, the Conference separated into three geographical areas: the Northern Area Conference (our "Northfield") on the Northfield-Mount Hermon campus; the Erie Area Conference, held at Westminster College in New Wilmington, PA; and the Middle Atlantic Conference, held on Cape Cod. Each Conference developed differently. The Northern Area Conference (our "Northfield") evolved into a multi-generational community for individuals and families, with program planning emanating from its participants. Through both a secular and spiritual lens, we honor the diversity of the human experience by striving towards honest, open and authentic sharing. In 2007, the Middle Atlantic Conference and in 2013, the Erie Area Conference officially rejoined the Northfield Conference.

OUR LEADERSHIP STRUCTURE

In the summer of 2013, the Conference began a new leadership structure. Previously (when the Northfield League Annual Meeting voted in new Bylaws) our Conference was called "The Northern Area" and was one of three Area Conferences under the umbrella of The Northfield League. What most people did not know was that, while each Area could create its own program and political structure, it was the League that held our non-profit tax exempt status 501(c)(3); consequently, the League was required to have a Board of Directors that was legally accountable for all the activities of the Area Conferences. For instance, the League held all the investments, controlled all bank accounts, and did all the reporting to the IRS. With the closure of the Erie and Mid- Atlantic Areas, leaving only The Northern Area, the decision was made to legally blend The Northern Area into The Northfield League, creating a single entity.

The By-Laws Committee was required to keep the existing Board of Directors of the League which includes a President, Treasurer and Secretary – each elected for staggered 3 year terms. The Conference Coordinators (Troika) model, however, has worked so successfully for the last 35 years, it will continue to be in charge of planning and running the Conference itself. Financials and Investments will remain as a Board function. Our structure can be found below:

POSITION BOARD	CHOSEN BY	LENGTH/LIMITS	RESPONSIBILITIES
President Treasurer Secretary Troika One Troika Two Troika Three Registrar Youth Program Coordinator	Conference Membership Conference Membership Conference Membership Nominating Committee Nominating Committee Nominating Committee Board Board	3 years / twice 3 years / none 3 years / none 3 years / open 3 years / open 3 years / open 1 year / none 1 year / none	Bylaws/Financials Bylaws/Financials Bylaws/Financials Conference/Mid-Winter Conference/Mid-Winter Conference/Mid-Winter Enroll June Conference Organize Youth Program
EXEC. COMMITTEE The Board Program Co-Chair Program Co-Chair	See above Board Board	See above 1 year / open 1 year / open	See above Lead June Conference Lead June Conference
COMMITTEES Nominating Chair Nominating	Conference Membership Self-Selected	1 year / open 1 year / open	Nominate new Troika member
One Troika member is elected annually at the June Conference as the senior member rotates off the Board.			

“The Northfield community is a large and beautiful basket that holds space for me to grow, connect to others, deepen my spirituality, learn new things, laugh and cry, and, most of all ,practice the ongoing art of loving. YES.” Dorothy

FAQS

Welcome to Your Northfield Family! ... What is it?

A Northfield “Family” is an intergenerational small group of Conference participants that meet daily after the Conference Hour. It is a great opportunity to get to know a small group of people throughout the week and share your reactions to the Conference or just to have a confidential space where you have a chance to talk about yourself. Each small group has “Family Facilitator” whose goal is to help everyone feel welcome and included.

Do I have to do everything on the schedule?

We know we pack a lot into our week together and it can feel overwhelming, even to folks who have been coming for years! We encourage Newcomers to participate in as much as possible, to really immerse yourselves in the Northfield experience. But we also do not want you to feel overloaded, so the answer is No, you do not, with one exception! Families have been considered by many to be the heart of the Conference. We are all assigned a Family on Sunday morning and this is a commitment we take seriously. Each morning, from 10:30 to 12noon, we meet with this special group of Northfielders to connect, talk about the Conference Hour, play games, share our journeys – each Family decides how they want to use their time. Other than that, pretty much everything else is optional...but really, give it all a try!

Where do I sit at meals?

The simple answer is “Anywhere you like!” But that is not so easy when you are new and everyone seems to know everyone else and it can feel difficult to sit at a table, especially if you are naturally reserved or shy. Here we encourage “Be Brave!” and join a table with others already there. You will be welcomed, we promise!

What's this about the bathrooms?

If you are reading this on Saturday, before the Dorm Meetings, it's good to give you a head's up about the bathroom question. Most likely the person who encouraged you to come to Northfield forewarned you, but here's the scoop. Each dorm, or floor of a dorm, decides whether or not the bathrooms will be coed or some variation of coed. This is because we are all living together and want it to be as convenient for everyone as possible. That said, however, not everyone is entirely comfortable with this arrangement, so some dorms will designate certain hours when bathrooms are single-sex or make certain bathrooms single-sex all the time, etc.

We are a very respectful community and every opinion counts. Because you are new, you may feel swayed by the "old" Northfielders and feel you cannot speak up – NOT TRUE! If you have strong feelings about this, let your voice ring out! Your opinion counts.

Sacred Circle – I'm not particularly religious or spiritual...

That's fine. Sacred Circle is a time every evening for us to gather as a community and sit in peace together. There are readings and songs – coming from every tradition. As a community, we are Christians, Jews, Buddhists, Earth-Based, agnostics...we welcome every faith or none and use this time to feel the Spirit as it moves us. Every day at 1:00, that evening's Sacred Circle is created by anyone who wishes to have input or just listen to the process. Do you have a favorite reading or song? Bring it to a meeting and offer it.

GENERAL DAILY SCHEDULE

Please refer to the Grid. See Daily Schedule posted in the far end of the Dining Hall for changes or additions.

Time	Activity
6:30am	Coffee available in Dining Hall
7:00 - 7:30am	Yoga: Solarium
7:00 - 7:30am	Sound Meditation: Chapel
7:00 - 7:30am	Meditation: Blake, small lounge
7:30 - 8:15am	Breakfast: Dining Hall
8:30 - 9:55am	In-gathering: Blake Lounge
9:00 - 12:00pm	Children's Program: Leave from Blake Lounge
9:00 - 10:15am	Conference Hour: Blake Lounge
10:30 - 12:00pm	Northfield Families
12:00 - 1:00pm	Lunch, Dining Hall
1:00 - 2:00pm	Sacred Circle Planning: Small Dining Room
1:00 - 2:00pm	Family Facilitators' Meeting: Social Hall
1:00 - 2:00pm	Recreational Sports
1:00 - 3:00pm	Pool Open, Tuesday & Thursday
2:30 - 5:00pm	Pool open, Sunday, Monday & Wednesday
2:15 - 4:15pm	Workshops (<i>refer to separate schedule sheet</i>)
4:45 - 5:30pm	Tree Sessions – Locations to be announced
5:30 - 6:30pm	Dinner: Dining Hall
6:45 - 7:30pm	Sacred Circle: Chapel
8:00pm	Each evening will have a Special Activity (check the Grid)
After Evening Activity	"Club Northfield" (Blake, 2nd Floor) Dancing, Refreshments, Games and more!!

While this is the "general" schedule of each day, there are variations and additions throughout the week. For explanation of the special activities, please refer to "Other Special Activities in the Handbook."