



NEW HOPE NEWSLETTER



Volume 1, No 12

The Rev. Steven Counts

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Officers of the Church Council

President: Larry Strock
Vice President: Don Byers
Secretary: Kirk Partin
Treasurer: Alan Lunsford
Financial secretary: Debbie Sowell



Our Mission Statement

The mission of our congregation is Building Disciples, Growing in Faith, and Serving in Christ's name. We believe the Canonical Scriptures of the Old and New Testament are the inspired Word of God and the final authority for us in all matters of faith and life.

Members



LeNair Amick, Mary Coltrane, Vicki Edwards, Melissa Flemming, Lavenia Hentz, Becky McCartha, Nell Poole & Janis Strock.

Friends and Family

Wanda Boland (daughter of Becky McCartha), Dianne Clark, Jill Billings (daughter of Gene and Karen Jeffrey), Johnny Bouknight (uncle of John Bouknight), Sheryl Jackson (Gordon's daughter) Cassie Lindler (daughter of Michael Lindler) Verna Sawyer (sister of Mary Coltrane & Becky McCartha) Drew Moore (grandson of Becky McCartha) and Cliff McElveen (brother of Linwood McElveen).

Those with on-going illness: Landon Derrick



MEMORIALS AND HONORARIUMS

Given to New Hope Lutheran Church
In Honor of: Mervyn & Judy Derrick & Mary Coltrane

*Members who give In Memory of or In Honor of will receive a card from the church office thanking them for their gift to the church and the family will also be informed of the gift.
The names of those giving gifts may be found in the Remembrance Book.*

MONTHLY INCOME & ATTENDANCE—December

Report from Sunday, December 1st

Worship Attendance:.....52 Advent.....22
Offering Collected: \$5,228.00 Advent \$200.00

Report from Sunday, December 8th

Worship Attendance:.....47 Advent..... 20
Offering Collected: \$ 3,394.00 Advent...\$225.00

Report from Sunday, December 15th

Worship Attendance:....45 Advent.....22
Offering Collected:...\$5,930.00 Advent...\$337.00

AVERAGE ATTENDANCE 47

Report from Sunday, December 22nd

Worship Attendance:.....51 Advent.....16
Offering Collected: \$7,793.00 Advent...\$170.00

Report from Christmas Eve, December 24th

Worship Attendance:.....42
Offering Collected:.....\$976.00

Report from Sunday, December 29th

Worship Attendance:.....43
Offering Collected:.....\$ 6,442.00
Parking lot Offering.....\$ 75,000.00

ALTAR GUILD TEAMS & SCHEDULE

(*Donates Group Coordinator)

Group #1: *Laurie Lackey, Chrystal Bouknight, Janis Strock , Laurie Lackey , Cindy Lindler (Saturdays—9:00am)

Group #2: *Leigh Ann Lunsford, Pat Coogler, Patsy South, Betty McCartha (Saturdays—8:30am)

Group #3: *Nancy Cannon, Mary Coltrane, Erica Richardson, Dana Monts (Saturdays—8:30am)

Reminder— if you are not able to attend on your scheduled day, please let your coordinator know)



MONTHS ASSIGNED

Group #1—January, April, July & October

Group #2—February, May, August & November

Group #3—March, June, September & December

Remember that all 3 teams help with Christmas, Holy Week and Easter Services.

ASSISTING MINISTERS—JANUARY

	5th	12th	19th	26th
Lectors:	Cathy	Earl	Larry	Lynn
Flowers:	Outlaw	Open	McCartha	Lindler
Fellowship:	Open	Lindler	Open	Open

Acolytes: Lucas, Hentz, Edwards **Communion Assistants:** Monts/Lackey

Altar Guild Group: # 1 F. Shealy, E. Hentz, K. Monts, J. Leviner

Worship Sundays in January

	<u>1st Reading</u>	<u>Psalm</u>	<u>2nd Reading</u>	<u>Gospel</u>
5th	1 Kings 3:4-15	Psalm 119:97-104	Ephesians 1:3-14	Luke 2:40-52
6th	Isaiah 60:1-6	Psalm 72:1-11 (12-15)	Ephesians 3:1-12	Matthew 2:1-12
12th	Isaiah 43:1-7	Psalm 29	Romans 6:1-11	Luke 3:15-22
19th	Isaiah 62:1-5	Psalm 128	1 Corinthians 12:1-11	John 2:1-11
26th	Nehemiah 8:1-3, 5-6, 8-10	Psalm 19:(1-6) 7-14	1 Corinthians 12:12-31a	Luke 4:16-30

**MEN'S
GROUP**

MEN OF NEW HOPE

Our Next Meeting will be **Tuesday, January 7th @ 6:30**
Join us for a great meal, planning, and fellowship!

**WOMEN'S
GROUP**

Circle of Hope Women

Our next meeting will be
Tuesday, January 14th @6:30

All women are invited to join us for dinner, devotions & planning of community projects.



Annual Congregational Meeting

We will meet right after Sunday School
on January 19th .



Choir Practice

January 9th & 23rd @ 7:00pm



Small Group Bible Study

topic: The Book of ACTS

⇒ Tuesday morning @ 9am

⇒ Wednesday evening @ 7pm



Ladies Tea

Please mark your calendars for a Ladies' Tea to be held
on Saturday, May 17th.

More details to come!



**Giving Statements for 2024 will be
available at church on January 9th.**

If you would like your statement emailed, please contact the office.

2025 COUNCIL OFFICERS AND COMMITTEE CHAIRPERSONS / LIAISONS

Elected Officers of Council:

President: Larry Strock

Vice President: Don Byers

Secretary: Kirk Partin

Treasurer: Alan Lunsford

Financial secretary– Debbie Sowell

Congregational Committees:

- 2025 Outgoing Council Members: Karl Brehmer, Ken Monts and Don Byers
- Nominating Committee: Ken Monts (Council Liaison & Chairperson), Karl Brehmer, Don Byers & Patsy South (Congregational Member)
- Audit: Don Byers (Council Liaison) & Gene Jeffrey (Chairperson)
- Mutual Ministry: Don Byers (Council Liaison) & Karl Brehmer (Chairperson)

Program Committees:

- Worship & Music: Laurie Lackey (Council Liaison) & Earl Monts (Chairperson)
- Christian Education: Earl Monts (Council Liaison) & Kirk Partin (Chairperson)
- Mission Outreach: Ken Monts (Council Liaison) & Linda Leviner (Chairperson)
- Congregational Life: Chrystal Bouknight (Council Liaison) & Chrystal Bouknight (Chairperson)
- Men of New Hope: Ken Monts (Council Liaison) & Larry Strock (Chairperson)
- Circle of Hope: Earl Monts (Council Liaison) & Cathy Monts (Chairperson)

Support Committees:

- Finance: Karl Brehmer (Council Liaison) & Don Byers (Chairperson)
- Property: Larry Strock (Council Liaison & Chairperson)
- Staff Support: Karl Brehmer (Council Liaison) & TBD (Chairperson)
- Kitchen: Larry Strock (Council Liaison) & Betsy Byers (Chairperson)
- Cemetery: Erica Richardson (Council Liaison) & Leigh Ann Lunsford (Chairperson)

DECEMBER 2024 PARISH COUNCIL HIGHLIGHTS

Officers, standing committees and council liaisons were appointed and confirmed.

January 19, 2024, was approved as the date for the Annual Congregational Meeting.

All officer and committee reports are due on or before December 31, 2024.

During 2025, the Council agreed to spend a few minutes at each month's meeting to discuss the state of the congregation and options available to expand and enhance the congregation's outreach to the community.

The council approved the purchase, within reason, of a new manager scene for next year's Christmas season. The Worship and Music and Property Committee will investigate what's available.

Per the request of our mission district dean, Council approved allowing a lay-led service as often as every 6 weeks so Pastor Steve could be available to lead worship at other NALC congregations without regular pastoral supply, AND authorized Pastor to supply as called upon following worship at New Hope barring his attendance being required for meetings, gatherings, etc. after service at New Hope.

JANUARY

Birthdays & Anniversaries



Jennings & Betty McCartha

19th



Don Pierce	7th
Jennings McCartha	16th
Dianne Hambrick	17th
Patsy South	24th
Allie Gray	28th
Alan Lunsford	29th
Nell Poole	30th

Occasionally, I still scroll through the ELCA's homepage. I don't really know why, maybe it's perverse curiosity, maybe it's just seeing what the "competition" is up to now, but mid-December I happened to read this rather innocent sounding article printed below:

Radically Welcomed

This past August, I had the opportunity to experience the Churchwide Assembly in Columbus as a voting member. I was, at the time, Director of Youth and Family at an ELCA congregation in Tampa. I had only experienced my own congregation and didn't have a full understanding of the ELCA or what the Church did on a National/International level as a denomination and organization. Before beginning that position in June of 2021, I had never heard of the ELCA despite growing up with a religious background experiencing over 5 different denominations of the Christian faith. Lutheranism wasn't any different in my eyes than Baptist, United Methodist, or Non-denominational. I thought it was all the same. Being a Black queer woman, I haven't seen myself represented that much in any church's leadership, in any denomination I've been a part of. When I saw all the people and groups represented in leadership, the intentionality of language used, the humility, the effort being made to grow and learn and bring awareness and accountability, I just was so floored. Sometimes I still can't believe something like the ELCA exists. It was at the Assembly I said to myself, to my friends, and to God: I feel like this is a place where I can be my full self, be seen as me, and fully participate in the works happening here without having to renounce pieces of myself. I HAVE TO FIND A WAY TO WORK FOR THE ELCA!

First of all, I find it very disconcerting that the "Director of Youth and Family" at a Lutheran congregation has no idea what a Lutheran is, no concept of Lutheran doctrine and the Confessions, but that happens in a lot of congregations, unfortunately. We can be so desperate to attract youth and families that we're willing to soft-petal our understanding of the Faith to be popular and winsome. Those of you who have been studying the Book of Acts in our Bible Study: How many of the Apostles tried to make their proclamation of the Gospel accommodating to culture around them?! Remember how Peter began some of his sermons? Paul did an amazing job of making the message intelligible to people of different cultures and traditions, and even languages, but he did not change the message. But this demonstrates the great flaw of the ELCA, and generic American Christianity as well, this notion that "it's all about me." "Being a Black queer woman...this is a place where I can be my full self, be seen as me, and fully participate...without having to renounce pieces of myself."

Good Lord deliver us! When did the Gospel ever become a message of me being fully me – whatever the Hades that may mean! I like the old saying, "God loves us just the way we are, and loves us way too much to leave us like that." I doubt seriously, despite sitting in a church pew every Sunday, this woman has ever truly heard John the Baptist's and our Savior's call to repentance.

Yes, here's a snapshot of what's wrong with this current incarnation (definitely no pun intended!) of American Christianity. It's all about "me," that I feel accepted, appreciated, even coddled. To borrow from Joel Olsten, It's about "your best life ever." I believe it's the Lutheran Satire channel on YouTube that has a video of the early Christian martyrs making Joel's "positive affirmations" as they are suffering death for the Faith. It's hilarious because it's so

ridiculous: St. Lawrence the Deacon being roasted live as he glibly says, “God wants you to be rich and comfortable!”

You see what’s going on with folk like this, no doubt sincere, Black queer woman don’t you? It’s the serpent in the Garden all over again. Satan tempting us to be our own gods, ends in ourselves. So, indeed, “Good Lord deliver us!” And thanks be to Christ who alone has the power to save us from even ourselves.

JANUARY 2025

A New Year Marks a New Beginning for Christian Stewardship of All of Life

While the practice of making New Year's resolutions goes back over 3000 years, it was the Romans who raised resolution-making to a high art, and the determination to begin the new year with a better attitude, solid goals and a zeal for self-improvement has been with us ever since.

This is certainly understandable, after all, the start of a New Year gives us the feeling of a fresh start, a new beginning, and new opportunities. It is a time when people feel that they can begin anew with their lives. Common New Year's resolutions are to lose weight, exercise more and eat healthier; or to spend more time with family. Still others include managing money better and being better organized. Although there is nothing in the Bible or notable in the Christian tradition about New Year's resolutions -- indeed, because of pagan excess of Roman New Year celebrations, the early Christian Church largely ignored the secular New Year and replaced it with an observance of the circumcision and naming of the infant Jesus on the 8th Day of Christmas -- nevertheless, many good stewards take advantage of this time of year to seriously consider their discipleship. They may re-commit themselves to pray more, to read the Bible, or to attend worship services more faithfully.

If you are planning on using these early weeks of 2025 to make a change in your spiritual life, maybe even looking for some help in making a New Year's resolution to that effect, here are a few good ideas to get you started:

Practice gratitude – Cultivating a grateful heart is the hallmark of a Christian steward. Every day, express thankfulness to the Lord and to others. It may sound overly simplistic, but seeing the good in your life will allow you to keep your heart compassionate and loving.

Encounter the Lord each day – Find time to be with the Lord each and every day, whether it be for an hour or ten minutes. Seriously, have a conversation with the Lord, and give over your joys and worries to Him as well. Allow God's love to transform them. Our encounters will keep our eyes and ears open to the presence of Christ in our midst who meets us in all circumstances when and where we are attentive.

Be present to others – There is much celebration and mourning, joy and sorrow in peoples' lives -- what a blessing it is to be able to share those times and not let others experience them alone. The gift of your presence to others is often far more valuable than you realize.

Have realistic expectations of yourself and others – There is always this unspoken pressure to produce, to meet goals, to be successful. But activities that lead us to constant worry do not give glory to God. What God calls us to do we can do well; He will provide. Be mindful that life requires balance, down time and letting go of unrealistic goals.

Nurture friendships – Our friends are those we choose to be with, those with whom we spend our evenings, with whom we vacation, to whom we go to for advice. Friends are gifts from God who give us a greater appreciation of God's love for us. Friends need our time and love. Christmas teaches us that our God is an incarnational God, one who comes to us embodied in flesh, in the stuff of this world. One way that God often meets us is in our human relationships.

Give more – (Now you were probably waiting for me to write this! I mean, clearly, the more money the congregation has, the more it can do, but there's a deeper concern here.) Good stewards realize that everything they have is entrusted to them as a gift to be shared. Now, we all know this -- seriously, apart from the grace of Jesus Christ, how many of our valuables will still be ours in a hundred years? -- but often do we live like we know that. There is no better place to begin than sharing with the community that gathers around the Lord's Table at the Sacrament of the Altar. Consider what you are giving to your congregation, its missions and ministry, and commit to an even greater contribution as circumstances allow.

Make a difference in your congregation's community – Believe it or not, your congregation genuinely needs your talents. Offering your time and skills and service to your faith community is one of the most effective ways to feel useful and connected to others -- seriously, this could be a potentially life-changing New Year's resolution.

Consider living more simply – We cannot find fulfillment in possessions. They add nothing to our self-worth. Jesus blessed the "poor in spirit" in his Sermon on the Mount; and Saint Francis of Assisi urged us to live with only what was necessary, for that is how we begin to find God. We all know far too many people who are owned by their possessions rather than the other way around. Once things are clung to, hoarded, they are no longer blessings, but burdens.

Get healthy – For the past several decades, studies have shown that most people in North America are accelerating their own decline into premature old age and death owing to poor diet and lack of physical activity. Be a good steward of your body. As applicable, plan on a complete overhaul of your diet and exercise habits.

(And, finally, two recommendations we all need to hear...)

Don't give up – People most often give up on their New Year's resolutions a few weeks into the year because of perfectionism and unrealistic expectations. So take it slow, be kind to yourself and keep trying. Resist the urge to throw your hands up and quit. You will succeed only through small, manageable changes over time.

Turn to the Lord – Ask the Lord for guidance, strength and perseverance in achieving your resolutions. In his letter to the Philippians, Saint Paul writes: "I can do everything through Him who gives me strength" (Phil4:13). If God is truly the center of our New Year's resolutions, you

will have a much better chance for success. Indeed, may your new year be filled with wonderful opportunities to grow, and serve and love and celebrate God's calling of you in Christ Jesus.

Grace, peace, and joy in this Year of Our Lord, 2025,