

newhope news

Lutheran Church - Agoura Hills

January, 2024

“Do not remember the former things, or consider the things of old. I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert.” (Isaiah 43:18-19)

As we step into January, there is a mistake that I will be making all month long: writing “2023” on all of my checks. It takes me forever to convince myself that we have stepped into a new year. How can it be 2024 already? That doesn’t seem right!

Even small changes can be tough to make, like writing down the correct date. It is not that I dislike change, but rather I get stuck in my routine. I’ve paid so many bills in 2023 that it is hard to switch to a new number. It is not easy to start a new way of doing things.

But yet, as we see in this reading from Isaiah, God is always making things new. God wants to work transformation in our lives, in our relationships, and in our church. Christ seeks to pull us closer and to help us walk the path of love. Every day we are being formed and reformed by God.

In honor of that, our church’s governing board (the church council) will be reading Five Practices of Fruitful Congregations by Robert Schnase this year. The book outlines five pillars of vibrant churches: radical hospitality, passionate worship, intentional faith development, risk-taking mission and service, and extravagant generosity.

New Hope used this book a number of years back, and the congregation found it a powerful way to focus their vision. But so much has changed since then! As we step into 2024, we will be looking at this book again to explore how God is working with us now. Schnase encourages churches to connect with the Holy Spirit and try out new forms of ministry. We want to connect to our community and do God’s work in the world. God has loved us, so now we go out to share that love.

You’ll be hearing more about these five practices in future sermons. But for this newsletter article, I just want to pass along a simple message: be excited! God is doing powerful work at New Hope. And we, as a congregation, want to lean into God’s love. God is always making things new, and we seek to be a part of it.

Peace,

Pastor Steve Simpson



From Deacon Lynn

“God is doing powerful work at New Hope. And we, as a congregation, want to lean into God’s love. God is always making things new, and we seek to be a part of it.”

That is how Pastor Steve ended his newsletter article this month, and I’m excited to watch how New Hope will follow God in new and different paths.

I know that our family is definitely following a new and uncharted path going into 2024. Some of you have already heard that Joe received a cancer diagnosis in late November, and as I write this in late December we still don’t know all the particulars. But we will some time in January and we’ll figure out a way to go forward with God leading, just as New Hope will figure out ways to follow God in exciting ways.

I’ve already learned something new about myself in the last five weeks. I’ve been a whistler as far back as I can remember, especially at church. The last catchy hymn or piece of liturgy that I’ve heard runs thorough my head, and people always know where I am in the building...but only when I’m happy.

I’ve been more challenged than happy the last few weeks and one day I decided to try something. If I whistle when I’m happy, could I boost my mood by whistling? The answer was yes! Especially if I paid attention to the music of the Advent and Christmas season.

When the words wouldn’t come in prayer, music would. It lifted my spirits and reminded me of the promises God makes to all of us; we are never alone, never abandoned. *“For unto us this night is born a Savior who is Christ the Lord.” Luke 2:11.* May we all carry that promise into the new year, whistling as we go.

Blessings,

Deacon Lynn





Let us remember the following people in our prayers.....

Harper Neal had been in the hospital with pneumonia but is now home recovering.

Joe Bulock is in the early stages of cancer treatment.

Laurie Scott fell and broke her wrist.

The Olelewe Family on the death of Friday's mom.

Continued prayers of healing for Evelyn Colby, Sandy and Amanda Cowden, Lou Fiore, Steve Frye, Lyla Grant, Kara Henkel, Vi and Chuck Kemmerer, Joyce Lawson, Jim and Cheryl Merrill, Debbie Niebolt, Ava Grace O'Connell, Cindy O'Hare, Ahoo Pilehvari, Sharon Pryor, Wayne Rickert, Suzanne Sahlie, Madelyn and Stan Swope, Jane Taschereau, and Fred Turner.

Prayers for our servicemen - Heather Brown, Keith Brown, Patrick Clohessy, Farrah Hayden, and Ikenna Olelewe.



Please update your church directory with the following change.

Rob Taschereau

805-358-0295 - cell number



Hot Meal Program

In 2024, New Hope will continue with our participation in

the Harbor House Hot Meal Program. We are assigned the third Monday of each month to provide 50 hot chicken pot pies. These pies are provided by New Hope and just need to be baked and placed in containers and delivered between 4:00-4:15 PM to Holy Trinity Lutheran Church on Avenida de los Arboles' back parking lot area on Monday.

You can sign up to be a permanent baker, or you can sign up to be an "on call alternate." If we get enough sign ups, then each person may only have to do every other month. More hands will make for less work for each of us.

I will have a sign-up sheet after church out in the Narthex....or you can call or text me (805) 405-0518 or email (kreed0753@gmail.com). I will be the one coordinating the assignments through 2024. Thank you for considering helping with this important and appreciated program.

Happy New Year,
Karen Reed

Social Justice Small Group

Our small group meets from 1:30 – 2:30/3 PM, by Zoom, on the 2nd and 4th Wednesdays of the month. We look at our Biblical call in Micah 6:8 to "...do justice, love kindness and walk humbly with our God." We explore the injustices in our world and seek ways to be a voice for the voiceless, find ways to help right wrongs, and show God's love for those in need. If you are interested in social justice issues, please contact Karen Ingram for the Zoom information.



Undecorate the Church

Saturday, January 6th will be the day for our congregation to take down our Christmas decorations at 10:00 AM. We had such a wonderful group putting them up and hope we are as lucky for taking down. We're usually done in under an hour! Please come and help if you can. Thank you!

Karen Orefice



Prayer Shawl Ministry

Come by the Amplify Room (behind the kitchen) to our next gathering on Sunday, February 4th at 9:15 AM and see what we're about. This group will not meet in January. We knit, crochet, or loom shawls for those who may be in need of comfort, support or to recognize a celebration or a blessing.



Congregational Meeting

The annual Congregational Meeting to vote on the 2024 Budget is January 28, 2024, following worship. Please mark your calendars and plan to attend this very important meeting.



Congregational Council

Council will be reading and discussing the book 'Five Practices of Fruitful Congregations' by Robert Schnase in 2024. The five practices are: Radical Hospitality, Passionate Worship, Intentional Faith Development, Risk-taking Mission and Service, and Extravagant Generosity. This book and the ideas generated will help move New Hope in a direction to meet the needs of our community, both near and far. We will have various opportunities for everyone at New Hope to participate in the discussion of how we are called to mission and ministry. If you are interested in learning more about the book, please speak with a Council Member.

Council Members

Council said farewell to Robin Martin and Leila Mader, whose Council terms ended December 31, 2023. We also bid farewell to Chuck Titcomb who resigned after serving 4 years on Council. Please thank them for their time, service, and leadership. Terms for incoming Council members officially begin January 1, 2024. We welcome Burnis Reed and Gail McGinnis to their first term and Natalie Larkin for her 2nd term. Council meets at 6:00 PM on the 2nd Tuesday of the month. Meetings are open to all members of New Hope. We would love to see you there.



We need a volunteer to serve as the liaison between the support groups that meet at New Hope and the church office. This person will process the monthly contributions from the groups, coordinate the meeting schedules, inform groups when church activities are happening, etc. The tasks will take 3-5 hours per month. Some computer skills are necessary. If interested, please see Laurie. Thank you!

Giving Options

There are many different ways one can donate to New Hope. In addition to offerings of cash and checks, one can donate electronically via Zelle, Vanco, or PayPal.

One can also donate directly from an IRA to help with a required minimal distribution (RMD)-or donate stocks or funds directly to the church (and avoid capital gains taxes).

Contact the church office if you want more information.



Men's Bible Study and Fellowship

Thursdays at 8:30 AM

Our men's group uses Rev. Andy Stanley's sermons to focus our discussion. We frequently stop the video to discuss our reactions and applications to our faith journey. We are always marveling at how helpful they are in developing spiritual growth.

Recent series included such compelling topics as: Your Integrity: Our World, Not in It to Win It, and Heaven: Who Goes There? Join us when you can. Attend in person in the church library or join us on Zoom.



You are invited to be a part of our 50th Anniversary Timeline!

We would like to include your household on our 50th Anniversary Timeline posted on the bulletin board in the main hallway. Flowers, butterflies and sun bursts are located in the white basket on the bulletin board ledge.

Please choose one, add your household name and the year you first came to New Hope, then pin it closest to date you started attending New Hope.

"You will find what you're looking for. If you look for fear, you're going to find it. If you look for stuff to bum you out, you'll find it. If you look for hope, you will find that."

- Bob Goff



Drop your quarters in the
laundry love jar!

Join New Hope Church in
helping low-income
neighbors in our community
have clean laundry.



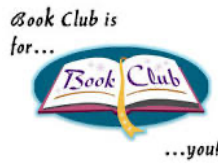
Please place any of these "top priority items of the month" in our Manna Box in the hallway:

1. Personal Care Items: shampoos, conditioner, soap, toothbrush & paste
2. Diapers— all sizes
3. Paper Products: toilet paper, paper towels, tissue
4. Shelf-stable Drinks: juices, oat, almond, soda



January Birthdays

- 5 Avery Mansmann
- 6 Alyssa Taylor
- 10 Pat Henkel
- 15 Tom LaVanne
- 23 Karen Ingram
- 24 Robin Martin



The daytime Book Club will meet at 11:30 AM on Zoom and/or in person on Tuesday, February 6th to discuss "Black Cake - a novel" by Charmaine Wilkerson. Please join us if you can. The future books we are reading are....

March 5th - "Lessons in Chemistry" by Bonnie Garmus

April 2nd - "The Paris Library" by Janet Skeslien Charles

The deadline for all articles for the February newsletter is January 26th. Be sure to email them to gsmcginnis@roadrunner.com

"One of the things I learned the hard way was that it doesn't pay to get discouraged. Keeping busy and making optimism a way of life can restore your faith in yourself."

- Lucille Ball



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