

# newhope news

***Lutheran Church - Agoura Hills***

***December 2025***

*“Now in that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid, for see, I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger.”*

*(Luke 2:8-12)*

Christmas is right around the corner, and you see signs of it everywhere. Christmas lights are going up, stores are decorated in red and green, and you hear holiday music wherever you go. For me, there is something comforting and nostalgic about this time of year. It makes me want to wrap myself in a warm blanket, drink some hot chocolate, and appreciate all the grandeur. I am looking forward to seeing who has the best Christmas lights in my neighborhood this year!

All of these Christmas celebrations are wonderful. They can connect us to each other and bring back good memories. At the same time, we should also remember that the first Christmas was very different. Mary and Joseph struggled to find a place to stay. There were no decorations or hot chocolate. Only a few people showed up to celebrate that first night: a group of shepherds. And then Jesus was placed in a manger, which is a trough meant for animal feed.

It was truly a humble night, and it was not what most people expected for the birth of a savior. But this is how God chose to enter the world. Why? Because the Lord wants to meet us where we are. In the moments when we feel low, like Mary and Joseph struggling to find a place to stay, we know that God is with us.

Christ was born in the messiness of our world, wrapped in simple bands of cloth. That shows us something powerful about Jesus: he wants to be as close to us as possible. Jesus is with you on the good days, the bad days, and even just the normal days. A God who was born in a manger can (and will!) show up anywhere.

I wish you a Merry Christmas this year. I pray that it is filled with good memories and wonderful celebrations. And most of all, remember what God has done for you: Christ was born in a manger. Christ loves you.

*Peace,*

*Pastor Steve Simpson*

## From the Deacon



Dear friends at New Hope,

By the time you read this I will be preparing to come back to the congregation regularly. I may not be there every week, but most weeks. Answers to questions I've gotten in the last few months:

- Yes, I'm still a deacon...a retired deacon, but still a deacon. The only thing I'm not is your deacon. At New Hope I'm just another person worshipping like you are.
- No, I won't be going straight back to the things I did before June 1. Other people have picked most of those duties up quite well, and I'm happy to see that. What I'll mostly do is things I really enjoy that I haven't been able to do much, like sing with the choir.
- Yes, I will probably come back to other things besides Sunday morning worship that I have been a part of in the past. I'm still weighing which ones I'll pick up, most likely after Christmas.
- Yes, I may lead worship once in a while, and perhaps even preach once in a while, just as others in the congregation, like Pastor Jennie, Terry Paulson and Karen Ingram occasionally.

Thank you all for keeping in touch while respecting my privacy while I started figuring out just what retirement means. I'm still figuring out parts of that, but it's been good so far.

Deacon Lynn



**CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICE AT NEW HOPE**

**WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 24TH - 5:30 PM**

**Special music, Christmas carols, Holy Communion,  
and candle lighting!**



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

Mary Ann Fiore and family on the passing of Lou.

Continued prayers of healing for Joe Bulock, Steve Chew, Sandy Cowden, Mariella Edgar, Joy Elazary, Suzie Frye, Lyla Grant, Ben and Kara Henkel, Vi and Chuck Kemmerer, Beverly Larkin, Joyce Lawson, Dorr and Joan Looman, Elinor Martin, Katie Jo McCarthy, Jim and Cheryl Merrill, Katie Murray, Renee Olmstead, Jerry Orefice, Karen Reed, Wayne Rickert, Madeline Swope, Don and Ardy Tamburro, and Jane Taschereau.

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



We rejoice with Wayne Rickert on the birth of his great-grandson, Nolan Thomas. He was born on November 1st. Parents are Wayne's granddaughter, Lauren and her husband Ben.

Gary and Gail McGinnis became great-grandparents to Haven Jayne McGinnis on November 14th. Parents are their grandson Ryan and wife Taylor.

### **Thank you from Joe Bulock - Our Council President**

Thank you to everyone that volunteers on church activities. From the Sunday related Worship planning, altar care, singing, Sunday School, and AV; to the endowment, finance, and counting

done behind the scenes; to organizing the Bible studies and small groups. You all make up the church.

October and November Council Meeting Highlights -

\* Council discussed the follow up to the Congregational meeting and the Stewardship Luncheon.

\* The four grants recommended by the Endowment committee were approved. Grants will be paid to Luther Glen, Manna, Cancer Support Group and Many Mansions.

\* Council has started working on the 2026 budget.



### **Social Justice Small Group**

Thank you for your overwhelming generosity in response to the drive held last month for Friends of the Fieldworkers (FOF). Several trunks and back seats were filled with nonperishable food items, toilet paper, paper towels, and more and taken to the FOF office for distribution to the families in need. Ventura County farm workers work so hard to put fresh food on our tables, and you responded to their need for food at this difficult time for them. Gracias.

The Social Justice small group meets by Zoom on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Wednesdays of each month from 2 - 3 PM. You are welcome to join us as we discuss social injustices and look for ways to respond to God's call to speak out against injustice and help our neighbors. Please contact Karen Ingram to receive the link.

## **First Monday Prayer Gathering**

Please join us in the Prayer Chapel on December 1st from 5 - 6 PM. Our hour of prayer begins with prayers for those on our Sunday prayer list and the prayer chain, followed by our personal prayers (silently or aloud). We will then pray that the joy of Christ's birth and the Peace He brought into our world be felt by all. Since Mary and Joseph searched for a place to shelter pending His birth, we will also pray for those who are homeless and seeking safe shelter.

On January 5th we'll be praying for God's blessings in the new year, and for racial equality. On February 2nd we will pray for God's love to be felt around the world.



### **Bread Breakers**

A new small group is forming, so if you like to try new restaurants or want some company while you dine, Bread Breakers is for you. We will meet at least once a month for lunch and conversation. Watch for the sign-up sheet in the narthex this month for our first outing in January.

## **Financial Update**

Thank you for your continued generosity in 2025! Your giving through October amounted to \$338,300. Our expenditures were \$332,447. Both donations and spending are tracking with the budget, and we still anticipate a deficit at the end of the year. Contact John Bell if you have any questions.



## Church Labyrinth to Be Created on December 6th

The morning we gather to decorate the church for the Christmas season, we will also be creating our church Labyrinth in the back patio. We have the stencil and only need people to help paint the outline used. For those not acquainted with labyrinths, they are patterns that serve as a spiritual tool for prayer, reflection, and contemplation. It involves a single path leading to a central point point. It promises to be another way for members to expand their own Christian worship and spiritual practice. This is part of a Thrivent Action Team project, and you will also get a free Thrivent T-Shirt. More information will follow, but we welcome you to help make this happen.

### Help Create Our Church Labyrinth!

No experience needed—just helping hands to paint the stencil outline.



December  
6<sup>th</sup>  
following  
“Deck  
the Halls”

Labyrinths offer a peaceful path for prayer and reflection.  
Join us in shaping this meaningful space for worship on our patio.





# HOLIDAY HAPPENINGS

## Help Decorate the Church

Please join us for a fun New Hope tradition as we decorate the church for Christmas on Saturday, December 6th at 10 AM. (Please note time change from the November newsletter).

Karen Orefice

## Women's Advent Gathering in the sanctuary

**Monday, December 8th - 6:30 PM**

Let us come together for our annual Advent WELCA (Women of the ELCA) gathering.

Make a fun gnome craft to gift yourself or a loved one.  
Share in Advent devotions together.  
And a WELCA business meeting.

Dessert and drinks will be provided.  
So important and wonderful to ground the Advent season  
in community and God's love incarnate!  
We look forward to seeing you all.



## Annual Christmas Dinner

**Sunday, December 14th**

Mark your calendars for Sunday, December 14th at 5:30 PM. Santa Claus will visit with the children at 5:45 PM, followed by a delicious turkey dinner. Don't miss out on a memorable evening with your church family. Be sure to sign up so we know how many to prepare food for.



# *First Monday*

Prayer Gathering

*We will meet in  
the Prayer Chapel  
Monday, December 1st  
5-6p.m.*

New Hope

## Donate to the Altar Flower Fund

Let us recognize your special  
someone or event during our  
worship service announcements  
and in our newsletter

Dedicate flowers online at:

[www.newHopeAgoura.org/  
altar-flower-donations](http://www.newHopeAgoura.org/altar-flower-donations)



## Adopt a Family



**Order  
Gift Cards this Sunday**

November 30<sup>th</sup> is the last day to order



A graphic for the Prayer Shawl Ministry. On the left, the title "Prayer Shawl Ministry" is written in a cursive font, with "knit, loom, crochet, & pray" below it. To the right of the text is a red ball of yarn with knitting needles and a small red heart. On the right side of the graphic is a close-up photo of hands knitting a multi-colored shawl.

*Prayer Shawl Ministry*  
*knit, loom, crochet, & pray*

*Created to comfort and support those in need or to celebrate special events*

*For more information go to:*

[NewHopeAgoura.org/ministries/prayer-shawl-ministry/](http://NewHopeAgoura.org/ministries/prayer-shawl-ministry/)

We will meet on Sunday, December 7th at 9:15 AM.

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Our quilting group meets every other Thursday,  
from 9:30a.m to 1p.m.

We will meet again on December 4th

See Kathy Rogers for more information about this ministry,  
or how you can donate to the cost of materials.





New Hope Women's Annual  
**WELCA Advent Gathering**  
December 8<sup>th</sup> at 6:30pm

The evening will include:

- ★ Making a fun gnome craft
- ★ Share in Advent devotions together.
- ★ A WELCA business meeting

Dessert and drinks will be provided.





*Serving others...*



newHope

## Food Drive

FILL OUR MANNA BOX WITH  
NON-PERISHABLE FOOD ITEMS

JOIN US IN HELPING MANNA FIGHT  
HUNGER IN OUR COMMUNITY

Manna  
CONEJO VALLEY FOOD BANK



*Hot Meal Program*  
the 3<sup>rd</sup> Monday of each month

**Volunteer to bake & deliver  
pot pies to Holy Trinity  
church. Pies & supplies are  
provided by New Hope.**

*Sign-up Sunday in the Narthex!*



New Hope Church participates in the Harbor House Hot Meal Program by providing 50 hot chicken pot pies each month. Our New Hope volunteers bake the pies then deliver them to Holy Trinity Lutheran Church on the 3rd Monday of each month, between 4:00 - 4:30 PM. Emails to follow. Thank you to all. The frozen pies and supplies are provided by New Hope. Any questions, text Karen Reed at (805) 405-0518.



newHope  
Lutheran  
Church

Helping neighbors in  
our community have  
**clean laundry**



*Drop your quarters in the Laundry Love jar!*

The cost of washing is \$2.50 for small loads and up to \$6.50 for large washers. Drying time is \$.25 per 5 minutes.

God bless you for your prayers and continued support of Laundry Love, helping the needy in our community! Volunteers are also appreciated! See Burnis Reed for more information.

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### ITEMS NEEDED FOR MANNA THIS MONTH

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

**Canned Pasta Sauce**

**Canned Refried Beans**

**Broth - Canned or Soft Sided Carton**

**Instant Ramen**

**Instant Mashed Potatoes**

**Canned Soup - any kind**

**Canned meat - Chicken or Spam**

**Coffee or Tea or Hot Chocolate**

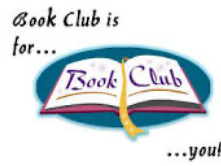
**Condiments - Mayonnaise, Ketchup, Mustard, etc.**

**Cereal**



**Manna**  
CONEJO VALLEY FOOD BANK





## December Birthdays

- 5 Vi Kemmerer
- 6 Shannon Mader
- 14 Laurie Scott
- 20 Gail McGinnis  
Suzanne Sahlie
- 25 Holly Dolliver
- 26 Jerry Orefice
- 29 Jeffrey Rausch
- 30 Sonja Speer



The daytime Book Club will meet at 11:30 AM on Zoom and/or at church on December 2nd to discuss "Running with Sherman" by Christopher McDougall. The future books we are reading are...

February 3rd - "Broken Country" by Clare Leslie Hall

March 3rd - "The Personal Librarian" by Marie Benedict and Victoria Christopher Murray

*The deadline for the January newsletter is December 22nd. Be sure to email them to [gsmcginnis@roadrunner.com](mailto:gsmcginnis@roadrunner.com)*

"For every failure, there's an alternative course of action. You just have to find it. When you come to a roadblock, take a detour.

- Mary Kay Ash



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