

**Letter of Hope
December 2016**

The Joy
of CHRISTMAS
CELEBRATE THE SEASON

**at
House of Hope Lutheran Church**

CHRISTMAS EVE

Saturday, December 24

4:00pm Family Worship with Communion

10:00pm Candlelight Worship with Communion

CHRISTMAS DAY

Sunday, December 25

9:00am Christmas Worship with Communion

Rejoice! A Savior is Born!

+ **Pastor's Letter** +

Dear Friends of House of Hope,

This time of year is a unique one. The weather is getting colder, the days are getting shorter, and, this year, the conversations are full of the election, division, fear. Into this dark season, we Christians celebrate Advent: a season of waiting, a season of expectation, a season of hope. This play of darkness and light, of fear and hope, is one that Christians have explored for centuries. Jan Richardson, a Christian poet, writes of Advent this way in her book *Night Visions* (Wanton Gospeller Press, Orlando Florida 1998; janrichardson.com):

“tell it as a story
about darkness
giving birth to
light, about
seemingly end-
less waiting, and
about that which
lies at the end of
all our waiting.”

Darkness and winter can be a difficult time. Holidays can be hectic, full of family that may or may not get along, and each day seems to hold a task-list miles long. But, this time can also be a place of healing, of growing, of turning toward God. Because, as Christians, we remember that our God comes as light. “The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it” (John 1:5). We remember that our all-powerful God, comes to us on Christmas as a little baby who will grow up as a human being. We find great hope and solidarity in the story that we tell each year: that our God comes to us, to earth, to be among us and to live as we do. God comes in this hectic, dark, cold time to show us that “nothing will be impossible with God” (Luke 1:37).

This dark time does not need to be one of despair, Richardson continues in her poem writing that

“darkness can
become the
tending place
in which our
longings for
healing, justice,

and peace grow
and come to
birth.”

So, in this time of year, we embrace this darkness, this season of winter, this time of expectation. We allow our hope to grow as we look for God and listen for what God is calling us to do. In this divisive time, we look for what is being born in our world. We look for how Jesus comes in our life. We share this love of God, we hope for a new year and a new season of joy.

Blessings on your Advent and may your Christmas be full of joy!
Pastor Gretchen



Advent Services - Wednesday Evenings

Wednesdays at 6:30pm (with soup suppers at 5:30), join us to delve into the Advent Season as we await the birth of our Lord Jesus. Each week, we'll have a skit featuring a Bible story and then some time to reflect on this story at prayer stations around the sanctuary. Join us to explore fear and peace, confusion and clarity, doubt and trust, and curiosity and wonder.

DECEMBER FORUMS . . .

Dec. 4—Christmas Cookie Reception
Dec. 11—Education Ministry Team
Dec. 18—Christmas Carol Sing
Dec. 25—MERRY CHRISTMAS!

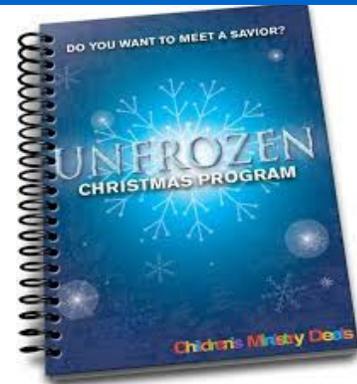
Stewardship Corner

Thank you all for your participation in Consecration Sunday. Our guest preacher, Grace Duddy Pomroy, gave us a new way to look at the parable of the Good Samaritan. We submitted our Estimate of Giving Cards as an act of worship and followed it all with a wonderful brunch. The 73 families that pledged on Consecration Sunday increased their pledges from 2016 by a total of \$40,000! That is fantastic.

That is a great segue into the topic for this month - Jesus' warning to us that we cannot serve God and money. (Matthew 6:24) Wealth poses a huge threat to one's relationship with Jesus. When one has wealth, one is tempted to trust in that wealth, instead of trusting in Jesus. Those of us who are wealthy (and that includes all of us when compared to third-world countries) often try to trust both money (by trying to create financial security) and to trust God (for our spiritual and eternal life needs). According to Jesus, though, we can't have it both ways.

The Bible does not say that money is in and of itself evil. I Timothy 6:10 states that "The love of money causes all kinds of trouble. Some people want money so much that they have given up their faith and caused themselves a lot of pain." Jesus doesn't want us to fall into the trap of believing that we are nothing without money. If we do believe that, we are trusting in something other than Jesus.

The Bible offers us a way to start the process of overcoming this threat to our relationship with Jesus. It is generous giving. God has blessed the wealthy with material items, not so that they may hoard things for themselves, but rather use that wealth to benefit those who have material needs. One thing that we can do to is to recognize the duty of wealth and give generously of that which God has entrusted to us. By giving money away generously we put money in its proper place and place our trust with the only one ultimately worthy of that trust, Jesus.



**Children's Christmas Program
UNFROZEN!**
Come join us during worship on Sunday,
December 4th, to watch our kids act out the
Christmas Story in a fun new way. Bring a
dozen cookies to share for the cookie
reception afterwards!



YOUTH & YOUNG ADULTS!
After the Christmas Carol Sing at church on
Sunday, December 18th, let's go out to lunch
and then go caroling at the local nursing
homes. This is a great time for us to get
together as a group, to celebrate Christmas,
and to share our joy with our neighbors!
6-12 graders and all college-aged and
20-somethings are invited to join in!
Email Pastor Gretchen (grode@hohlc.org)
for more info!



November 27 we started a new church year as we entered the season of Advent. This season serves a deeper liturgical purpose than simply helping us resist the commercialization of the holiday season and more reverently celebrate Christmas. Advent is indeed a season of anticipation, but also of revolution. The readings in Advent prepare us to receive not only a new baby, but a new world where God's justice and mercy reign. So in Advent we not only prepare for the coming of the Christ but we take the time to reflect on what this means for us and the world. We all know how the story turns out but during Advent let us turn away from all the talk of Christmas and the commercialization of it going on around and us give ourselves a chance to reflect and prepare. Over these four Sundays, the arc of the story is clear: the darkness is giving way to the light, the world is being reborn, and God is on the way.

During these seasons of Advent and Christmas our music groups will be offering a wide variety of music to help us prepare and then rejoice. On December 4, the Sunday School Children's program will give us a perspective of the season through children's eyes. Sunday, December 11, is our Service of Lessons and Carols. The Hope Bells will be ringing *O Come, O Come, Emmanuel* by Anna Laura Page and *Gentle Mary Laid Her Child* by Sandra Eithun. The Hope Chorale will be singing *O Lord of Light Who Made the Stars* by Daniel Schwandt, *Break Forth, O Beauteous Heavenly Light* by J. S. Bach, *The King Shall Come* by Robert A. Hobby, *O Day of Peace* by Hal Hopson, *The Light in the Night* by John C. Reim, *Three Great Kings* by Russel Schultz-Widmar. Sunday, December 18, Hope Chorale will sing *We Wait for Thee* by Victor C. Johnson. For our Christmas Eve service at 10:00 p.m. the Hope Bells will ring *Curoo, Curoo* (Carol of the Birds) by Tammy Waldrop and the Hope Chorale will sing *Child of Mary* by Allen Pote and *Joy to the World* by Aaron David Miller. Sunday, December 18, we will have a Christmas Carol sing-a-long during the forum time where all of you get to be the musicians for a while.

George



ISAIAH CAUCUS MEETING

ISAIAH's Minneapolis and northwest suburbs are joining together Saturday, December 3 from 10am-2pm at New Creation Church, 1922 N 25th Ave, Minneapolis.

The agenda of the meeting includes:

- Laying out the path forward
- Creating intentional deep relationships across our congregations
- Deepening the sanctuary strategy
- Continuing on our path to end poverty profiteering
- Creating a hate crime response effort
- Staying grounded and committed in our prophetic faith.





HOLIDAY FOOD BASKETS FOR NEAR & PRISM

Once again we will be collecting items for the holiday food baskets distributed by NEAR and PRISM to their client families. Below are lists of the holiday food items requested and also of everyday needs at the food shelves. Please bring your donations to the table in the narthex. And, as always, thank you for your generosity in giving to help make the holidays happier for our neighbors in need!

HOLIDAY NEEDS

- Stuffing Mix
- Pumpkin & Yams
- Pineapple & Cranberries
- Fruit Cocktail
- Cookies & Candy
- Canned Oranges
- Pie Mix (any kind)
- Canned Milk
- Corn & Green Beans
- Money to buy Meat
- Gift Certificates

EVERYDAY NEEDS

- Peanut Butter & Jelly
- Pancake Mix & Syrup
- Crackers & Cookies
- Jello & Pudding
- Pork & Beans
- Rice, Sugar & Flour
- Coffee, Tea, Cocoa
- Canned & Boxed Meals
- Cereal—All Kinds
- Soups—All Kinds
- Paper Goods/Cleaning Supplies

NEAR Cap & Mitten Tree

Please add new caps and mittens or gloves to the tree in the narthex so we can help families in need stay warm this winter.



It Took a Village . . . to host the 36th Annual Lutefisk Dinner, and we did it! The Lutefisk Committee members cannot thank each and every one of you enough. Whether it was donations of food or crafts, or helping fry rosettes and fatted man—without the village helping, the dessert trays would have been sparse. With so many helping hands, the dinner was nearly flawless. From the wait staff to the cooks and dishwashers, we almost looked professional. So stand up and pat yourselves on the back—you made us proud! Many thanks! —The Lutefisk Committee

CHRISTMAS GIFT TABLE



We are collecting Christmas gifts again this year for NEAR and PRISM and for the Plymouth Christian Youth Center. A table

for the gifts is set up in the narthex. Check the table for a list of items that are needed by each agency. You have been so very generous in past years in helping to make the holidays happier for families in need. We thank you and ask for your continued support.



SENIOR MINISTRY EVENT
Wednesday, December 14
11:30am

First Lutheran Church, Crystal
 Potluck Lunch (bring a favorite dish to share) with free will offering. Leo Alexander will be providing Christmas music for our enjoyment.



CELEBRATING THIS MONTH

BIRTHDAYS

- 12/1 - Madeline Halupnick
Matthew Wittmer
Michael Wittmer
- 12/7 - Jane Griffith
Bill Morrill
- 12/9 - Marty Gorsky
Tom Haney
- 12/10 - Mandy Scott
- 12/11 - Ken Gorsky
Harris Haney
Arlen Johnson
- 12/13 - Christine Beck
Ian Wold
- 12/14 - Andy Fretag
- 12/19 - Mark Vinge
- 12/20 - Carol Darg
- 12/21 - Steve Nightengale
- 12/23 - Pat Carlson
Theresa Henderson
- 12/24 - Colleen Nightengale
- 12/28 - Lynette Neus
- 12/31 - Ben Sundeen

If you have a birthday or anniversary in December and are not on the lists please contact Barb in the church office (763-533-3341).

Our Church Family . . .

Confirmed . . .

Ceci Wold on October 30

Funeral . . .

Marie Fetterley on November 21 at House of Hope

Bonfire Ministry *Families Moving Forward*

“Beacon's *Families Moving Forward* program offers families experiencing homelessness hospitality, emergency shelter and a path to home with support for stability.” Our Bonfire Ministry is blessed to be able to be a part of this program in providing hospitality and housing for some of these families in transition. In 2017 we will have three separate weeks where we will host families at St. James Lutheran Church in Crystal: January 22-29, April 16-23 and September 3-10. Preparations for hosting in January are now underway! We will begin volunteer sign-up in early December. This year we encourage members from each of the three Bonfire congregations to sign up for any of the seven nights. This is a wonderful opportunity to work with our neighbors and promote fellowship between our Bonfire congregations. If you have a specific group that wants to go together on one night, for example, youth, musicians, a ministry team or ushers, you could sign up the whole group for that evening. Each night will require that we have several volunteers to provide food, work in the kitchen, welcome the families, act as hosts for the family before, during and after the meal time, and entertain children. We will also need individuals to help setup and cleanup before and after the guests' week at St. James.

On January 8, at 1:30 p.m. there will be a *Families Moving Forward* training session at St. James. At this meeting volunteers will be informed on what it means to be a host congregation. There will also be a tour of the St. James facilities and other building logistics for those that will be volunteering at the church. At this training, the volunteer teams for each night will have time to meet and to plan who will undertake the various roles, what meal they will prepare and after-dinner activities for the guests.

Thank you for considering this opportunity! If you have any questions, please contact Erin Paulsen, espaulsen6616@msn.com or 763-670-5828

**ANNUAL
REPORT**

**IT'S THAT TIME OF
YEAR AGAIN!!**

Please email or turn in your 2016 annual report to Barb by January 4th!
Thank You!



SERVICE TEAM NEWS . . . Team #6 will be responsible for January 2017. They will meet on Sunday, December 11, 2016, after the worship service (10:00am) to volunteer for the month's tasks. Please come to the meeting and sign up for as many tasks as you can. **SUPPORT YOUR TEAMMATES BY ATTENDING THE MEETING.** The members of Team #6 are:

Muriel Armstrong	Tom & Becky Broeckel
George & Linda Brooke	Jim & Lynn Bursell
Carol Darg	Gale Friedrich
Richard & Shirley Fulmer	
Luis Gonzalez Alvarado & Jennifer Luke Gonzalez	
Burt & Eunice Gran	Mark & Jill Jensen & Carter
Sharee Johnson	Pat Kukachka
Kim Larson	Gene & Linda Moen
Bill Morrill	Barbara Nelson
Erin Paulsen	Loretta Quick
Stan & Connie Stensaas	John & Martha Thompson
Joe & Debbie Trombley	Glen & Karen Vetter
Tim & Leida Wold & Ceci & Sofia	
George Zirbes & Peggy Anderson	

SERVICE TEAMS CALENDAR— Please mark your calendars with the date for your next opportunity to sign up for your service team month. We encourage you to support your team by signing up for as many tasks as you can. We appreciate all your help.

Service Team #6 - December 11, 2016
 Service Team #7 - January 8, 2017
 Service Team #1 - February 12, 2017
 Service Team #3 - March 12, 2017
 Service Team #5 - April 9, 2017

Your Service Team Task Force

PARISH NURSE HOURS

Thursdays—11am-1pm
 3rd Sunday—9:00am-12 noon
 Debbie's direct phone number is 612-408-2049
 or call her at the church 763-533-3341
 and leave a voice mail.

House of Hope Staff

Pastor Mark Vinge
mvinge@hohlc.org
 Pastor Gretchen Rode
grode@hohlc.org
 George Brooke
gbrooke@hohlc.org
 Barb Suckerman
office@hohlc.org
 Debbie Haney, Bonfire Parish Nurse
 612-408-2049

Sunday Morning Schedule

FREE Breakfast—8-8:30am
 Worship—9:00am
 Sunday School—10:00am
 Forum/Fellowship—10:00am
 Christ's Kingdom Assemblies
 Ministries—11:00am

Weekly Bible Studies

WEDNESDAY—
 6:30am—Men's Bible Study
 (Country Kitchen)
 10:30am—Wed. AM Bible Study
 (at church)
 7:00pm—CKAM Bible Study
 (at church)

THURSDAY—
 9:30 am—Women's Bible Study
 (at church)

Mission Statement

Living out God's grace we seek to be neighbors to all.

The deadline for the January issue of the *Letter of Hope* is December 20th.

House of Hope Lutheran Church
4800 Boone Avenue North
New Hope, MN 55428



HOUSE OF HOPE LUTHERAN CHURCH

A Reconciling Congregation

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Phone: (763) 533-3341 FAX: (763) 531-9006

www.hohlc.org

www.facebook.com/houseofhopemn

House of Hope Lutheran Church is a *Reconciling in Christ* community. All are welcome to worship, to hear the Good News, to receive the sacraments, and to participate fully in fellowship and service. God loves us unconditionally and we endeavor to be a place where that same hospitality is extended to everyone. Following Christ we seek justice and reconciliation among all peoples. We welcome everyone, without exception and regardless of sex, race, national origin, sexual orientation, gender identity, physical and mental ability, age, or station in life, faith or creed. Each person is a unique creation of God and, through Grace, is a child of God. We invite you to come and worship with us.