

Tidings of Hope

March 2024



Hope Lutheran Church
Ladysmith, Wisconsin

Tidings of Hope

Information & Inspiration
March 2024

A New Path of Discipleship Pastor Christopher Martin

(Jesus said) All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit; teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” (Matthew 28:18b-20)

Earlier this week, I participated in a webinar in which the speaker was Thom Rainer, the author of the book Autopsy of a Deceased Church during which he shared some new, updated statistics on the topic of dying and deceased churches. During the webinar, Dr. Rainer spoke about the decline of what we call “Cultural Christianity” and how it has led to the numerical decline that many churches are currently experiencing. To define that term “Cultural Christianity” in its most simple form, there was a time in our culture, where if you wanted to be accepted and respected in the community, whether it be in business, the political sphere, academically, or anywhere, there was an expectation that you would be aligned with a church (and in some communities, there was a specific church anyone who was or wanted to be anyone in town was expected to be a part of). Now notice, you didn’t necessarily need to believe anything that the church was teaching about God or about Jesus, you just had to somehow be affiliated with it and have some level of activity. Thus, the push was to gain as many “members” as you could and that was the measure of your church’s success (or in some cases perceived failure) in its ministry. It was defined by numbers such as membership, average attendance, the square footage and location of your building, and the size of your budget.

Today, that is no longer the case. “Cultural Christianity” had been slowly dying for many years as our society has become increasingly secular. This is reflected in these statistics Dr. Rainer shared in his webinar with regard to the median worship attendance for the average American church. In 2000, the median (midpoint) of worship attendance for an American church was 137. By 2010, that number had declined to 105, and by 2020 (prior to COVID measures), that number was down to 65. Today, that number is now estimated to be 40. Why the sudden change, in particular over the last four years? When COVID closed the doors of many churches to in person worship, many of those who were nominally committed to the local church realized that their lives in the community didn’t suffer because they were no longer attending church, to where when churches reopened, the “Cultural Christians” were not returning.

Why do I bring this up, and how does this relate to the topic of discipleship you ask? First, it allows us to “get real” with ourselves and our current circumstances. Hope Lutheran Church in 2024 is not the same church as it was 20 years ago, 10 years ago, or I’ll even say five years ago. If our focus is on simply “gaining new members”, we are setting ourselves up for failure, as we no longer live in a culture where church attendance and participation is expected or assumed. And the reality of it is that nowhere in the Bible do you hear Jesus speak about membership the way we often define it in the life of the church today. In fact, when Jesus challenges some who had been following Him in John 6, looking to Jesus to give them things for this world, and find out He’s here to be the Bread of Life, to give His flesh and blood to be our Savior from sin, death, and the power of Satan, and bring us to live for God instead of ourselves, many turned away and no longer followed Him. Yet, in Acts 2, when the church in the days following Pentecost, having only the Word and the Sacraments to go on, a church that lacked buildings, money, technology, or programs, we read that church was growing day by day as people shared the good news of the Gospel with others and lived as followers of Christ in their daily lives!

As we move forward, our focus as a church must be on being disciples of Jesus, who make disciples of Jesus. We are in a time where we, as followers of Jesus, must be willing to reach out of our comfort zones, and be ready to be evangelists in our life, being

willing to share the Gospel of Jesus through our thoughts, our words, and our actions.

So what does this look like? Our Path Forward Committee at its most recent meeting agreed upon a preliminary vision of what a disciple at Hope Lutheran Church would look like. The end result would be a follower of Jesus who: prays daily, worships weekly, reads the Bible daily, serves at and beyond Hope, develops spiritual friendships, and gives generously of time, talent, and treasure to extend the Kingdom of God.

By coming to this vision of what a disciple of Jesus at Hope Lutheran Church would look like, and what we seek to replicate in everyone who becomes a Christ-follower with us through our ministries, the Path Forward Committee has hit a significant milestone in the long, and often difficult, road of congregational renewal. Over the next two weeks, you will see this vision on the white board in the fellowship hall. I want to encourage each and every one of you, whether you are here at the church, or reading this article at home, to start thinking about the question “now that we have identified a vision of the outcome of our disciple-making ministry, what can we do here at Hope to help this vision become a reality?” This is where the hard work continues. I encourage you to think about and discuss that question, even if it means we may have to face some significant change in our programs or our emphasis moving forward.

To help you get started, we at Hope already provide a tool to help you fulfill one extremely important area of this vision. On the calendar page of this newsletter, you will find a second calendar on the back side of the page that has a list of daily Scripture readings from the NALC’s “Devoted to Prayer” daily prayer and reading guide so that we as a family of faith can be reading the same lessons each day. You can have each day’s lessons sent to you as a text message to your phone by texting ReadingTheWord to 24251 and follow the instructions given. There is also more information on how to get started with a reading and prayer program at this link on the NALC’s website: <https://thenalc.org/worship-resources/devoted-to-prayer-introduction/>

Indeed, we live in an ever-changing world. And it is easy to be down on ourselves because our lives within our church are not the same

as they used to be years ago. However, I truly believe that God is giving His Church, both here at Hope and beyond, an opportunity to renew ourselves and our commitment to Him, and to be more effective witnesses of the Gospel, by removing from our lives the baggage that went along with “Cultural Christianity” and freeing us to develop a closer walk with Him, a deeper faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, and to equip us for much more effective, life-changing ministry to our community and the world in the years to come. As we look to the present and future, we realize Hope will not be the church she once was at any point in her past, but that doesn’t mean our best days are behind us. I believe our best days are yet to come. Let’s follow the prompting of the Holy Spirit, be willing to let go of things that are not helping us become passionate disciples of Jesus, and let’s be open to the new, exciting things God has in store for our future as we follow our Lord Jesus this Lenten season to His cross, the empty tomb, and to whatever He has in store for us in the years to come, as we seek to fulfill the Great Commission, making disciples, followers of Jesus, wherever He leads us to go!

Education & Fellowship Opportunities

Book Discussion: The book discussion group will meet on Sunday, March 17 at 10:30am in the Fireside Room. The book for February is Esther: Royal Beauty by Angela Hunt.

Sunday Morning Study: The Sunday morning “Fruit of the Spirit” Bible study will meet on Sundays, March 3, 10 & 24 at 10:30am in the Fireside Room.

Meal of the Month: The March Meal of the Month will be on Tuesday March 12 at 11:30am at the Ladysmith Family Restaurant. This monthly gathering is an opportunity for members of the congregation to enjoy a meal and time of fellowship while supporting one of our local businesses.

Mission Statement

Hope Lutheran Church is commissioned to make disciples, commanded to love God and others, and committed to serve.



Lent, Holy Week, and Easter Worship Schedule

When the characters in the Passion narrative look at Jesus, what do they see? This year, our theme for our midweek Lenten worship services is “Eyes on Jesus.” As we make our way through Mark’s passion account, we will examine how the various people around Jesus viewed Him—and how we should view Him today. In these special services, we will be “fixing our eyes on Jesus” and what He has done to save us from our sins by His suffering, death, and resurrection.

We are again rotating our Lenten worship services between Hope & Glen Flora Lutheran Churches. Midweek Lenten worship will be held at Hope on March 6 & 20 and at Glen Flora Lutheran Church on March 13. Soup suppers will be served beginning at 5:00pm on March 6, 13, & 20 at the respective church.

March 6 - “Denying Eyes” 6:30pm at Hope
March 13 - “Murderous Eyes” 6:30pm at Glen Flora
March 20 - “Worldly Eyes” 6:30pm at Hope

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Maundy Thursday Worship

March 28 - 6:30pm

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Good Friday Worship

March 29 - 6:30pm

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Easter Sunday, March 31

7:00am & 10:00am

An Easter breakfast will be served on Easter Sunday from 8:00-9:30am. There will be a free-will offering with proceeds benefiting youth ministries.



The fourth GriefShare grief support cycle will begin on Thursday, March 7. GriefShare is a network of 15,000 churches worldwide equipped to offer 13-week non-denominational, faith-based, grief support groups to help people deal with all of the complex feelings after the death of a loved one.

The lay people leading the classes have experienced grief themselves and have gone through special training. A nice feature of the program is that, even though it is a 13-week cycle, each session is self-contained so people do not have to attend in sequence. They can pick up any sessions they missed in the next cycle. Each participant receives a free workbook with activities that can be completed during the week.

Each 90-minute session consists of a 10–15 minute check-in time to discuss the previous week and/or workbook topics, a 30-40 minute DVD presentation by experts in the field of grief, and 25-30 minutes to discuss the DVD topics.

The Hope Lutheran GriefShare sessions will run from 6:00-7:30pm on Thursdays, March 7, 14, and 21 during Lent, and Wednesdays, beginning March 27 through the end of May, except for April 17, which will be re-scheduled for Thursday, April 18.

If you, or someone you know, would like to register for the program, please call the Hope Lutheran Church office at 715-532-7739. Bonnie will take down your contact information and a GriefShare leader will call you back. You can also register online at griefshare.org, just click on "Find a group" and enter the 54848 zip code.

Please keep the facilitators and participants in your prayers as they walk together through the grief journey towards healing.

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"Weeping may tarry for the night, but joy comes with the morning."
Psalm 30:5



Hope Lutheran Church Women

March Meeting: The HLCW will hold their annual Lenten Communion Service & Breakfast on Thursday, March 21 at 9:30am. All Women of Hope are welcome to attend. Hostesses are Josi Hamilton and Lois MacArthur.

February Meeting Notes: Thank you notes were received from the Power House Youth Center, Rusk County Animal Shelter, Bruce School District, and Backpack Food Program. The current HLCW checking account balance is \$8,410.57. Working with Youth Ministry on the St. Patrick's Day Dinner and Easter Breakfast. World Day of Prayer will be held here at Hope on Friday, March 1 at 1:00pm. Pastor installed officers for 2024: Kathy Peterson, president; Lois MacArthur, vice president; Josi Hamilton, treasurer; Lisa Borman, secretary.

Quilting: The quilting group will meet on Tuesday, March 26 beginning at 9:00am. There are jobs for all skill levels. If you can stay for the whole day, please bring a sack lunch. Quilt squares are also available to be sewn at home. Questions? Contact Karen Skeels (715-452-5444).



World Day of Prayer

World Day of Prayer is a worldwide movement of Christian women of many traditions who come together to have a continuing relationship in prayer and service. This year's Rusk County World Day of Prayer service will be held here at Hope on Friday, March 1 at 1:00pm. This year's program is written by the women of Palestine and is titled, "I Beg of You—Bear with One Another in Love" based on Ephesians 4:1-7. Everyone is welcome.

"Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."

Ephesians 4:1-3



St. Patrick's Day Dinner & Pie Auction

Youth Ministry will be serving a corned beef and cabbage dinner on Sunday, March 17 with serving from 5:00-6:00pm. Following the dinner there will be a pie auction. All proceeds from the event will go towards youth ministry. If you have questions, please contact Julie Kammerud.

Youth Ministry

Donuts & Devotions: Youth in grades 6-12 are invited for donuts and devotions on Sunday, March 3 at 10:15am. Friends are always welcome at all Youth Ministry events!

Youth Ministry will be serving the Lenten Soup Suppers, the St. Patrick's Day Dinner, and Easter Breakfast. Questions about these events can be directed to Julie Kammerud.

Sunday School

Sunday School is for children 3-years old through 6th grade. It meets each Sunday from 10:15-11:00am in the education wing. Children will be making resurrection biscuits on Sunday, March 17. There will be no Sunday School on Sundays, March 24 or 31. Sunday School will resume on April 7. The last day of Sunday School for this school year is April 28. It's never too late to join in!

Livestreaming

Our Sunday morning worship services are livestreamed on the Hope Lutheran Church YouTube channel each Sunday and posted to the church's Facebook page. If you would like to sponsor a worship service in honor or memory of a loved one, there is a sign-up sheet on the bulletin board in the narthex. The suggested donation is \$50/service. Proceeds from the livestream sponsorships are used to keep the technology needed for this ministry up-to-date.



FOOD PANTRY

The Hope Lutheran Food Pantry serves those in need throughout Rusk County. The Pantry is open Mondays 1:00-3:00pm, and Fridays 9:30-11:30am.

Volunteers are needed on the first and third Mondays of each month (March 4 & 18) at 9:15am to help unload the Feed My People delivery and to stock shelves.

Donations of non-perishable food items can be dropped off at the church on Sunday mornings or during the week during office hours. Monetary donations can be placed in the offering plate or dropped off at the church office (clearly mark donation for the food pantry).

MANNA Meal

(Meals Available for the Nutritional Needs of All)

This month's MANNA Meal will be held on Thursday, March 21 with serving from 5:00-6:00pm. **Please note this is one week earlier than the usual schedule due to Maundy Thursday.** This is a free meal providing food and fellowship to those in need of either. This month's meal is being served by members of Hope Lutheran.

Scrip

Scrip cards are sold following the worship service most Sundays. These are essentially gift cards. You receive the face value of the card and a percentage is returned to the church by the vendors as a charitable donation. Scrip cards are available for immediate sale for several area businesses and can be ordered from a long list of other vendors. Cards that are special ordered must be paid for when ordering.

Proceeds from the scrip program are used for building and maintenance needs. Please stop by the table in the multi-purpose room to purchase scrip or for more information.

Summary of Council & Committee Action

Leadership Development: The Church Council will attend a “Small & Rural Church” workshop led by Pastor Martin on Saturday, April 20 from 8:00am-2:00pm. This will also be open to members of the congregation who are interested in participating.

Appointments: Council appointed Brian Buchholz, Chris Kammerud, and Burt Zielke to the Audit Committee. Appointments to the Endowment Fund Committee were table until the March Council meeting.

Congregational Care & Outreach: The next GriefShare series begins on March 7. Greeting cards are sent to members celebrating their 80th and up birthdays, as well as to families who are grieving. Visitation to homebound members continues. Next meeting: TBA.

Parish Education: Working with Pastor Martin to schedule First Communion. Beginning planning for VBS. Next meeting: TBA.

Property: Looking at costs to repair cracking in the sanctuary walls. Working on prioritizing the order of upcoming maintenance and repair projects. Next meeting: March 12 at 6:00pm.

Service & Fellowship: Working on the calendar of events for 2024. Next meeting: TBA.

Social Ministries: Did not meet. Next meeting: TBA.
March 12 at 5:30pm.

Worship & Music: Palm fronds for Palm Sunday have been ordered through EcoPalms. Worship Assistant handbook has been updated. Next meeting: March 5 at 6:00pm.

Youth Ministry: Working on Lenten Soup Suppers, St. Patrick’s Day Dinner & Pie Auction, and Easter Breakfast. Brainstorming ideas for mini mission trips this summer. Next meeting: March 4 at 8:15.

Next Council Meeting: March 19 at 6:30pm.

Copies of the full Council minutes are available on the bulletin board in the narthex after they are approved by the Council. Minutes can also be requested by contacting the church office.

Resurrection Biscuits

It is a tradition at Hope Lutheran for the children to make Resurrection Biscuits during Sunday School and Wednesday School prior to Easter. If you would like to make these with your family at home, the recipe follows.

Ingredients

- 1 pkg Pillsbury Grands buttermilk biscuits
- 8 large marshmallows
- 1/4 c melted butter
- 6 Tbsp sugar
- 1 tsp cinnamon

Directions

1. Preheat your oven to 350 degrees. Spray a cookie sheet lightly with cooking spray.
2. On waxed paper, press the rolls into flat circles. As your child is pounding the dough, remind them how Jesus was beaten by the soldiers who had arrested Him.
3. Place a marshmallow in the center of each roll. The marshmallow represents Jesus, pure and white.
4. Pinch the dough around the marshmallow, telling your child that the you are sealing Jesus (marshmallow) in your "tomb" (biscuit) just like the soldiers sealed Jesus' body in His tomb after He died.
5. Roll the marshmallow-filled rolls into round balls.
6. Brush each ball with butter. This wetness is like the tears of sorrow that Jesus' friends cried when He was gone.
7. Mix the cinnamon and sugar together in a small bowl. This represents the dirt and the rocks at the tomb. Sprinkle each ball with the mixture of cinnamon and sugar.
8. Let the rolls rise on your cookie sheet for 30-45 minutes. This waiting time is like Holy Saturday, when we are waiting in anticipation. Then bake them at 350 degrees for 15 minutes, until they are golden brown.
9. Let them cool; serve warm (if served the next day you can microwave a few seconds). Just like the tomb on Easter Sunday, these rolls are empty! Jesus (the marshmallow) is gone.

MARCH WORSHIP ASSISTANTS

3	Ushers Lector Comm. Asst. Acolyte	Kathy Peterson, Aileen Tauchen Bonnie Billings Bradon Martin Tanner Davis
6 Weds	Ushers Lector Acolyte	Nick Sovacool, Aileen Tauchen Nick Sovacool Sophia Kammerud
10	Ushers Lector Comm. Asst. Acolyte	Charlie Holtebeck, Irene Titera Linda Campbell Linda Campbell Izzy Solberg
17	Ushers Lector Comm. Asst. Acolyte	Jerry & Pat McEathron Bonnie Billings Dukerschein Nolan Kammerud
20 Weds	Ushers Lector Acolyte	Nick Sovacool, Aileen Tauchen Aileen Tauchen Sophia Kammerud
24	Ushers Lector Comm. Asst. Acolyte	Gordie & Bev Dukerschein Dukerschein Dukerschein Violet Craker
28 Thurs	Ushers Lector Comm. Asst. Acolyte	Nick Sovacool, Aileen Tauchen Jana Nyhagen Irene Titera Blake Nyhagen
29 Fri	Ushers Lector Acolyte	Nick Sovacool, Irene Titera Irene Titera Bradon Martin
31 7:00	Ushers Lector Comm. Asst. Acolytes	Don & Judy Soyring Nick Sovacool Bradon Martin Nolan Kammerud, Sophia Kammerud
10:00	Ushers Lector Comm. Asst. Acolytes	Gordie & Bev Dukerschein Bonnie Billings Dukerschein Addison Hulle, Izzy Solberg



Deadlines...

Items for the weekly bulletin are due in the church office no later than noon on Wednesday. Items for the March newsletter are due in the church office by Thursday, March 14.

The preferred method of submission is via email (hlcladysmith@gmail.com) or electronic file. Items may also be left in the office mailbox or dropped off at the office during office hours.

CHANGE OF ADDRESS and/or PHONE NUMBER?

If you have had a change in your mailing address, email or phone number, please notify the church office of these changes. Also, in an effort to improve communication we are seeking email addresses for members of the congregation. If you would like to have your email address added to the list, please send it to the church office at hlcladysmith@gmail.com.

CHURCH STAFF

Pastor	Christopher Martin
Church Secretary	Bonnie Billings
Custodian	Rosemary Warwick
Organists	Lisa Borman Karen Tappon Terry Wedwick

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Ladysmith, WI 54848

Church Phone: 715-532-7739

E-Mail Address: hlcladysmith@gmail.com

Website: hlcladysmith.org



Easter Garden

We will once again be using flowering plants to decorate the sanctuary for Easter. If you would like to donate a plant, please complete the form and return it to the church office no later than Sunday, March 24. Plants should be brought to the church no later than noon on Saturday, March 30. Plants can be taken home after the 10:00am worship service on Easter Sunday, March 31.

Name: _____

Phone number: _____

Number of plants: _____

In memory of: _____

In honor of: _____
