



The Newsletter of Hope Lutheran Church—Eau Claire, WI

Hope Lutheran Church

2019—75th Anniversary

December 2019

www.hopechurchec.com

Sundays in December

- Dec. 1 Today we welcome the season of Advent and light the first candle of our Advent Wreath. During worship we'll also welcome our new members.
- Dec. 8 Children's Christmas Program – Our children will present their annual Christmas pageant. This year's theme is "Sing a Song of Christmas." Stay afterwards to enjoy treats at Coffee Connections in Olson Hall.
- Dec. 15 This morning we celebrate the baptism of Hadley Richel. During Coffee Connections, Music Director Gary Polden will be sharing delicious Scandinavian treats.
- Dec. 22 Today is the fourth Sunday in Advent. We'll light all four candles on the wreath as we grow in our expectancy for observing the Nativity of Our Lord.
- Dec. 29 Our worship this morning will include a lovely service of lessons and carols. We'll sing many cherished Christmas songs and hear Bible readings and reflections centering on the message of our Lord's birth.

Christmas Eve Worship

Hope will have two worship opportunities on December 24.

Here is our schedule for Christmas Eve:

- 4:30 p.m. **Family Christmas Service** – This service will include a Children's Time as well as special music and end with a traditional candle lighting.
- 7:30 p.m. **Festival Candlelight Service** – Our senior choir and our bell choir will provide music and the service will end with a traditional candle lighting.



Dear Friends,

Elvis Presley sang about his Blue Christmas. Christmas is a holiday associated with joy and peace. But Christmas can bring sadness and stress instead.

Many things can contribute to a Blue Christmas:

- Grief – Especially in that first year after the loss of a loved one, the Christmas holiday is particularly rough. Memories of joyful Christmases past are reminders of the beloved person no longer here.
- Family Tension – We love our family, but sometimes they drive us crazy! Personality clashes, substance abuse and differing world views can lead to tension and disagreements.
- Financial Stress – Christmas seems to come with a great deal of added financial stress. We stress over the desire or the expectations of purchasing expensive Christmas gifts, for hosting celebrations. Travel at Christmas can add to that financial burden. Overall, we are tempted to spend beyond our means.
- Too Many Commitments – Christmas gatherings, office parties, musical programs, Christmas baking, shopping for presents, travel plans – Christmas can feel like cramming ten pounds of potatoes in a five-pound sack! We end up feeling exhausted and even resentful.
- Loneliness – The Christmas holiday can be especially lonely for the single, the elderly, the newly divorced, and those new to a community.



What can we do? As a faith community, we celebrate Christmas first and foremost by aligning our inner being with the true gift of Christmas: God's word-made-flesh. Christ came to embrace our world in all its pain and sorrow. Christmas isn't about an absence of suffering. The Christmas story and its surrounding circumstances are filled with global turbulence, family strife, loneliness and grief.

Christ came to dwell with us in all our colors, including blue. As we embrace this Prince of Peace, we allow him into our own wounds and suffering. And as his healing presence fills us, we radiate his peace into the world.

This December season, keep your eyes open and hearts alert to those whose Christmas might be shading a little blue. Walk lightly with kindness, and may the peace of Christ dwell within you.

Peace to you,

Pastor Mary

"Don't Lose the Baby"

An Advent Message from Bishop Laurie



An Advent Message From Our Bishop

On the First Sunday of Advent, every year, our family unpacks the wreath. Our tradition is to put an incomplete nativity scene in the center. We use the ceramic figures my mom made for us the first year we were married. The magi are put up on a high shelf until they make their appearance on Epiphany. Mary, Joseph, the shepherds, a few sheep, and an empty manger go in the center to wait.

One of our children would hide the tiny figure of the baby Jesus in a cup in nearby cabinet. Every year I'd worry a little and give a warning, "Remember where you put him, we don't want to lose baby Jesus." They were careful, but I would still worry that we might lose the baby Jesus. Before supper we'd light the blue candles on the Advent wreath and pray "Come, Lord Jesus be our guest." Advent was about waiting to put the baby in the manger. On Christmas Eve, we retrieve the hidden baby Jesus, give a sigh of relief that we haven't lost him, put him in the manger and light the Christ candle.

It's possible to lose baby Jesus in the craziness of Advent. As Christians, surrounded by the most commercialized and secularized holiday of all, we are always in danger of losing Jesus. Not the ceramic Jesus figurine from our nativity set, but losing our way in Advent and never finding the holy in the midst of the hectic; never experiencing the expectant purposeful waiting that brings us to the awe and wonder of Jesus Christ, the baby born in Bethlehem.

Every year I want to issue some motherly WARNING: Don't lose the baby! If you lose the baby, Christmas doesn't make any sense at all. Without the baby, Christmas is a beautifully wrapped box with nothing inside. It is empty of meaning, but most of all it is empty of hope.

I want to issue a motherly CAUTION: Don't lose the baby. If you lose the baby, Christmas doesn't work. It is broken and like a cracked snow globe, the hope leaks out. The world needs Jesus this Christmas more than ever. There are so many broken things in our personal lives, the pain leaks out over grief, loss, and disappointment. There is so much systemic brokenness in our communities and in our country that it leaks out as violence. We need the hope and healing that only Jesus can bring.

Theologically, we don't need to worry about losing Jesus because Jesus is with us. First in Luke 2 "***She gave birth to her first born son and laid him in the manger;***" then the incarnation of John 1, "***The Word became flesh and dwelt among us.***" The incarnation Jesus hasn't been lost. In Matthew 28 Jesus promises to be with us "***always to the end of the age.***"

Perhaps a more accurate warning is this: DANGER: Don't lose **sight** of the baby. That baby, that Word made flesh is the light of the world. In these dark days of winter we need the light of the world to shine in us and through us.

Now a little ENCOURAGEMENT for this Advent and Christmas: **PRACTICE INCARNATIONAL MINISTRY.** That means just show up and be Jesus for others. Go and be Jesus for those who may have lost sight of him. Go and be the Church, show your neighbors, your community the love of Jesus. Go to the dark places and bring Jesus. Go sit with those who are sad and be Christmas. Go and speak the truth into the cracks of the broken places in our society. Go, just show up and be the hands, feet, the voice, the love of Jesus. Go and let your light so shine before others, go be the light of Christ, the light no darkness can overcome.

May God bless you, your family and congregation, and may the peace of God made real to us in a baby born in Bethlehem fill your hearts this Advent and Christmas Season.

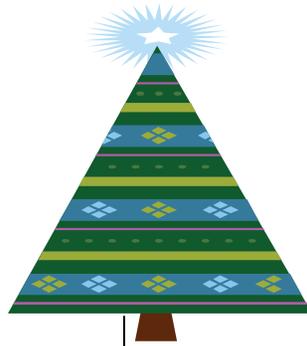
Rev. Laurie Shor. Olsun

Serve Our Congregation

With a new year soon to start we will have several people whose terms of service on our church boards and our council will conclude. Please consider sharing your leadership skills with our congregation! We also welcome new leadership on our Executive committee, if you would like to serve as congregational President or Vice President. Here is some information on our boards.

- **Executive Committee** – Comprised of the officers of the congregation and the pastor. Meet once per month to set the agenda for the council meeting. Provide support to the council and the church staff towards fulfilling the church's mission.
- **Board of Deacons** – Provide visual ministry by working with Pastor and music staff to enhance the worship and mission of the congregation. We creatively decorate God's House according to the seasons of the Church calendar and we have fun!
- **Board of Education** – Work together to develop and evaluate educational materials and programs, implement special fun activities, and provide / organize our Vacation Bible School. In addition, act as advisory board for the Youth Committee.
- **Board of Outreach** – Consider and review donation allocations for distribution and recommend benevolence allocations to the Church Council. Be a liaison between community, the Church Council, congregation, the ELCA, and the wider church. Communicate activities and mission opportunities to the congregation. These include involvement in Weekend Kids' Meals to Sam Davey Elementary, serve meals at The Community Table, host a blood drive, provide meals and overnight hosts to The Beacon House, service mission to El Salvador, among other things.
- **Board of Rachel's Place** – Provide support to the Rachel's Place staff and programs so that the quality of child care provided matches the mission of the Center and Hope Lutheran Church. Work to monitor budgets, staffing, and programs to support a safe and loving environment. In addition, this board plans special events to celebrate the happenings at the Center and strengthen the relationship with our congregation.
- **Board of Trustees** – Have charge of the general management of situations relating to legal matters and finances. Supervise the maintenance of the properties of the congregation and act as advisory board for the Building & Grounds Committee. Function as liaison between the Congregation Council and those standing committees overseen by the Board. Responsible for counting and depositing weekly offerings. Prepare a proposed budget for each church year and present it to the Congregation Council for approval and recommendation at the annual meeting of the congregation.

Hope's Happenings



Hats & Mittens Needed!

The Bolton Refuge House and Beacon House have requested a supply of hats & mittens so they may be prepared for the upcoming winter season. Many of their clientele are in need of these items when the weather changes. SO, if you happen to see hats & mittens on sale, would you please be so kind as to donate a pair or two? Please place them in the box labeled "Hats & Mittens" in the Gathering Area. We will be collecting these items October through December. Thanks again from the Board of Outreach!



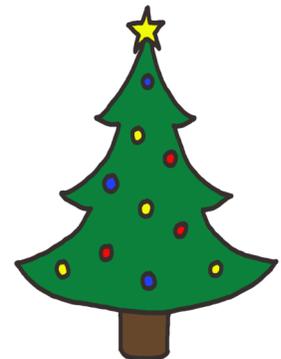
Join us for FUN at the Lazy Monk

Thursday, December 12th we will gather with others to sing festive holiday songs. If you wish, please bring a delicious appetizers and/ or snack. The fun will begin at 5:00pm and will continue until 7:00pm. ***Come when you can for lots of laughs and holiday cheer!***



Hope Remembrance Tree

The Board of Outreach will once again try to "Light Up" our Remembrance Tree on the corner of Starr & Eddy. The bulbs are still \$5.00 each - what a bargain in today's world! The blue bulbs are for "In Memory Of" and the white bulbs are for "In Honor of." The money raised will support Hope's monthly commitment to the Community Table, and possibly other Outreach endeavors. Bulbs will go on sale Nov. 10th through the third week in December. Let's Light it up!!!!



Reminders

Year-end giving

The financial books for the church year will be closed on **December 30th**. Any financial gifts you wish to have applied toward your 2019 giving statement must be received by that date.

Notice to all Boards

Your year-end reports are due in the church office by **January 9, 2020**, so they can be included in the Annual Report for our Annual Meeting.

El Salvador Mission of Healing/Family Wellness Fairs 2020 update:

Thank you to everyone who has donated items from our list of needs. We'll be removing the collection box from the Gathering Area for the month of December, but you can keep collecting things at home for the 5th and 12th of January, our last collection dates. As a refresher, the items we're collecting (with a new addition at the end) are:

½ - ¾" Band Aids – all one size rather than the boxes of assorted sizes.

Large Band-Aids – approx. 3" square

Hotel-size wrapped soap

Nail clippers

Pipe cleaners for the children's area

Stickers for the children's area (they love Valentine stickers in February!)

Size 10-12 girls' undies. (Thanks to the Undies for Sundaes of last summer we have plenty of small and large ones but are low on the medium sizes.)

Funds to purchase these items in El Salvador:

Toothpaste

Acetaminophen (Tylenol) for adults and children

Prenatal Vitamins (for all pregnant/nursing moms or those planning pregnancy)

Adult Vitamins (for those who need them)

Reading Glasses (for elders)

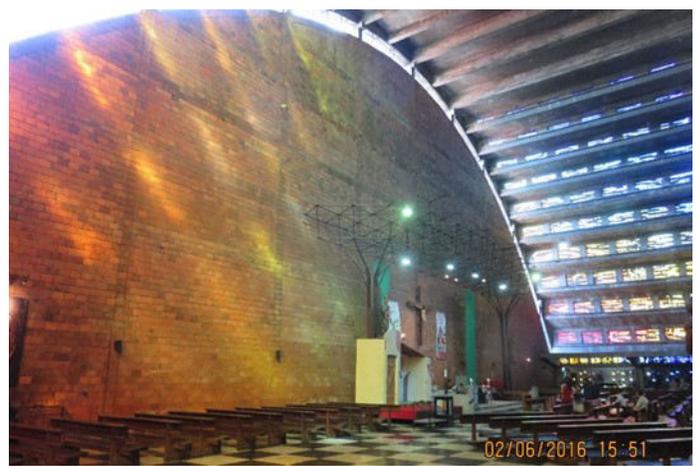
Soap for the Days for Girls kits

Large suitcases that roll easily and that you don't need returned.

We have been joined by women from Spirit Lutheran and other friends who have heard about the Days for Girls project and anticipate assembling in January the most kits we have ever had. Thus far there are 5 of us going to El Salvador from the Chippewa Valley - that means 10 suitcases of supplies. We would be happy to have others join us for this life-changing experience and for the supply-carrying capacity. Knowledge of Spanish is not necessary but being in general good health is. Talk to Bob or Deb Adams, Carol Mohr or Jenny Buckley if you want more information.



Experience the fruits of summer in our winter



Visit some beautiful churches. El Rosario above. Friends took shelter here as a battle raged outside.



Advent Christmas Program

Join us as the Musicians of Hope Lutheran present an Advent Christmas Program on Sunday afternoon, December 1, at 4:00 p.m.

Come and hear the wonderful sounds of the Advent /Christmas season. This Celebration of Sound will feature anthems, solos, duets, and carols by the congregation.

Please bring a "bell" to ring! Come and hear music and readings to help us "Prepare Him Room."

A coffee reception will be held following the concert!

Children's Christmas Program

The Children's Christmas Program will be held on Sunday, December 8th at 9:00am worship. Join the kids as they present "Sing A Song of Christmas", and learn why we SING at Christmas time. Please come and enjoy!

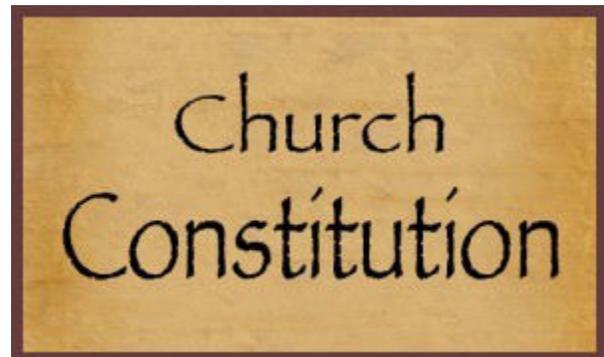
We will meet for treats following the program in Olson Memorial Hall, if you are able to donate some baked goods for the morning, please call the church office.

Oasis and Confirmation Pizza and BINGO!

Join us Wednesday, December 18th for Pizza at 5:00pm followed by a night of BINGO fun. Sunday School families are welcome to join us for this fun end of the year Christmas fun. We have lots of prizes so there will be many BINGO winners! We will eat and then get the BINGO started around 5:15.

Revisions to Hope's Constitution

At this summer's churchwide assembly, revisions were made to the Model Constitution for ELCA congregations. Hope's constitution has been revised and updated per those recommendations. After the synod office has reviewed and approved the changes, our church council will review the revised constitution at their December meeting. Following their approval, the proposed new version of our constitution will be made available to the congregation for your review along with a summary of the revisions. Look for them in mid-December on our church website. We'll also have hard copies available in the church office. The congregation will then vote on adopting this revised constitution at our Annual Meeting on January 26, 2020.





Live
Courageously

It's Never too Late to Pledge

If you weren't able to return your Financial Commitment card or Time and Abilities volunteer sheet from our Live Courageously fall stewardship emphasis, you can still participate. We have extra forms available in the church office.

The Women's Book Club

The Women's Book Club will NOT be meeting in December but will spend the holiday season selecting a "Readers Choice" title to discuss during our January meeting. Our next meeting will be Monday, January 20th at 6:30 in the Fireside Room. Join us in the new year—we love having new faces join us!

BOOK CLUB

Please see the Hope website for the worship leaders schedules, or the table in the back of the Church (Narthex).

Thank you for Serving our Church Family!



Rachel's Place will hold their Christmas Program on Friday, December 13th at 6:00pm. Everyone is invited to come and experience the Joy of Christmas with the kids!





Family Movie Night

A family fun movie night has been planned for Sunday December 1st at 6pm in the youth room. The hit movie "Breakthrough" will be shown on the big screen. This will be a Fire and Ice youth group event but anyone and everyone is invited. Popcorn and snacks will be provided. The cost is FREE!!!! Talk to Les for questions.

Giving Tuesday! December 3rd!

For 24 hours on December 3rd, you can go to www.livegenerously.com and make a donation to the Community Table and Thrivent will match 1\$ for every 2\$ donated. You also have the opportunity to support the Community Table in our area by donating sugar, spices and coffee. There is a basket in the Gathering Area where these items can be dropped off until Friday, November 29th. Let's fill the basket!



Scandinavian Bake Sale

On Sunday, December 15 there will be a Bake Sale of Christmas goodies. We will have delicious goodies to share for Coffee Connection, and also to buy to take home. Proceeds from this event will go towards new microphones for your sound system. Come and enjoy krumkake, lefse and other treats.



Evan Tody—*Following in his Big Brother's Footsteps!* Evan Tody is excited to announce that in June of 2020, he will be departing on a trip of a lifetime with other students from DeLong Middle School to Iceland on a Global Education program organized by the Discovery Channel. Highlights of the trip include visiting places he cannot pronounce, glacial boating, volcanology, exploring several natural hot springs, studying geothermal power plants, hiking glaciers, volunteering at an Icelandic school, and viewing some of the most beautiful scenery in the world. (Just to name a few things) Evan's Family will be hosting Coffee Connections next Sunday, December 1st. Please come see Evan, ask him some questions about his pending trip, and donate to support this amazing opportunity for him. THANK YOU!



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Hope Lutheran is a handicapped accessible congregation providing barrier-free and elevator access, marked parking spaces, large-print materials and accessible restrooms



Download the Hope Church App on the Apple "App Store" or Android "Google Play" platforms!