

This Week at HOPE December 4, 2024



I hope you have enjoyed delving into our 2024 Advent series so far! This week we dwell in the reality that each one of us is a blessing. We heard “you are a blessing” numerous times on Sunday and you’ve continued to hear them if you’ve been enjoying our Advent devotionals (still available for pick-up on table in sanctuary!). Please see [last week’s newsletter](#) for more information about the theme.

As I’ve met with a few groups this week, I’ve shared the following poem during our devotion time. I’ve asked this question:

How does it make you feel when I tell you that “you are a blessing?”

Does it make you feel weird?

Confused?

Unsure?

Comforted?

Peaceful?

Upon further discussion we began discussing the etymology of the word, “blessing” and I shared that the Biblical Hebrew word for blessing, בִּרְכָה “berākāh (pronounced ber-ah-KHA) shares the same root as for the word, “knee,” כָּרַךְ or berekh, (pronounced “ber-ech.” This sparks the image of dropping to one’s knee to receive a blessing. It is an act of *humility*. *In fact, when I hear “you are a blessing” it feels very humbling to me. If you remember in the story of the Angel Gabriel’s visit to Mary she responds, “How can this be?” and I suppose I feel similarly when I hear these words.*

How can this be, that me with all my faults and imperfections and imposter syndrome could possibly be blessed by God?

And yet, that is precisely what we all are. For if I can acknowledge that I am a blessing, then I also must acknowledge that so is every other person I encounter. Yes, every other person.

We are named, claimed, and blessed by God to share in Christ’s very ministry of bringing about the very Kingdom of God.

Holy and humbling work, indeed.

If you have not already done so, please **make sure to pick up the following on the front table in the sanctuary in order to enhance your Advent journey:**

1. A beautiful, full-color Advent devotional specific to this year’s theme
2. An advent calendar fit for individuals, families with children, or couples
3. An advent photo challenge grid so you can share your Advent journey with those in your social circles, and perhaps invite them in for the season!

You, beloved, are blessings. May you feel a sure sign of God’s blessing on you this week and always,
In humble service,
Pastor Annie



The First Sunday of Advent | WORDS FOR THE BEGINNING
YOU ARE A BLESSING

JOY AND CELEBRATION

You are a blessing.
If you hear nothing else,
if the wind howls,
if your brain runs amok,
if rebuttals and denials line up like little toy soldiers,
then hear *this*—
you are a blessing.

I knew it the first moment I met you / heard your name / learned there are 7 billion of us
on this planet.
I knew it in my bones,
the way my feet know the way home.
You are a blessing.

For our creating God
breathed life into your being.
And there is simply no way that,
along with that life,
some of God's goodness
didn't slip right in.

So tell the rebuttals to rest.
Tell the toy soldiers to find another hill,
because this one is reserved for joy and celebration.
You are a blessing.
Breathe it in.

Poem by Rev. Sarah A. Speed | A Sanctified Art LLC | sanctifiedart.org

This Week at HOPE December 4, 2024



VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

**THIS SUNDAY WE NEED:
USHERS AND ALTAR FLOWERS
IF YOU CAN SERVE PLEASE
SIGN UP HERE!**

MIDWEEK ADVENT



5:45PM

Meal Fellowship

6:15PM

Holden Evening Prayer

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More fun pictures from the Advent Fair!





This Week at HOPE December 4, 2024

A warm, festive background featuring a lit red candle in the center, surrounded by holly leaves and berries. Soft, out-of-focus lights create a bokeh effect in the background.

Carols & Candles
Sunday, December 8th, 2024
4:00PM

HOPE Lutheran Church, 3337 Kingsbarn Ave, River Falls, WI

A light gray background decorated with white snowflakes and hanging Christmas ornaments in shades of blue, gold, and silver. A Santa hat is perched on one of the ornaments.

Songs & Suds
Holiday Sing-Along

Monday Dec. 16, 6:30 pm
@ Rush River Brewery
Everyone is welcome!



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Lefse Day

You don't have to be Norwegian to spend a morning at HOPE making lefse. Please join us on **Saturday, December 14th 10:30**. Bring your own lefse dough, one quart ziploc type bags, griddle, turning stick etc. The tasty lefse will be sold during fellowship time on **December 15th**



Christmas Bake Sale

Baked goods and holiday treats are needed for HOPE's Bake Sale on **Sunday, December 15th**. Proceeds from your lefse, cookies, bars, breads, pies, cakes, snacks, candy etc. will be donated to the River Falls Backpack Program. Remember to bring your checkbook or cash so you can go home with some delicious homemade goodies.

Please price your baked goodies before the sale!

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CHRISTMAS TREAT LEFTOVER PALOOZA COFFEE HOUR DECEMBER 29, 2024

As part of our "Lessons and Laughter" service on Sunday, December 29th, we plan to continue the fun during coffee hour!

We know that many of us will still have plenty of Christmas treats leftover, or maybe even things we were given that we couldn't possibly eat all on our own!

Everyone is invited to bring any small treats to coffee hour that day to share! NO OBLIGATION! We hope to see you there!

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Advent Project Theme is “Words for the Beginning”

A Giving Tree with ornaments listing items for two families from Turning Point with gifts they would like for Christmas will be the main project. Gift cards to Target/Walmart need to be received at church by **December 8th** so that the older youth can go and shop for the gifts.

Gas cards are also needed. Darcy Boock has \$25 and \$50 Kwik Trip gas cards that can be purchased from her that will also benefit Our Neighbors Place.

Items that will be purchased by members of the congregation (who have taken an ornament with an item listed on it) need to be received at church no later than **December 15th**. All gifts need to be unwrapped and will be delivered to Turning Point on **December 16th**.

There will also be items on the tree that can be purchased throughout the duration of Advent to be collected for Turning Point and Our Neighbors Place

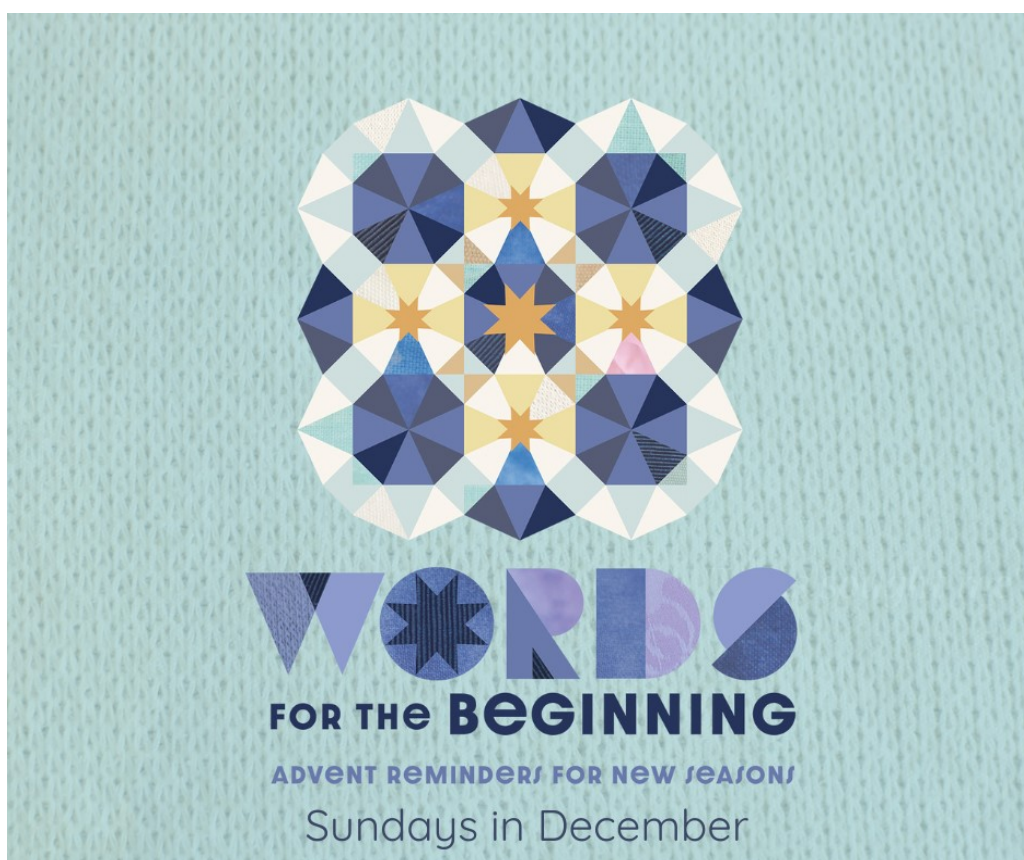
This Week at HOPE December 4, 2024



Did you know HOPE is on Facebook in TWO places?? Public HOPE Facebook Page

For public information, events, and Gospel sharing
Private HOPE Facebook Group

For private events, picture sharing, sharing joys & prayer concerns,
and living out our faith together
Make sure to like, follow, and join both to stay up to date!



This Week at HOPE December 4, 2024

A collage of holiday-themed images including wrapped gifts, Christmas lights, and a decorated tree. A central red banner contains text about shopping for Turningpoint families. A yellow star graphic on the right says "FILL OUT THE POLL!".

CONFIRMATION & HIGH SCHOOL YOUTH

SHOPPING FOR TURNINGPOINT!

Join us for as we complete shopping for gifts for our 2 adopted Turningpoint Families!
Check your email/link below for a poll on when you can go!

EDUCATION & MISSION MINISTRY PARTNERSHIP

FILL OUT THE POLL!

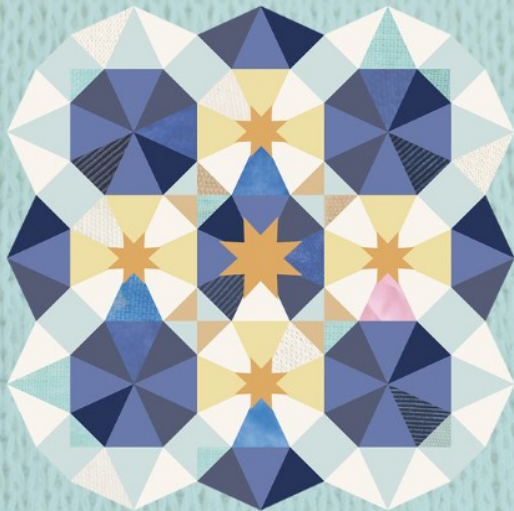
DOODLE POLL FOR TURNINGPOINT SHOPPING

YOUTH ARE ACCEPTING \$25/\$50 GIFT CARDS TO WAL-MART AND TARGET TO COMPLETE SHOPPING FOR FAMILIES, DUE DEC. 8!

This Week at HOPE December 4, 2024



COMMUNITY EVENTS HAPPENING THIS SEASON



WORDS
FOR THE BEGINNING
ADVENT REMINDERS FOR NEW SEASONS
Sundays in December

A graphic featuring a large, circular quilted star pattern in shades of blue, yellow, and white, set against a light blue background with a subtle vertical line pattern. Below the star, the word "WORDS" is written in a large, stylized font where each letter is filled with a different quilted pattern. Underneath, "FOR THE BEGINNING" is written in a bold, dark blue sans-serif font. At the bottom, the text "ADVENT REMINDERS FOR NEW SEASONS" and "Sundays in December" is displayed in a smaller, lighter blue font.

Join us for a FREE drive through

Living Nativity

December 7&8 from 5-7pm each night

Our Christmas gift to you! Drive through scenes with actors and live animals that depict the events of Jesus' birth.



First Covenant Church
1374 N. Main Street
River Falls, WI

Across from Kwik Trip
Enter from Quarry Road
rfcov.org

A dark blue background with white stars and a silhouette of a nativity scene at the bottom. The scene includes three camels, two shepherds, a manger with baby Jesus, a cow, a donkey, and two angels. The text is arranged in a clean, modern layout with a mix of serif and sans-serif fonts, and some text is italicized.

This Week at HOPE December 4, 2024



SPANISH LANGUAGE CHRISTMAS SERVICE

Saturday, December 22nd
2:30PM
First Covenant Church
1374 N Main St, River Falls WI 54022

A green line-art illustration of a Christmas tree with a star on top, decorated with ornaments and lights. At the base of the tree are two wrapped gifts with bows.

**CELEBRACIÓN
NAVIDEÑA**

TODOS SON BIENVENIDOS

FECHA: DOMINGO 22 DE DICIEMBRE
HORA: 2:00 PM
LUGAR: IGLESIA FIRST COVENANT
DIRECCIÓN: 1374 N MAIN ST,
RIVER FALLS WI 54022

SERVICIO RELIGIOSO EN
ESPAÑOL.
SEGUIDO POR ALMUERZO.
DISTRIBUCIÓN DE REGALOS
PARA MENORES DE 18 AÑOS

SI DESEA ANOTARSE PARA
LOS REGALOS DE MENORES,
ENVÍE UN TEXTO A
TONY MATA HAUG
AL +1(715) 821-3096;
INCLUYA EL NOMBRE DE LOS
PADRES, EL NOMBRE DEL
MENOR, EDAD Y SEXO

FECHA LÍMITE PARA ANOTARSE 11 DE DICIEMBRE



DECK THE HOUSE

FOR MORE INFORMATION

AND SOCIAL

A square QR code is located on a pink background that resembles a television screen. A black cord is attached to the top of the screen.

12/8/2024
1:00PM -3:00PM

JOURNEY HOUSE
143 E. Cascade Avenue
River Falls, WI 54022

The poster is decorated with a festive border. The top and bottom edges feature a green garland with yellow and pink stars. The left and right sides have a red border with white starburst patterns. The background is a light beige color with a red house silhouette behind the main title. There are also illustrations of a sleigh, a gift box, and a Christmas tree.



ELCA Truth & Healing Movement Opportunities!

Last November, Rev. Sara Bishop, NWSWI Synod Advocate for Right Relationship, joined us for an Indigenous People's service and learning opportunity on a synod resolution for Land Acknowledgements. Since then we have been studying and learning more from our indigenous siblings. We have read and discussed *An Indigenous People's History of the United States*, have learned more about the *Doctrine of Discovery* and the ELCA's repudiation of it, and broadened our conversation to wider civic life and faith concerns as we explore how our past informs our present. All of these efforts are in line with the ELCA's wider work, "The Truth and Healing Movement," which serves to put legs onto our official repudiation statement. This fall there have been a number of opportunities for further exploration, learning, repentance, hope, and looking toward a more just future together. As we move into the winter, opportunities continue to be available on the [ELCA's Truth and Healing Movement website!](#) Make sure to check back often to continue to challenge your understanding and grow in your love of our native siblings.

Our next upcoming opportunity will be on **January 19, 2025** when you are invited to join Pastor Annie for a discussion on *Custer Died for Your Sins: An Indian Manifesto* by Vine Deloria Jr. (*Standing Rock Sioux*). This book has been commended to us through the ELCA's Truth and Healing Movement's new Reading Circle. This is an opportunity for us to participate in a much wider conversation across the ELCA in its many expressions. This will be the second book written by an indigenous author that we will explore together in Christian community here at HOPE. This author brings with him a theological perspective, having graduated from one of our ELCA Seminaries, Lutheran School of Theology.

This Week at HOPE December 4, 2024



WEDNESDAYS 5:45-7:15!

Fall Session: September 18th-November 20th

Fall session ends with our cross-gen Advent Fair on November 20th!

THIS DECEMBER:

All WOH families are invited to join the wider HOPE congregation for our mid-week Advent meal & worship services:

Dec. 4, 11, & 18th

5:45: Meal

6:15: Holden Evening Worship

Winter Session: January 8th-February 26th

Exploring: New Testament stories, Parts of Worship, Souper Bowl, and BINGO

All K-10+ children and youth are encouraged to register and attend!

Friends are always welcome!

3 Sessions throughout the year:

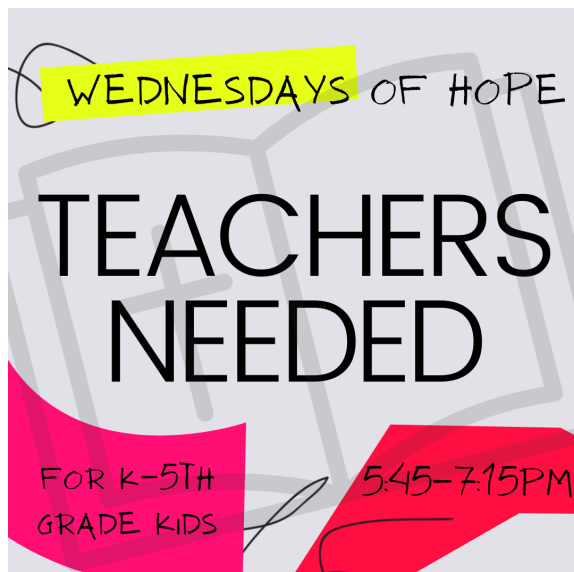
Spring Session: April 30-May 21

MEALS NOW PROVIDED EVERY WEEK!

Click below for more info & to register:

[2024-2025 WEDNESDAYS OF HOPE REGISTRATION](#)

This Week at HOPE December 4, 2024



[TEACHER SIGN UP HERE](#)



WEDNESDAYS OF HOPE MEAL HOSTS NEEDED! [SIGN UP HERE AT THIS NEW LINK!](#)

This year we would like to provide a SIMPLE, kid-friendly meal each Wednesday evening for our Wednesdays of HOPE ministry. This helps families participate in our ministry with one less thing to worry about on a busy weeknight, helps our youth and mentors connect over a meal, and provides an opportunity for other HOPE adults to engage with our children and youth!

Meals need to be ready at 5:45 and we expect to serve 15-20 people total. *Free Will donations will be collected to offset expenses. Donations of money for pizza nights are also being accepted.*

Please prayerfully consider if you/your ministry team would like to host a meal this year! Fall session is currently our biggest need!

This Week at HOPE December 4, 2024



Please lift up the following people in prayer

Steve and Diane Meyer

Ethan Sailer (Family Friend of Faye Perkins)

Family of Rosina Hendrikson (Family of Mary Thompson)

Ellen Roose

Andy Haugen (Relative of Ellen Roose)

Derrek Lettich (Relative of Karen Brohaugh)

The Family of Teresa Jonas (Friend of Kay & Bill Montgomery)

Connie Juaire

Scott Uring (Friend of Jeff & Karen Rodewald)

John Cain (Family friend of Olive Olson)

Robb Scott

The Family of Woody Fangmeier (Friends of Jeff & Karen Rodewald)

Family of Kermit Paulson

Marcus Stack (Friend of Steve & Karen Kaste)

Jeremy Martinson (Brother-in-Law to Elise Forward)

Family of Teajai Schmidt (relative of the Boocks)

Jacob Dan and family (Friends of Jeff Rodewald)

Patricia Miller (Sister of Carl Warren)

Rhiannon Bondhus (Niece of Bondhus family)

Lori Snyder (Friend of Nancy & David Peters)

Ed and Gwen Paulson

Randy Dopkins (Family friend of Olive Olson)

Eden Annoye (Relative of Debra James)

Fatma Aljarrah (Friend of Faye Perkins)

Beth Lindgren Family (Dan Malaney)

Michael Jacobson (Brother of Linda Jacobson)

Barb Carmichael (Friend of Nancy Sailer)

Dennis & Sandy Schultz (Friends of Bill & Kay Montgomery)

Nancy Miller (Friend of Paula & Phil Klacan)

Linda Shurden (Friend of Nancy Sailer)

Hannah Forward

Ella Conover (Phil & Paula's Klacan's Niece)

Daryl Kleeman (brother of Darcy Boock)

David Boock (Relative of the Boocks)

Lee Hill (friend of Naomi)

Gary Siebold

David Hendrickson

This Week at HOPE December 4, 2024



December Baptisms

Phillip Klacan
Sawyer Filarsky
Pastor Annie Ladnier
Eden Ladnier
Heathley Neuhaus
Piper Rodewald



December Birthdays

Alexis Rehbein	3-Dec
Dale Bohnert	5-Dec
Mark Bondhus	5-Dec
James James	11-Dec
Susan Schuettpelz	11-Dec
Luke Filarsky	15-Dec
Sara Filarsky	15-Dec
Karen Hamilton	17-Dec
Grete Rehbein	17-Dec
Jason Neuhaus	20-Dec
Bruce Schuettpelz	22-Dec
Gary Siebold	26-Dec
Alyssa Boock	27-Dec
Noelle James	27-Dec
Cameron Leitch	27-Dec
Ella Wolfe	29-Dec
Hazel Ladnier	30-Dec



December Anniversaries

Edward & Gwen Paulson

Date
26-Dec

Years to Celebrate
59

This Week at HOPE December 4, 2024



All are invited & needed to participate in the leading of worship! Please prayerfully consider sharing your time and talents!

SIGN UP HERE

Want to help but not sure what the job entails? Learn more in our [Worship Volunteer Guide](#)



All are invited to join Pastor Annie for this weekly small group conversation and Bible study! This is a great chance to grow in relationship with God and one another.

Discussion time includes group check-in, opening meditation, and study of the week's worship texts.

We meet via Zoom so all can join from wherever you are!

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88419155061?pwd=di9hUXlraeDdzM0dCK0pPMDNtbHczZz09>