

This Week at HOPE December 18, 2024



As the holiday stress increases in the next week, maybe some good music can help!

Here is a link to the curated [“Words for the Beginning” playlist](#) on Spotify.



DO THE GOOD THAT IS YOURS TO DO

This week we are reminded to “do the good that is yours to do.” On Tuesday I shared [Romans 12](#) with our council for our opening devotion. In it we read,

“We have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us: prophecy, in proportion to faith; ministry, in ministering; the teacher, in teaching; the encourager, in encouragement; the giver, in sincerity; the leader, in diligence; the compassionate, in cheerfulness.”

We were reminded that each of us have unique gifts, woven into us by the very creator of the universe, in order that we might share God’s grace with the world through them.

Today take a moment to consider gifts that God has given you to use. Write them down. Say a prayer of thanks for them and ask God to show you ways to use them this season.

Then take another moment and think of a friend, neighbor, colleague or classmate. What gifts do you see in them? Could you write them a note of encouragement naming that you see their gifts? Now say a prayer of thanks for their gifts and ask God to bless them and their gifts this season.

Beloved, you have extraordinary gifts to share! Do the good that is yours to do!

Pastor Annie

This Week at HOPE December 18, 2024



The Third Sunday of Advent | WORDS FOR THE BEGINNING
DO THE GOOD THAT IS YOURS TO DO

HARVEST

Maybe none of it matters.

Maybe you can't make a difference.

Or maybe that watermelon seed you spit out over the summer will grow into a green orb, full of sticky sweet fruit. Maybe the rain will nourish it. Maybe your mother's hands will pull it from the vine, slice it into wedges, and place it on the dining room table. Maybe the neighbors will come over and chomp into that soft pink fruit, juicy water running down their chins. Maybe you will laugh at the shared experience, at this garden-grown communion, and maybe the stars will shine brighter that night.

People say the problems of the world are too big to make a difference,
but surely those people have forgotten the fruit that grows from one little seed.

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



Thank you to our generous Advent Meal hosts!

This Week at HOPE December 18, 2024



ALL ROLES HAVE BEEN FILLED FOR THIS SUNDAY!!!

WE STILL HAVE NEEDS FOR 4PM CHRISTMAS EVE:

ASSISTING MINISTER
COMMUNION PREP

NEEDS FOR DECEMBER 29:

ASSISTING MINISTER
COMMUNION PREP
USHERS
READER
ALTAR FLOWERS

IF YOU CAN SERVE PLEASE [SIGN UP HERE!](#)



THE GIFT THAT IS YOU! 2024 Christmas Message



As I reflect on my time in Malawi back in early November, I had so many experiences that merit being shared. As I write this letter, perhaps the most important lesson I can offer was that of my new reality as a guest overseas.

Everywhere I turned, I truly felt like I was the most important person present. Yes, there were times where I was the honored guest as a bishop. I was granted the best seats in the church, in the van, on the stage. When I walked the grounds at the Lutheran Compound in my purple clerical, EVERYONE immediately stopped what they were doing to greet me, even if that was their first encounter with me. I was fed better than most and I never had to carry my own luggage. I had women pour water over my hands before certain meals (including

communion) much like Christ did during the Last Supper in washing the disciples' feet. And despite my innermost desires to remind them that I was just another guy, I simply could not insult them in that manner. The way in which they treated me was at the core of their faith practice.

Thankfully, Deacon Laura taught me a valuable insight that helped my understanding more clearly. They didn't treat only bishops that way, they treat all guests that way! Having been to Malawi five times before she took me, Laura has experienced that generous hospitality time and time again. And now that I'm a few weeks removed from their genuine welcome, I still firmly believe that their faith has taught them to love their neighbor and lift them up no matter how far away we may come.

What if we all treated our neighbor as though they are the most important person present at that time? What if we lifted the spirits of the people God places in our lives each and every day? As we prepare for the Christmas story once again this year, we emphasize the gift that comes in the Christ child, God made flesh to live among us mortals. Just think about the lives that the Christ child touched! It started with Mary and Joseph, continued to the shepherds in the fields, and even gave the heavenly host something to praise!

Of course, Jesus went on to touch so many lives - people in need of healing, children in need of welcoming, outcasts in need of community, sinners in need of redeeming. Jesus became the gift who helped them all feel that they were the most important person present at the time, people worthy of his unconditional love, people whose spirits were uplifted.

As we march through the season of Advent toward the birth of God Emmanuel, Jesus the savior of the world, remember the gift of God's presence in your lives. Recognize that God is even present within you and that you are a gift as well! And much like my new friends in Malawi, be that gift for others. Reveal Christ's presence to others through your continued faithfulness and dedication to the God of love because that love can overcome division. You are a gift to this synod and to God's church when you let God's light shine in and through you! May this Christmas also reveal to you the light of Christ through others.

Bishop Martin

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A Wonderful Time at Songs & Suds: Christmas Edition
Thank you to Strings of HOPE for sharing their gifts!



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INVITATION FOR CHRISTMAS EVE FLOWERS!

You are invited to bring in poinsettias or other Christmas floral arrangements to adorn our space for Christmas Eve (and the Christmas season!).

Please bring to church by noon on Christmas Eve

This Week at HOPE December 18, 2024



**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!



ELCA Truth & Healing Movement NEW Opportunities!

HOPE is called by God to look beyond ourselves. We walk together in faith, treasuring all people and sharing with them the love, hope and acceptance that is in Christ.

As we continue to be a people striving after God's justice

As a member congregation of the ELCA, part of the Northwest Synod of Wisconsin, and as a community of faith in River Falls striving to live into our mission to "look beyond ourselves," "treasure all people" and "share the love, hope, and acceptance that is in Christ" we are called to seriously engage in the work of the ELCA Truth and Healing Movement and we have been doing so over the course of the last year. Part of looking beyond ourselves and treasuring others is to step outside of our own experiences and narratives in order to hear and truly listen to the lived experiences of our siblings, especially those whom the Church has historically oppressed. That important listening work is one way that we not only share Christ's love, hope, and acceptance with our siblings, but a way that we also *receive Christ's love, hope, and acceptance in return.*

It is the holy work of reconciliation and it is a blessing to be invited into it.

This winter we are invited to continue in our work of the ELCA's Truth and Healing Movement There are 2 opportunities for you this January!

1. Right Relations Training (An ELCA-wide opportunity)

An experiential training designed to provide a guide to Christian and settler-descended volunteers who want to engage in movements for Indigenous Justice.

In 2025, the Coalition to Dismantle the Doctrine of Discovery will offer monthly online training! They will rotate between "Right Relations" and "Decolonizing and Organizing for Systems Change" training modules. This coming January, the Coalition will offer online "Right Relations Training" training in 2 two-hour modules. "Right Relations Training" is an experiential training designed to provide a guide to Christian and settler-descended volunteers who want to engage in movements for Indigenous Justice.

[Register for Module 1](#)

[Register for Module 2](#)

2. Truth and Healing Movement Reading Circle (HOPE Book Discussion)

Join Pastor Annie on Sunday, January 19, 2025 following worship for a discussion of *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 in Chicago.*

This Week at HOPE December 18, 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

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THIS DECEMBER:

All WOH families are invited to join the wider HOPE congregation for our midweek 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:

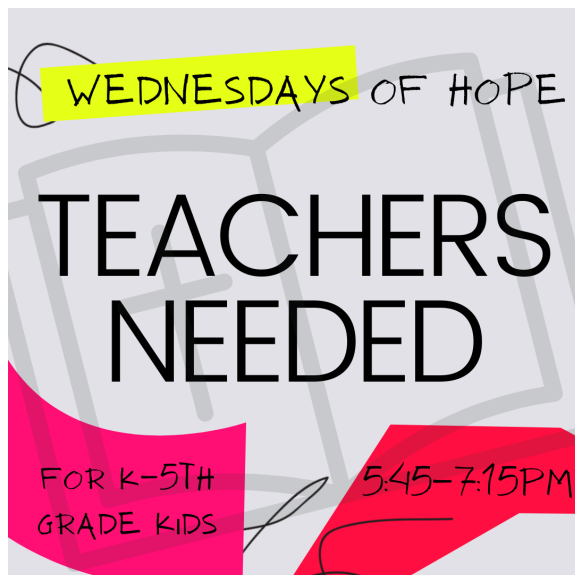
Spring Session: April 30-May 21

MEALS NOW PROVIDED EVERY WEEK!

Click below for more info & to register:

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

This Week at HOPE December 18, 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!

SIGN UPS ARE NOW AVAILABLE THROUGH MAY!

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Please lift up the following people in prayer

Mavis Wegleitner (Family of Dale Wegleitner)
Dick Jackson
Family of Danny Lee (Nephew of Doug Rudesill)
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 Juairé
Scott Ullring (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)
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

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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

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

SIGN UP HERE

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



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!