

A Little Introduction: Pastor Jim Harris, Interim Pastor

Dear friends, It is truly an honor to serve as your interim pastor for these next two months. I'm looking forward to walking alongside you, getting to know your hearts and hearing your stories. Since someone has to go first, I'll begin with a bit of my own.

My journey began in Keezletown, Virginia, where my family moved when I was just two years old, leaving Ohio behind. We were warmly welcomed by the community at the Methodist Church, who quickly became like family. It was there, at just eight years old, that I first sensed God's call on my life to become a minister.

That call deepened when I was twelve. A visiting missionary, Katherine Eye, came to our church and shared her powerful experiences serving in Africa. She later began writing to me, encouraging my growing sense of purpose. I still remember when she shared that she believed God had told her I would one day be a minister.

But the path wasn't simple—or straight. In high school, I wrestled with anger toward God, which eventually grew into doubt and skepticism. By the time I reached college, I was drifting. I left after my freshman year and enlisted in the Navy, eager to put distance between myself and the divine.

Even then, God didn't stop pursuing me. Time and again, through the people around me and in quiet moments aboard a ship in the North Atlantic, I felt the nudge of that call. Though I resisted, something inside me was shifting.

After four years in the Navy, I found myself working as a baby photographer—of all things—when I finally surrendered my life fully to Jesus. That moment changed everything.

Within two years, I received my first pastoral appointment as a part-time student pastor. I was 26 and a junior at James Madison University. That was July 1975.

Now, fifty years later, I have the joy of celebrating this ministry milestone right here, with you.

I'm grateful for this opportunity to serve. May God bless our time together.

With hope, *Pastor Jim*



Parents Night Out

'Christmas in July'

We will have a Parent's Night Out on Friday, July 25th, from 5:30pm-7:30pm, with the theme of '*Christmas in July*'. Space is limited to 12 children, and the deadline to register is July 20th. The children will participate in games, a craft activity, they will watch a Christian video and have dinner, all while their parents enjoy a light dinner in the social hall. Please see Alicia Copeland with any questions.



The following are the minutes from the **June 2025** meeting of the Church Council.

The minutes are available to help the entire church family *stay in the know* about how this group is caring for New Hope UMC!

Administrative Council Meeting Minutes - June 26, 2025

Those in attendance: Becky Breeding, Alicia Copeland, Cindy Deavers, Wanda Harding, Pastor Jim Harris, Linda Howdyshell, Beth Howdyshell, Bill Lalla, Laura Jenner, Corey Johnson, Susan Mehler, Cindy Sheets, Karen Whitmer and Sandy Wyrick.

Becky Breeding called the meeting to order. Linda Howdyshell read a devotion on: 'God brings us safely through trouble' focusing on Psalm 138: 7

Becky welcomed Pastor Jim to the church council.

The minutes from the May 2025 meeting were reviewed. A motion was made by Sandy Wyrick to approve the minutes as written, Corey seconded it and the motion was passed.

Financial Chair: *(report from Bruce Rogers)*

- Becky and Bruce submitted the church audit to the Unity website for conference.
- In July the Finance Committee will meet to discuss the budget for 2026.

Treasurer: *(Cindy Deavers reported)*

- We are paying all of our bills on time.
- The insurance bill will be coming due on July 1st, the premiums went up some for property and liability insurance.
- The quarterly apportionments are \$1,910
- The Gift and Memorial fund has been updated with an additional \$309 for the mid-week meals.
- The Money Market dividends are recorded through May. And they will be transferred into the General Fund, should be around \$425.

- Payroll has not been made yet for June.
- Currently we have \$14,237.14
- Windows are now being installed in the Sanctuary. We were not required to put down any money initially and so far the wood trim has been fine.
- We now have a different insurance broker, as Weaver Insurance sold our policy off to Sanford Insurance of Midlothian. We do not know what that will mean for us in the future yet.

Staff Parish Relations Committee: *(Sandy Wyrick reported)*

- The parsonage inspection has been done. Some minor work will need to be taken care of, like paint touch-ups, but nothing major.
- The new windows are now going up in the Sanctuary. They will work on the other side of the Sanctuary tomorrow, and they should be done, weather permitting either Friday or Monday.
- There has been no news on the naming of a new permanent pastor for us yet.

Trustees: *(Corey Johnson reported)*

- The propane tanks were not picked up on June 12th. The new date for pick up is July 3rd.
- The parsonage inspection was completed by the Trustees and SPRC. Minor repairs to the parsonage, primarily patching and painting drywall will need to be done. The parsonage will be professionally cleaned, paid for by Pastor HK. Turnover will be conducted no later than June 30th. And all utilities will be transferred to the church until a new pastor resides there.
- The parsonage metal roof above the porch has been repainted, special thanks to the Walker family for doing this.
- The heating issue at the parsonage has not yet been repaired. Darryl Deavers has received the repair part and it should be installed this week.
- 30 cemetery gravestones were cleaned. Special thanks to Hailey and all of the people who helped.
- The right Narthex door opener has been replaced and is operating properly. The door opener between the Narthex and the Social Hall area does not appear to be leaking now after adjustments were made.
- The Sanctuary windows are in the process of being replaced.
- Jackson Water systems has been contacted regarding the billing for the well work done last January. Customer service representatives were supposed to contact their financial department to issue an invoice.

United Methodist Men: *(Bill Lalla reported)*

- The work at Steve Cull's place has now been completed. The UMM were hoping for a few hundred dollars for the work, Mr. Cull gave them a few thousand dollars for their work. The UMM are planning to use that money for any parsonage repairs.
- The UMM wanted to give a big Thank You to the ladies of the church for all of their hard work in preparing meals for our fundraisers and for the UMM meetings.

Lay Leader: *(Susan Mehler reported)*

- Corey has agreed to lead a bible study starting in mid-July. They will be on Wednesdays starting at 6:30pm. They will be focusing on Luke.
- August 24th is Laity Sunday. We will have special music, prayers, scriptures, a hymn-sing and more details to come.
- The Revival that we had here went well with about half the church participating - 26 people attended on Friday and 19 people attended on Saturday.
- Cindy Sheets will lead SHOP (Sweet Hour of Prayer) again on Saturday, July 5th.
- On Sunday, July 6th, Bill Lalla will be the lay leader as Susan will be out of town. And Hailey Johnson will be our pianist, as Nancy Bassett and Matthew Grandpre will both be out of town that day.

Membership: *(Karen Whitmer reported)*

- Margie Catherine Selmon died on June 1, 2025. She joined the church in 1986 under Glen Evans.

Communications: *(Cindy Sheets reported)*

- The new printer has been installed. If anyone has any questions about it, please see Cindy Sheets
- The issue with the audio in the Nursery has been resolved.
- The website is back up and running after being down for a few days.

Programming & Event Planning:

- Wednesday Nights Meals and SHOP - have all been good.
- The Community Meal on May 28th went well.
- The Revival we had was very good, with about half the church attending
- Our next fundraiser meal will be on Friday, June 27th. Take-out options will be available.
- On Sunday, we will have our Coffee SHOP in the morning, along with the Farewell to Pastor HK, Sarah and Elias.
- We will have a Parents Night Out on Friday, July 25th from 5:30pm-7:30pm.. Sign-up sheets are available. Currently, Alicia needs some more help with this. A light dinner will be provided for the parents. And it is limited to 12 kids, registration is required.
- 50's Night will be Saturday, September 27th. There will be a meeting in July to discuss how we are going to do it this year.

Pastor Jim:

- Pastor Jim's first day is Tuesday, July 1st.
- In the first week, he plans to visit our shut-ins.
- He wants to focus in on how God has blessed New Hope UMC
- He is looking forward to being our interim pastor.

New Business:

- There was some discussion on how we need to handle our Discretionary Fund at this time.
- Laura pointed out that there are going to be some new Virginia laws coming out that will forbid us from using styrofoam containers in the future. It was decided that we will use up or donate the styrofoam cups that we have now to organizations that will be able to use them up sooner than we can.
- There will be no Church Council meeting in July.
- There will be a Finance Meeting on July 31st at 6:30pm.

Becky closed the meeting with prayer. The meeting ended at 7:43pm.

Respectfully submitted by: Cynthia Sheets, Recording Secretary



We will have a new Bible Study on Wednesday evenings, starting on July 16th at 6:30pm.

Corey Johnson will lead this bible study focusing on the book of Luke.

Everyone is welcome to join us - bring your bible and a friend!



Upcoming Activities, Events and Meetings at New Hope UMC

Saturday, July 5th ~ Sweet Hour of Prayer (SHOP) @ 8:00am

Sunday, July 6th ~ Sunday School @ 9:30am
~ Sunday Morning Worship and Holy Communion @ 10:30am

Thursday, July 10th ~ Trustees @ 6:30pm

Saturday, July 12th ~ Sweet Hour of Prayer (SHOP) @ 8:00am

Sunday, July 13th ~ Sunday School @ 9:30am
~ Sunday Morning Worship @ 10:30am

Wednesday, July 16th ~ Bible Study @ 6:30pm

Saturday, July 19th ~ Sweet Hour of Prayer (SHOP) @ 8:00am

Sunday, July 20th ~ Sunday School @ 9:30am
~ Sunday Morning Worship @ 10:30am

Wednesday, July 23rd ~ Bible Study @ 6:30pm

Friday, July 25th ~ Parents Night Out @ 5:30pm - 7:30pm

Saturday, July 26th ~ Sweet Hour of Prayer (SHOP) @ 8:00am

Sunday, July 27th ~ Sunday School @ 9:30am
~ Sunday Morning Worship @ 10:30am

Wednesday, July 30th ~ Bible Study @ 6:30pm

Thursday, July 31st ~ Finance Committee Meeting @ 6:30pm

July 4th, Jesus Christ and True Freedom

Independence Day, celebrated on July 4th, is a defining moment in American history — a commemoration of the birth of a nation founded on the ideals of liberty, justice, and the inalienable rights of all people. As Americans reflect on the sacrifices made for national freedom, Christians are also reminded of a deeper, eternal freedom — the one found in Jesus Christ.

The Bible speaks often of freedom, not just from political tyranny, but from the bondage of sin and death. In John 8:36, Jesus says, *“So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.”* This spiritual freedom — the kind that transforms hearts, renews minds, and reconciles people to God — is the foundation upon which lasting peace and justice are built. While national freedom grants rights, Christ’s freedom offers redemption.

The Founding Fathers acknowledged a Creator as the source of human rights. Many were influenced by Christian thought and believed that true liberty must be grounded in moral responsibility. The Declaration

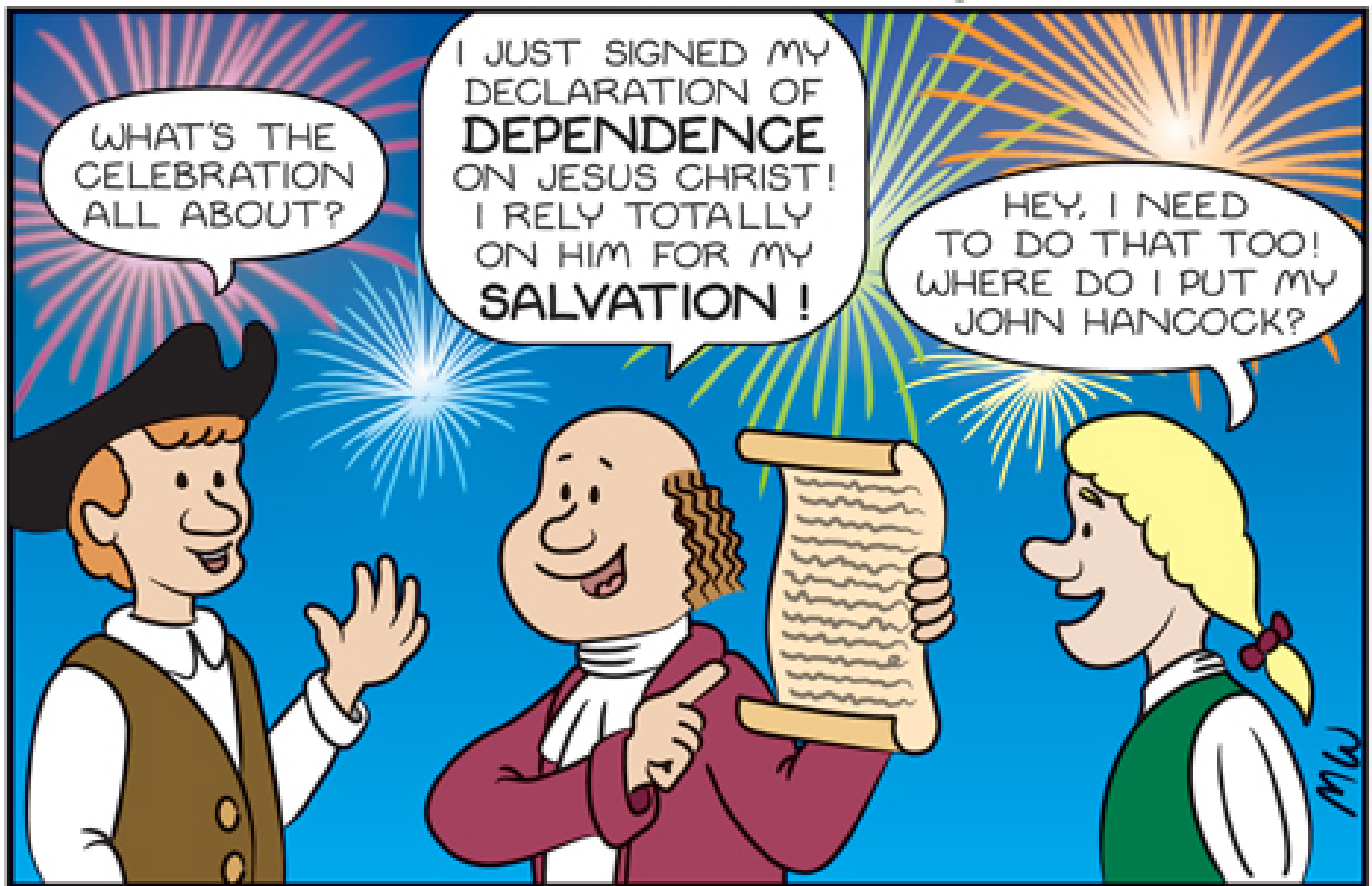
of Independence itself refers to “Nature’s God” and “Divine Providence,” indicating that freedom was seen not just as a political condition, but as a sacred trust.

On July 4th, Christians in the United States are uniquely positioned to celebrate both their earthly freedom as citizens and their heavenly freedom as children of God. The fireworks and parades may honor a historical moment, but the cross of Christ points to a greater victory — one that liberates souls and gives eternal purpose.

As America continues to wrestle with the meaning of freedom, justice, and truth, believers are called to be salt and light — to use their freedom not for self-interest, but in service to others, reflecting the love and grace of Jesus. July 4th, then, becomes more than a national holiday; it is an opportunity to thank God, not only for the blessings of this nation, but for the ultimate freedom found in Christ.



DECLARATION OF DEPENDENCE A Joyful 'toon by Mike Waters



My salvation and my honor depend on God;
he is my mighty rock, my refuge.

— PSALM 62:7 NIV

*If you would like to add an article or announcement to the Hilltopper,
please contact us! Call/Text: (540) 280-1860 or email
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