

The Hilltopper

November 2025



New Hope UMC Family,

What a fun October we had! It was such a joy to see so many folks participate in Trunk or Treat. Thank you to EVERYONE who helped with food, decorated a trunk, participated in the hay rides (thanks, Bruce!), or volunteered in any other way. You made a difference and brought joy to the lives of the kids in our community – thank you.

I also want to thank everyone who took the time to make Pastor Appreciation Sunday (and month) so special for me. I am grateful to be here and to know you all. Thank you.

As we enter the holiday months, I offer you an invitation (or perhaps, give you permission) to slow down. Pause. Take a deep breath. Place your hand on your belly and feel it rise and fall as you inhale and exhale. Say a prayer. Slow your pace.

It can nearly become second nature for us to race through the holiday season with so much to check off the to-do list. Let's become rebels to that narrative and choose, instead, to sloowww downnnnn. Everything will get done. The sun will rise and set today and tomorrow the same way it does every day no matter what. Rest in that assurance. Rest in God's blessed assurance.

Take good care,

Pastor Ashley Oliver-Thomas



Pastor Ashley will have another
coffee hour on Monday,
November 17th at 10am
This 'Coffee with the Pastor'
will be open to anyone who
wishes to come, and will be held
at Starbucks in Verona.

We will have a
Parent's Day Out
on Saturday,
December 6th from
10am-1pm.
There will be games,
crafts, music, stories,
lunch and more for
the kids!



Please sign-up by November 30th.



The following are the minutes from the **October 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 - October 23, 2025

Those in attendance: Becky Breeding, Alicia Copeland, Cindy Deavers, Wanda Harding, Linda Howdyshell, Beth Howdyshell, Bill and Judy Lalla, Laura Jenner, Corey Johnson, Susan Mehler, Pastor Ashley Oliver-Thomas, Bruce Rogers, Cindy Sheets, and Karen Whitmer

Becky Breeding called the meeting to order. Corey Johnson read a devotion that he wrote based on Hebrews 10:22 - "Keeping the church healthy"

The minutes from the September 2025 meeting were reviewed. Bill Lalla made a motion to approve them, Bruce seconded it and it was approved.

Treasurer: *(Cindy Deavers reported)*

- All bills have been paid to date, and all giving has been reported through today.
- An apportionment payment was made last month and there will also be one paid for this month.
- Pastor Ashley and Lay Leader Susan Mehler are now on the Dupont CC account.
- Give Butter - Cindy Deavers had some concerns about the logistics of this donation platform. After some additional discussion, we agreed to try it. It will cost us nothing to use this platform, as long as we enable the 'give a tip' button when we use it. The 'tips' will go to the platform itself and not to us, but we will get the full donation. We will get rid of our paypal donation link on our website.

Finance: *(Bruce Rogers reported)*

- The 2026 budget was approved last month. At that time we did not know that Pastor Ashley was eligible for pension monies since she is part-time. She is eligible and the budget has been updated to reflect that extra \$2,405 per year. The revisions were approved and passed and will be set to the conference.

Trustees: *(Corey Johnson reported)*

- Work to the A/V room and Nursery monitors has been completed. All system failures have been fixed. This included all new RF modulator and HDMI extender/splitters were replaced, and rewiring, repairing, and organizing of the wiring in the A/V room. COsts totaled: \$768.19
- A hole in the window in the A/V room was identified that allowed an obscene amount of flies into the church, particularly in the A/V room. The hole has been sealed and the room was “bug bombed” by our cleaning staff and all pests seem to be under control.
- A quote for the door repair to the stairway door has been received. Plans are to make the repairs once the new budget year begins.
- Broken windows downstairs have not been repaired yet. Awaiting a proposed date and time from the vendor.
- A door closer to the main entry door was damaged. Rocker arm was out of adjustment. The repair was made by the Trustees. While repairing the door closer it was noticed that the adjustment screws to the unit were severely out of calibration and changed from the previous settings. As a friendly reminder to members, please contact a member of the Trustees before attempting to make adjustments or repairs to church property.
- The playset has had a topical wood hardener added to the floor of the playset outside. The colors do not match but the intent is to paint the flooring once color once the hardener is in place. It is safe to use.
- The church lost hot water services on October 20th. Valley Heating Air and Plumbing was called to assess the problem. It was found that both filaments were bad in the hot water heater. They replaced the filaments after draining the system, but when recharging the system the control valve on the pressure tank failed and wouldn't allow water into the system. They replaced the control valve and charged the system only to find that the hot water heater still did not work. After further investigation, it was found that the unit's thermostat had been damaged (panel electrically bonded to the tank) from a power surge. The technicians stated that the unit needed to be replaced. After aggressive negotiations from the Trustees, the vendor agreed not to charge for any of the work because they missed the initial problem. Expressing a need to keep the repair costs as low as possible, it was agreed that if the Trustees could acquire two tanks privately that they would send them a quote to install the unit(s). Installation would most likely be next week.

United Methodist Men: *(Bill Lalla reported)*

- Churchwide cleanup was very successful. Thanks to all who showed up. We accomplished pruning, trimming of overhanging branches, picking up debris, and spreading a trailer load of mulch.
- The playground was evaluated and nails were hammered down, a coating was put on the deck, weeds were pulled and the swing area had gravel put back in place.

-
- The community meal was a blessing. We were able to serve about 85 people while learning about community needs. The men provided hot dogs, hamburgers, drinks and ice. In addition we cooked the hamburgers and assisted with cleaning up.
- The excess food was taken to First Step, the shelter for those who have been victims of domestic violence. They were very grateful for the donations.

New Business

- We have a workday scheduled for Saturday, November 1 at Steven Cull's residence. If we have enough help we should be done before noon.
- As we have done in past years, I suggested we skip the December meeting as it falls during all the Christmas festivities..accepted..
- Since November will be our last meeting, we will be thinking about nominations for 2026.

United Methodist Sisters: *(Wanda Harding reported)*

- The Circle of Hope and Love will meet on Monday, November 10 at 6:30pm
- Sisters of Faith will meet on November 3 at 1:30pm
- The Circle of Hope and Love will serve a meal to the UM Men on November 20th at 6:00pm

Events:

- On Saturday, December 6th from 10am-1pm, we will have a Parents Day Out from 10am-1pm. We will have games, story time, crafts, lunch and more. Please have all kids who are interested in coming sign up by November 30th.
- The Community Dinner went well. Thanks to everyone for their help.
- The Church Family Oyster Dinner will be on November 8th from 5:30p-7:30pm. Reservations need to be in by November 2nd.
- November 9th - there will be a Church Conference at Dayton UMC
- On November 23, we will have our Thanksgiving Community Service
- On December 12th, the New Hope Christmas Parade will take place
- On December 14th, we will have a Church Covered-Dish Luncheon after worship service.
- Becky noted that there is a box in the library for donations of religious literature that will go to the Equipping the Saints - anything such as old bulletins, upper rooms, etc will be accepted.

2025

Upcoming Coffee with the Pastor dates will be November 17th at 10am

During Advent we will have a 4 week bible study, please sign up in the Narthex for books, it will take place on Sunday mornings, November 30, December 7, December 14, and December 21st

- Christmas Eve Candlelight Service will be on December 24th at 7pm.

2026:

- Ash Wednesday Service will be on February 18th at 7pm.
- We will have a Lenten Bible Study, starting the week of February 22 and running through Palm Sunday, which is March 29
- Easter Sunday is April 5th. We will have a Easter Sunrise Service, breakfast, communion and an Easter egg hunt
- Fundraising for Peanut Butter Easter Eggs will begin in March 2026.
- We will have a Maundy Thursday Service at 7pm
- On Good Friday, there will be a community service, more details to come.
- On the Saturday before Easter, we will walk the Blue Ridge Tunnel starting at 10am. It will be at the East Trail Head and we will have devotion and prayer. Pastor Ashley says that the tunnel is a good place to "reflect on a world without God"
- We will have a pancake supper on Shroud Tuesday.
- On January 25th, we will have Souper Bowl Sunday
- On March 21, will be a Ladies Retreat
- Mt. Tabor will be reserving our church on May 24th and September 27th from 2-7pm.
- In April the Community Dinners start back - April 22, May 13 and June 24
- We'll have our next church council meeting in January, and then it will be held every other month
- On September 11th, there will be a Parents Night Out
- On September 26th, we will have our 50's Diner

Charge Conference:

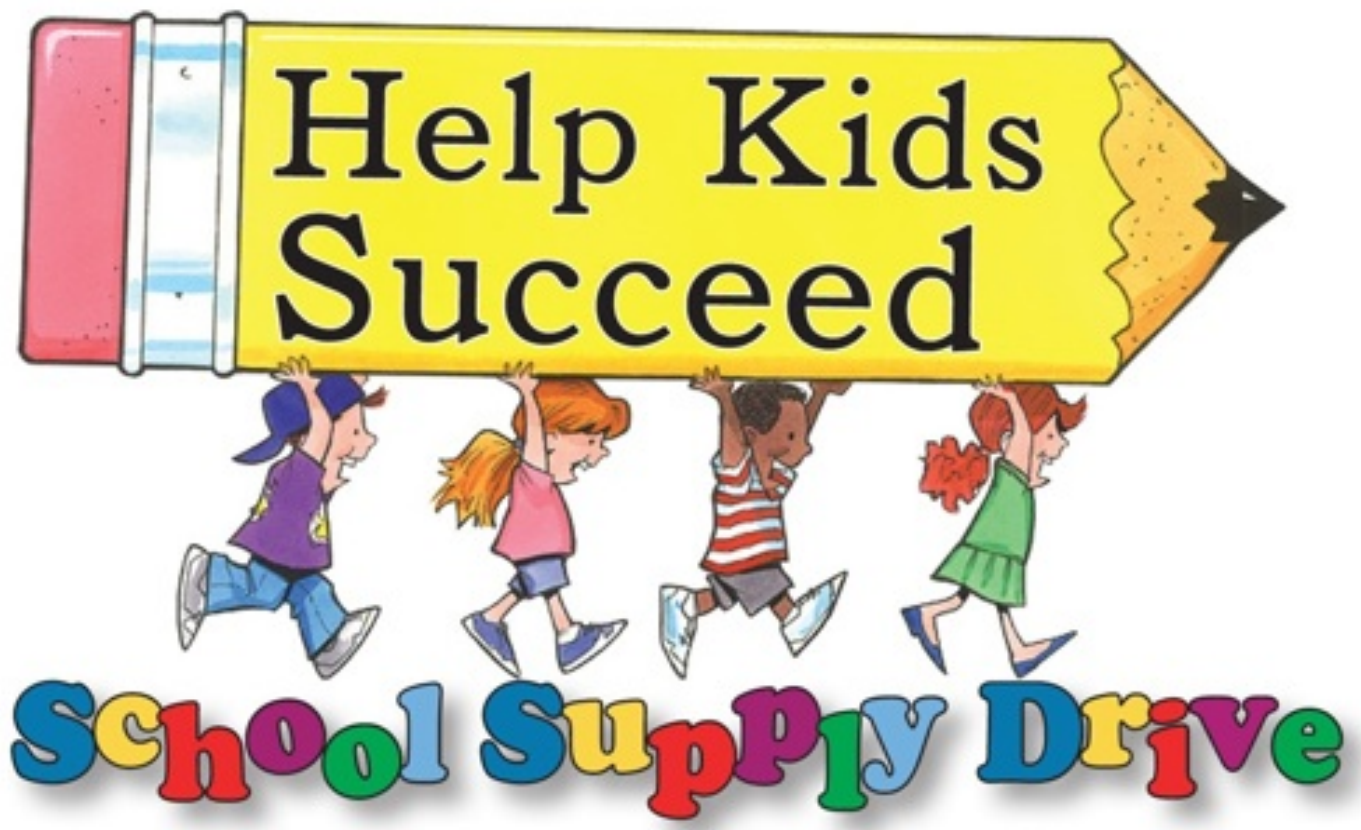
- During the meeting we had our charge conference to approve Pastor Ashley's compensation. Cindy Sheets was nominated as secretary of the charge conference for New Hope UMC. We voted and approved the pastor's compensation. Our pastor can safely and officially be compensated by annual conference. There was a move to adjourn the charge conference, it was seconded and passed. The charge conference meeting went from 7pm-7:20pm.

-

Becky closed the meeting and prayed.

The meeting ended at 8:16pm

Respectfully submitted by: Cynthia Sheets, Recording Secretary



Donations Needed

Our Advent mission project this year will be supplies for our local schools, as they prepare for the second semester.

A collection box will be in the Narthex starting on Sunday, November 30th through Sunday, December 21st.

What they are in need of most are: Tissues, Disinfecting Wipes, Headphones, Pencil boxes (no pink), Folders (colored with pouches on inside), Pencils, Composition Books, Colored pencils, and Crayons.

Thank you for giving to our children!



Upcoming Activities, Events and Meetings at New Hope UMC

Saturday, November 1st ~ Sweet Hour of Prayer (SHOP) @ 8:00am

Sunday, November 2nd ~ Sunday School @ 9:30am

~ Sunday Morning Worship (All Saints Day) & Holy Communion @ 10:30am

Monday, November 3rd ~ Sisters of Faith @ 1:30pm

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

~ Fellowship Dinner from 5:30pm-7:30pm

Sunday, November 9th ~ Sunday School @ 9:30am

~ Sunday Morning Worship and Veteran's Day Recognition @ 10:30am

Monday, November 10th ~ Circle of Hope & Love @ 6:30pm

Thursday, November 13th ~ Trustees @ 6:00pm

Saturday, November 15th ~ Sweet Hour of Prayer (SHOP) @ 8:00am

Sunday, November 16th ~ Sunday School @ 9:30am

~ Sunday Morning Worship @ 10:30am

Monday, November 17th ~ Coffee with the Pastor at Starbucks in Verona starting at 10am

Thursday, November 20th ~ United Methodist Men @ 6:00pm

Saturday, November 22nd ~ Sweet Hour of Prayer (SHOP) @ 8:00am

Sunday, November 23rd ~ Sunday School @ 9:30am

~ Sunday Morning Worship @ 10:30am

~ Decorating the church for Christmas - after worship

~ Community Thanksgiving Service @ Mt. Horeb Presbyterian Church at 7pm

Saturday, November 29th ~ Sweet Hour of Prayer (SHOP) @ 8:00am

Sunday, November 30th ~ Advent Bible Study @ 9:30am

~ Sunday Morning Worship @ 10:30am - First Day of Advent



Our Community Thanksgiving Service will be held on Sunday, November 23rd at 7pm at Mt. Horeb Presbyterian church.



Advent Bible Study

We will have an Advent Bible Study starting on Sunday, November 30th at 9:30am. The book will be "The Heart That Grew Three Sizes" by Matt Rawle. Please sign up in the Narthex if you are interested.

Leftovers

At the risk of appearing snobbish or ungrateful, I've got a confession to make: I don't like leftovers, i.e. cold food that is in need of being reheated. I always have the best of intentions to pull last night's meal out of the refrigerator, throw it in the microwave, nuke it, and consume it, but I fail to do so time and time again. Now, don't get me wrong. I've eaten my fair share of leftovers, but I can't honestly say that I enjoy eating leftovers. The food never seems to taste or look the same. It lacks something.

With respect to your Christian walk, do you realize that God is not interested in your leftovers?

In fact, Jesus says that we are to "seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness" (Matt. 6:33, emphasis added). Among other things, this means that God should come first in every aspect of our lives. Indeed, we should NOT give God our leftover love (Matt. 22:37-38), time (Eph. 5:18), thoughts (Phil. 4:8), service (Gal. 5:13-14), or money (Prov. 3:9; 1 Cor. 16:2; 2 Cor. 8-9). In the mind of God, such leftovers lack something.

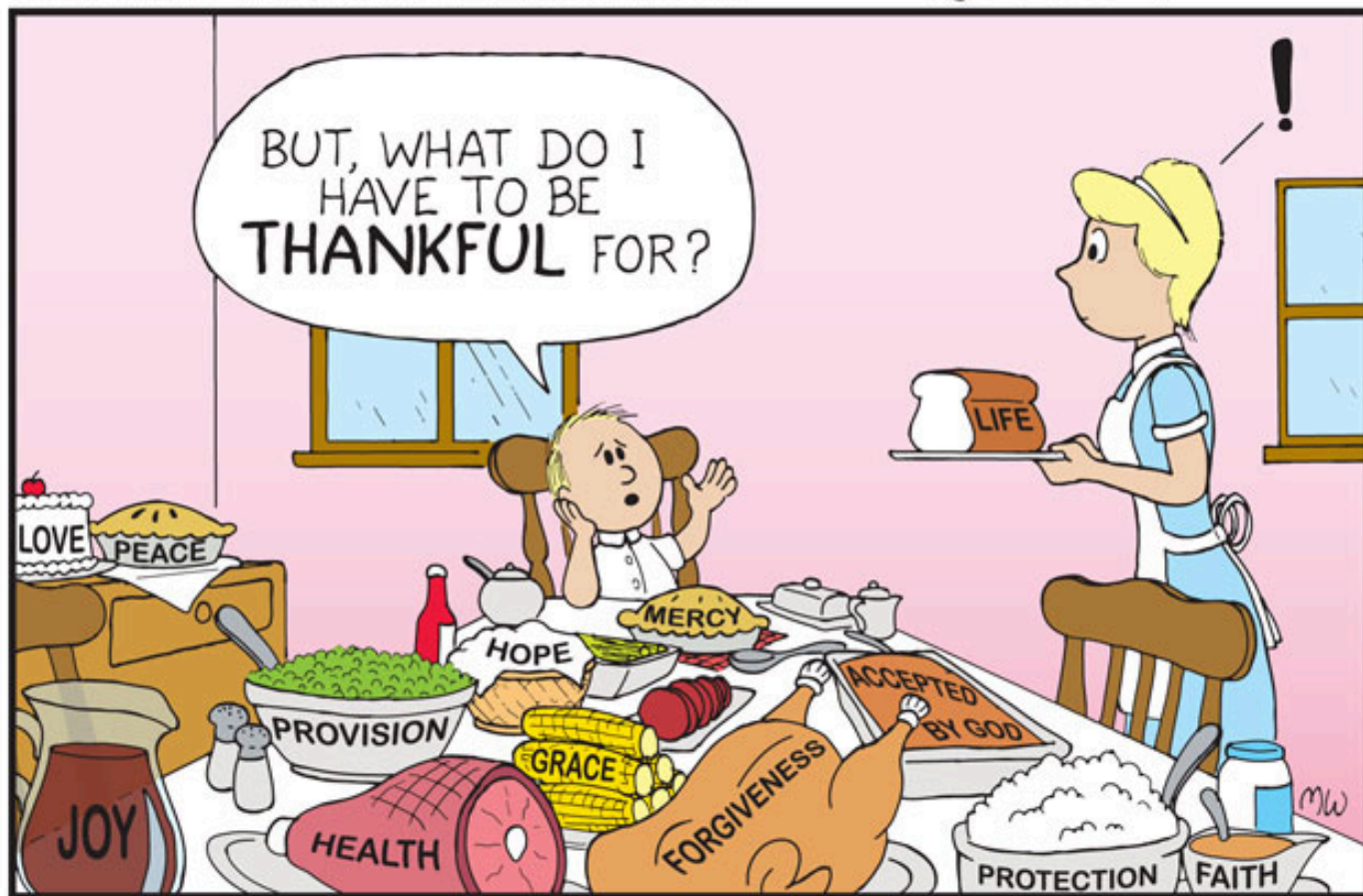


Being content with giving God the leftovers reveals something about the person who has this attitude. John said, "We love because He first loved us" (1 John 4:9, emphasis added). God loved us all so much in the midst of our sin that He took the initiative by sending His Son into the world to die in our place (John 3:16; Rom. 5:8). God gave us His very best; in return, He expects the same. Indeed, contentment in giving God the leftovers exposes an ungrateful, selfish attitude.

Leftovers are fine when it comes to nourishing our physical bodies. At times, leftovers are unavoidable, even necessary. However, with respect to God and our spirituality, a life of leftovers is unacceptable, especially when we take into account the example of His Son (cf. Phil. 2:5-11).

COUNT YOUR BLESSINGS

A Joyful 'toon by Mike Waters



Praise the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits—
— PSALM 103:2 NIV

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

New Hope United Methodist Church ~ Pastor Ashley Oliver-Thomas
55 Round Hill School Road; Fort Defiance, VA 24437
Mailing Address: P.O. Box 86, New Hope, VA 24469
Church Phone: (540) 363-5940

Pastor Ashley's Phone: (434) 465-8224

Pastor Ashley's Email: ashleyoliver-thomas@vaumc.org

NewHopeUMC.online

Facebook & Instagram: MyNewHopeUMC