

The Hilltopper



December 2021

From Pastor Mike

"The LORD is near to all who call on him, to all who call on him in truth." - Psalm 145:18

I am so thankful that God sent me to serve with you as your pastor almost 2 ½ years ago. It is a privilege I do not take for granted. I continue to be amazed at the strong lay leadership and the adaptability of the fine people who make up the congregation of New Hope United Methodist Church. When a need is discovered, this congregation calls upon God to find a way.

My heart was lifted once again after the Sunday, November 28th worship service. Alicia Copeland, our music director, came up with a very ambitious plan for music during Advent and Christmas. I was concerned that we may not have enough volunteers. We needed adults and children to sing and ring bells during Advent and Christmas Eve services.

One challenge we face at New Hope brought on by the pandemic is the ability to recruit volunteers. I was concerned that it may have been too much to ask, and the need seemed great. So, the call went out for volunteers and the response was amazing. The children practiced their songs during Kids R.O.C.K. A newly formed bell choir held a brief practice after worship. And people agreed to sing in the special Christmas Choir and took their sheet music home to practice.

The pandemic has forced us to do things differently which requires flexibility. Much time has been spent in prayer as we try to respond to COVID-19 in a responsible manner. The emotional toil brought on by the pandemic is real, but I believe we are trying to adjust and move forward as best we can. The enthusiasm I witnessed on the faces of the bell ringers and choir volunteers tells me we desperately need and want Advent and Christmas.

Another challenge is the need to reconnect with those who have not returned to online or in-person worship. While I have spent the past year reaching out to people over the telephone or through the mail, I am sure there are some who may feel neglected or overlooked. If you feel disconnected from your church family, I hope you will reach out to your pastor or a church friend.

Finally, since Christmas Eve is on a Friday this year and I think many families are eager to spend that night together. So, we will have a 4:00pm Christmas Eve service which should allow everyone to be home in plenty of time for Christmas Eve dinners and gift exchanges. I hope you will join us on Christmas Eve and bring your children and grandchildren. Look for more details about this service in the newsletter.

My prayer for the Church and each other during this Advent and Christmas season is that we will rediscover the joy of celebrating Christmas together again – whether virtual or in person.

Let us heed the words of King David and draw near to God. When the peace of Christ rules in our hearts, thankfulness overflows. Even in the darkest of times, we can praise God for his love, his sovereignty, and his promise to be near us when we call.

Yours in Christ,

Pastor Mike

It's Jesus Birthday!

A Christmas Eve Service For All Ages

Friday, December 24th @ 4:00pm



Hear the Christmas story read!

Sing your favorite Christmas carols!

Enjoy the special music of Christmas!

A children's message given by the innkeeper's wife!

A Christmas offering will be taken for local missions!

Decorating for the Season

Thank you to everyone who helped decorate our church for the Christmas Season!



New Hope Community Christmas Parade



*Friday, December 10
@ 6:00pm*

*Starting at New Hope UMC
and heading to the
New Hope Community Center*

Come Join Us!

Christmas Breakfast

*Sunday, December 12th
@ 9:00am - before Worship*



*Don't bring anything, but yourself.
All food and beverages will be provided.*

Expensive Junk and Free Treasure



Doug Wells ~ Parkersburg, WV

The zeal with which people will pursue the toy that their kid wants most for Christmas is astounding. Every year seems to have a new fad—a new massively hard-to-purchase toy. A few years ago it was “Shopkins” (tiny collectable rubber toys). When stores sold out parents flocked to eBay and spent thousands of dollars to get them. Normal retail price? Four dollars! Anyone who went to a store on Black Friday may very well have experienced the same kind of passion. And for what? I suspect in most cases those little Shopkins dolls got eaten by the dog or ended up in the trash.

What is interesting to me is trying to figure out where this fiery passion really comes from. My guess is that something in people's lives feels empty and the goal becomes to fill that void with stuff. People are thirsty and hungry without really knowing what they are hungry for. Nothing satisfies for long, even if it was four digits on eBay. I would encourage people to take to heart these words from Isaiah: "Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost. Why spend money on what is not bread, and your labor on what does not satisfy? Listen, listen to me, and eat what is good, and your soul will delight in the richest of fare. Give ear and come to me; hear me, that your soul may live" (Isaiah 55:1-3).

You might not be able to afford this year's latest fad. But guess what? You don't need it. What you really need you can get by the grace of God. Can you imagine the line if Walmart started handing out free Nintendo game systems? It would be crazy! God is giving out something much better than that. Why spend all your efforts on bread that isn't really bread? Why spend your money on a drink that won't quench your thirst? Come to God and He will give you what is good. He will give you the richest of fare, food that will make your soul thrive. And God won't charge you a dime.

*We welcome
new members
Bill and Judy Lalla
to New Hope UMC!
We are happy that
you have joined our
church family!*



Important Upcoming Dates:

Thursday, December 2nd @ 6:30pm
Wednesday, December 8th @ 6:30pm
Friday, December 10th @ 6:00pm
Sunday, December 12th @ 9:00am
Wednesday, December 24th @ 4:00pm

Church Council Meeting
PRG (Healthy Church Team) Meeting
New Hope Community Christmas Parade
Church-wide Christmas Breakfast
Christmas Eve Service ~ It's Jesus' Birthday!



We did not have a Church Council Meeting in November. Our last meeting for the 2021 year will be on Thursday, December 2nd.

We will have the minutes to that meeting in the January 2022 edition of The Hilltopper.

Minutes from the meeting on November 18, 2021

President Kim Maugans conducted the meeting. There were 15 members present. Mitch Brensinger, Jim Davis, Darryl Deavers, Jeff Hitt, Corey Johnson, Jarman Fretwell, Kenny Fretwell, Bill Lalla, Kim Maugans, John Morse, Pastor Mike Reaves, Bruce Rogers, Doug Snyder, Jack Walker and Lewis Whitmer. Devotions were provided by Corey Johnson. A wonderful meal was served by the Circle of Love.



PROGRAM: There was no program presented.

MINUTES: The minutes for the last scheduled meeting on October 21, 2021 had been sent to all members for their review. There being no questions, the minutes were approved as submitted.

TREASURER'S REPORT: The Treasurer's Report was given by Kenny Fretwell. It includes all expenses and revenue since our last meeting. We received a payment of \$342.00 from Augusta County for the week in October that we operated the dump. A copy of this report is part of these minutes.

Checking	\$ 307.17
Savings	<u>\$ 4,040.25</u>
Total	\$ 4,347.42

OLD BUSINESS:

- Kim Maugans and Wanda Harding have discussed a combined meal to celebrate the Christmas season. They decided to have a Christmas Breakfast at 9:00am on December 12 to focus on Fellowship. Sunday School will be canceled on that Sunday. Breakfast will be provided by the UMM and UMW and will include: Breakfast casserole, pastries, juice, coffee, and milk. A good will offering will be taken and given to a selected charity.
- Corey Johnson has a contact at a local VFW and suggested we see about having them present a program around Memorial Day. The group asked Corey to pursue that program.
- There was a group discussion concerning fund raisers to provide revenue for our mission programs. Having a group event is always good for developing fellowship. Do we need additional fund raisers? HOTS will be difficult to do the way we have conducted it in the past. Could we do something with a limited menu? Do we have enough people to staff a large event like HOTS? Do we do something and not call it HOTS in order to reduce expectations? There are so many questions surrounding possible fundraisers. A Revenue Committee of Jack Walker, Bill Lalla, Darryl Deavers and Kim Maugans was created to discuss ideas and options for possible fundraisers

NEW BUSINESS:

- There was no new business to be discussed.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned after a prayer by Pastor Mike Reaves.

Respectfully prepared and submitted by Bruce Rogers, Secretary.

NEXT MEETING: 6:30 PM, Thursday, January 20, 2022.



Thanks to Allen

12-16-2013

WHILE SHEPHERDS DECKED THEIR FLOCKS
BY NIGHT

**How much did Santa
pay for his sleigh?**

Nothing. It was on the house.

**How do you wash your
hands over the holiday?**

With Santa-tizer.

**What do you get if you eat
Christmas decorations?**

Tinsel-itis!

**My friend just won the tallest
Christmas tree competition.**

I thought to myself,
'How can you top that?!'

**Why was the snowman
looking through the carrots?**

He was picking his nose.

**What did the third wise man
say after his friends had
already presented gold
and frankincense?**

"But wait, there's myrrh!"

**A gingerbread man
went to the doctor's
complaining of a sore knee.
The doctor asked him.**

"Have you tried icing it?"



Birthdays & Anniversaries

1 - Steve Broyles
- Robert Corbin
- Diane Miller

2 - Robin Craun
- Leslie Shaver

4 - Matt Carr

5 - Susan Baldwin
- Charles Darrah
- Michele Taylor

6 - Clarissa Booth
- Karen Whitmer

7 - Betty Gruber
- Beth Rosen

8 - Peggy Corbin

9 - Josh Dively

10 - Bernie Powers

13 - Jennifer Bottenmiller
 Jake & Julie Botkin

14 - Brenda Price
- Dawn White

16 - B.F. Caricofe III
- Dwight Craig
- Shelvie Critzer
- Wyatt Markow
- Carrie Reed
- Paul Whitmer

17 - Kim Maugans
 Tim & Suzanne Lank

20 - Amye Bergman

21 - Emily Howdysell

22 - Keith Chittum

23 - Julia Botkin
- Cheryl Howell

25 - B.F. Caricofe, Jr
- Wally Smith

26 - Carl Caricofe, Sr
- Jesse Hartman

27 - Jeffrey Shipe

28 - Logan Kraisser
 Mathew & Tanya Keys

29 - Christopher Dively

30 -  Kim & Karen Maugans

31 -  Andy & Dana Breeding
 Gary & Kathy Lewis

The Familiar Path

How many times have you driven down the same road on your way to work or to your favorite restaurant or to church? How many times have you walked the same steps of your daily routine? How many times have you been on that same, old familiar path and thought how mundane things are?

Well I've been there...for 17 years I followed that same familiar path of my mundane routine. I feel like I woke up, went to work, drove home, had supper, and went to bed just to wake up and do it all over again. Of course, there were rewarding and special days mixed in with the regular routine, but it all just kind of blurred together and the weeks, months, and years passed me by.

Then, one day my familiar path no longer existed and I found myself walking a new path. One that I had never been on before and one where I felt like I was navigating it alone. Last November my mom's health quickly deteriorated and I found myself wanting to take care of her and taking FMLA to do so. So, I did...I left my familiarity of going to work



every day at my school teaching my fifth graders. My everyday normal was very different. Unfortunately, my mom passed away very quickly and I was faced with another decision...do I return to my familiar path? So, I decided to take a giant leap of faith and leave my familiar path of 17 years. Leaving what was so known to me was terrifying, not knowing what laid ahead of me was as well, but it led me to Virtual Virginia and now JMU.

It would have been so easy for me to go back to my same old day in and day out routine, but instead I decided I needed a new path. With trust in God, ultimate trust in him and a lot of prayer all the puzzle pieces fit together and I'm happier now than I have ever been on my new path.

I also realized God was protecting me from things that I couldn't see until I was out of that situation. Sometimes we can't understand the toxicity we are in until we get out of it. Sometimes it feels like there is no hope or it will be too hard to make a change, leave a job, start something new, etc. But God truly protects us from all the speed bumps in life and directs us to the path we need to be on.

In Proverbs 3:6, it states, "In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths." So when your familiar path takes a sharp right or you have to veer left don't ignore it or fight it. You have come to this crossroads in your life for a reason. Give all your faith and all your trust in God and he will guide you to the path that you need to follow. And if you find yourself on an unfamiliar path, take it, celebrate the new and uncertain and thank God for protecting you from being and getting stuck in a rut and remember it's exactly where you're meant to be.

Thank you and we pray that all of you are blessed,
Nathan & Cheryl Kutz ~ *Real Life Heavenly Hands*

Kids' Corner ~ The Nativity

By: Sharla Guenther



In those days the government decided that they should count everyone that lived in that area of the world. So Joseph had to take Mary to his town, Bethlehem to register.

It took Mary and Joseph a long time to get to Bethlehem. They didn't have cars back then, so it probably took them a lot longer to get there. This was very tiring for Mary because she was soon going to have a baby.

When they reached the town, all the hotels were full and there was nowhere that they could stay. Finally, someone felt bad for them, and offered them a place to stay.

The Bible doesn't say for sure

where they stayed but most people think that they stayed in a small barn where animals were kept. In any case, doesn't it seem strange that Jesus, the King of the Jews wasn't born in a fancy palace or even a hospital?

Mary and Joseph were thankful that they at least had a place to lay down. It was warm, and there was plenty of straw to lay on. That night an exciting, wonderful thing happened. Mary and Joseph had a baby! But it wasn't just any baby, it was Baby Jesus! The creator of the whole world, the King of Kings, the one who would save the world.

The little baby boy fell asleep in Mary's arms and she wrapped him in cloths and laid him in a manger on some clean straw. Mary and Joseph soon fell asleep, they were so glad to have this special baby join their family.

Some shepherds who lived near Bethlehem, were out at night in their fields watching over their sheep. They were worried a bigger animal might come and hurt the sheep, so they sat on a hill visiting and watching their sheep together.

Suddenly there was a bright light. Now this wasn't just any bright light. The light was so bright that they had to close their eyes for a minute because the light hurt their eyes.

When they opened their eyes to see what was going on, a beautiful angel was standing in the air just above them with his arms opened wide.

The shepherds looked at each other in disbelief, but realized it must be real, because they were all seeing the same thing. All at once they were very afraid, but they didn't run because they were too stunned.

Then the angel spoke to them. "Do not be afraid. I'm here to bring you good news for all people. Today in Bethlehem a baby has been born, He is the one that will save the world. You will know the baby because He will be wrapped in cloths, and laying in a manger."

Suddenly, just as quickly as the first angel came, there was a large group of angels, and they said together, "Glory to God, and peace to all people on earth." After they spoke, they floated away.

The shepherds were amazed and excited, did everyone know this news, or just them? They had to go see this baby the angels were talking about.

They ran as fast as they could, and soon found Mary, Joseph, and Baby Jesus. The shepherds fell to their knees when they saw Jesus, they were filled with joy that they had found the Lord.

During the time when Jesus was born there was a very mean king who ruled the land His name was King Herod. Remember his name, because we will talk about him later.

Soon after Jesus was born, wise men were traveling on their camels. One night they noticed a very strange star in the sky. They knew that this star meant that the King of the Jews, the One who would save the world had been born.

When the mean King... (What was his name again?) Herod heard this, he got very worried. He called a meeting with all the other important people in the area and asked them where this special baby had been born. The people replied, "In Bethlehem." They knew this because they heard that one day a special person would come from there and take care of all the people.

Then King Herod called the wise men to a secret meeting and found out from them exactly where they saw the star. He then told them, "Go and find this child. As soon as you find him, tell me, so that I can go and worship him." After they had spoken to the King, the wise men left to find the baby. They didn't know exactly where the baby was, but at night they followed the star in the east. They followed the star until it hung right over the very place where Jesus was.

Since it took the wise men a while to get to baby Jesus, they probably didn't arrive the day Jesus was born but sometime later. When they finally arrived they were very excited and happy. They found Jesus laying in Mary's arms, and they bowed down and worshipped him.

They opened the gifts they had brought Jesus. The gifts were gold, frankincense, and myrrh. These were very expensive gifts. Gifts that you would give to a King, not to a baby.

The story of Christmas is special, full of miracles and strange visitors all coming to visit a King and someday the Savior of the world.

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

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