



The Visitor



January 2017

Issue #13-1

Complex world. Thoughtful church.

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*University Lutheran Church of Hope
is a welcoming, Christian community of faith
centered in God's grace and
called to demonstrate God's love for the world.*

Welcome to the Table

“He welcomes sinners . . . and he eats with them.” The subject of the Pharisees’ snarky criticism of Jesus’ ministry has become means of grace for us all. We show our thankfulness by welcoming everyone who wishes to join in this sacramental celebration. Here at Hope we are extending our communion table – adding leaves to make room and welcome for more and more people.



The Radical Welcome

Our spoken and written invitation in the communion liturgy, after the words of institution and the Lord’s Prayer, is now what has come to be called The Radical Welcome: “All are welcome at this table.” No limitations, no exceptions for a person’s church affiliation, age, membership, baptismal status, or state of grace.

Personal Blessing for People of All Ages

For many years, the communion instructions in our bulletin have invited worshipers to bring their children forward to communion for a blessing. Now we are adding wording to make it clear that worshipers of all ages are welcome to come forward for a blessing even if they don’t wish to receive bread and wine. The pastoral staff and assisting ministers have been provided with suggested wording to welcome and bless these people, or will say whatever the Spirit leads them to say.

Communion Kits for Home and Hospital Sacraments

Our Friendly Visitors and Compassion Care Ministers who have received training in administering the sacrament to our members in home and hospital settings now have access to communion kits, with all the elements and supplies needed to link these individual celebrations to the Sunday morning Eucharist around the altar at Hope.

In these ways, we use Holy Communion to spread our arms and Christ’s table wide, to make room for everyone.

Marty Lewis-Hunstiger

Treasurer's Report for November 2016

	Actuals Nov 2016	Budget Nov 2016	Nov 2016 Var	YTD Actuals	YTD Budget	YTD Var
General Giving	31,114	34,575	(3,461)	382,970	398,775	(15,805)
Rental Income	6,918	7,875	(957)	79,043	89,460	(10,417)
Total Income	38,032	42,450	(4,418)	462,013	488,235	(26,222)
Total Expenses	40,823	45,738	(4,915)	447,254	498,779	(51,525)
Net Income	(2,791)	(3,288)	497	14,759	(10,544)	25,303



Again I have to report that total income is unfavorable to budget as of November 30, 2016. The variance is \$26k. Thankfully, I can report that our expenses are \$51k favorable to budget, thus making our net income favorable to budget by \$25k.

My personal thoughts on how non-profits (including churches) should be run is that they must be run like a business, or there will not be a “business” to do the mission. Because of this view, I believe that meeting our budget and mission needs to be a combination of thoughtful spending and contributions from our members. I try to keep my personal views out of my treasurer’s report. I believe I am here to report the numbers and answer questions. However, I also want our members to think of both sides – the financial side and the mission side. With that being said, our balance sheet is strong. (A balance sheet is a report of a company’s assets, liabilities and equity.). We are in a good financial position. We continue to work on keeping our church financially strong and mission-driven.

Simply Giving is a great way to evenly distribute your annual giving throughout the year and not have to worry about sending your check or even finding your checkbook. A link to Simply Giving is found on our home page at ulch.org/ And don’t forget, you can now give via text. If you’d like information on either Simply Giving or texting your donation, please let me know.

Total expenses in November were under budget by \$5k and YTD favorable to budget by \$51k. This stems from additional gifts received from the congregation for specific areas of ministry (Thank you, congregation!) and from our leaders being mindful of our mission while using our resources wisely (Thank you, leaders!).

The activity in the Building Fund for November was net income of \$3.8k. Thank you to our members for your continued contribution to this fund. We are blessed to have a wonderful building to call home.

If you have any questions please contact me at treasurer@ulch.org Merry Christmas!

Ruth Hedman
Treasurer

LifeLearners: A Mentoring, Tutoring Program

Mentoring and tutoring opportunities are being offered through LifeLearners, a program sponsored through the Minnesota Council of Churches. Being a mentor or tutor to a child is one of the best ways that we can address the achievement gap in Minnesota; there’s also the individual satisfaction it brings in making a positive difference in a child’s life.

A well-done video clip explaining more about the program is available at <http://www.mnchurches.org/justice/TutorRecruitment.html> Please watch it, and then consider if this is something you would like to be a part of.

As Bishop Ann Svennungsen stated, “God rejoices and the world is blessed when every child has an opportunity to grow and flourish through high quality education.”

Bruce Eldevik
Hope in the World

Discerning Sanctuary. Being Sanctuary.

Sanctuary: A place of refuge or safety. In a season of sweet baby Jesus in the manger, we sometimes gloss over Matthew's account (Matthew 2) of what happens next...What happens when Herod will stop at nothing to find baby Jesus. What happens when another angel appears in another dream to tell Joseph and Mary to flee to Egypt. What happens when they must remain in Egypt, away from their land, their people, until finally Herod dies. That's sanctuary.



Our congregation is in the midst of a month of discerning how we will respond to the invitation to become a Sanctuary congregation. Sanctuary congregations offer safety and refuge to immigrants and immigrant families facing deportation proceedings. Sanctuary congregations walk with immigrants as an act of resistance, offering them shelter, sustenance, resources, and friendship.

In late November and early December, members of Hope's Racial Justice Task Force attended a number of sessions sponsored by ISAIAH (a faith-based community organization). At the Task Force's request, our Vision & Governance Board invited the congregation to spend the next month (until the January 10 V&G meeting) in intentional and transparent discernment about sanctuary. A number of other congregations have decided to become sanctuary congregations or are in a discernment process similar to ours – notably neighbors University Baptist Church, First Congregational Church, and Grace University Lutheran Church.

Ideally, sanctuary will not be needed because a significant number of communities of faith publicly saying “No, we're not going to let our neighbors and friends be taken away in the night,” will affect the national conversation and politics. But the threat is near enough, and our kin in the immigrant communities are terrified, and it's our time to do some soul searching, learning, and acting.

There were some opportunities for conversation and learning in December. Early in January you are invited to participate in these sessions:

Wednesday January 4, 6-7 p.m. Soup and bread, Bible study, and discussion.

Sunday January 8, 11:45 a.m. Conversation after worship, including members of other churches and a speaker sharing their experiences.

ISAIAH is also offering weekly Thursday evening Prayer and Resistance Teach Ins; see the Thursday Epistle for details.

Whatever your feelings about this invitation, please plan to participate in the discernment sessions—we need your input. If you'd like to talk further, speak with members of the Racial Justice Task Force (Karen Westwood leads this), the V&G Board, or me. And, beloved, pray. Pray for those who, like Mary and Joseph and Jesus, need safety, refuge, sanctuary. Pray for our congregation's time of discernment. Pray for our world in these days. May this discernment process be rooted in prayer and inspired by our faith in God's holy way.

Pastor Jen

Hope Book Club

On January 8, 2017, 7:00 p.m. in the Hope Library, we're starting the New Year with a further look at a very thoughtful book: *The Social Animal*, by David Brooks.



“With unequaled insight and brio, New York Times columnist David Brooks has long explored and explained the way we live. This is the story of how success happens, told through the lives of one composite American couple, Harold and Erica. Drawing on a wealth of current research from numerous disciplines, Brooks takes Harold and Erica from infancy to old age, illustrating a fundamental new understanding of human nature along the way: The unconscious mind, it turns out, is not a dark, vestigial place, but a creative one, where most of the brain's work gets done. This is the realm where character is formed and where our most important life decisions are made—the natural habitat of *The Social Animal*.” www.goodreads.com

February 12: *Behind the Beautiful Forevers*, by Katherine Boo

Please contact Sonja Peterson with suggestions or questions at 612-789-0397 or speterson@dunnwald.com

FAITH FORMATION NEWS



Faith Formation for All Ages

Gratitude to Parents, Teachers and Students, and Plans for a New Year

Happy New Year! I've always felt that the best way to begin a new year is by appreciating all that is past, and looking forward to what may come. Looking back to December, that means sending out a HUGE thank you to those who helped with the children's Christmas Program. The kids worked hard to get ready to perform, and many adults worked with them to keep it running smoothly; not to mention, our teachers were there every step of the way. For that, I am very appreciative. University Lutheran Church of Hope should be extremely impressed with the talent and faith that is present in our congregation, young and old! I don't know many other places where students would have written such a witty and creative script, and continue to keep the Spirit alive and well in our Advent and Christmas celebrations. If you see those who participated, send a little appreciation their way.

But it is a new year, a new month, and a perfect time to renew our spirits. This month, we will be starting something new during our Faith Formation program hour. We will be starting **promptly at 9:15 am**, just as we have all year, but together as a group. We've decided to call it our **"First 15."** We will start each morning together in Room 101 or a classroom upstairs, with music, stories, announcements, and games. This will give our kids a chance to create community with one another, open up, and start their morning. **So parents and guardians, make sure you get the kids here on time each week so they won't miss out on our morning events!** Also, keep your ears open for two new intergenerational events happening in the months of March and May. Blessings and Happy New Year.

Ashlei Buhrow

Interim Faith Formation Minister

The FAITH5 with Older Kids

Starting rituals like the FAITH5 takes effort and intentionality. In many cases, it is easier to begin when your child or children are younger in age than when they are older. However, it's not *impossible* to start with older kids. A quick story:

A pastor and his wife started Highs and Lows with their teenage daughter. Unexpectedly, the girl was comfortable and conversational during her junior high school years, but when she started high school, a switch went off and she refused to talk. Her parents dutifully sat at her bedside each night and asked about her highs and lows for the day, but she only answered in scowls, grunts and snorts. This lasted all through her high school years, but her parents remained diligent and kept up the practice regularly.

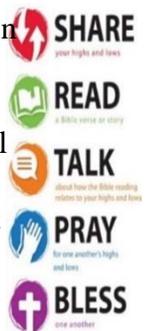
The daughter eventually went off to college. On her first term break, after watching a bit of TV together, the daughter said goodnight to her parents and went upstairs to her room. But she soon stomped back down the stairs and loudly said, "Mom and Dad, maybe you didn't hear me. I said I'm going to bed!"

Her parents finally got the message and went into her bedroom. The daughter climbed into bed and her parents sat down at her bedside. She looked at her parents, paused, smiled, and said, "Mom, Dad, do you remember all the great talks we had back in high school?" Her parents burst out laughing.

In reality, there were *few* good talks back in high school – only grunts and silence. However, the daughter remembered not what was said, but that her parents cared enough to be with her each night. We can get so caught up in the things we say that we forget about the power of simply being present. So, if you are apprehensive about starting Highs and Lows and the FAITH5 with your teen, fear not. They may not engage in much deep conversation, but I guarantee you that your regular presence will make an impact.

Monty Lysne

Faith Formation Coach



Sunday Forums

(9:30-10:20 a.m. in Heritage Hall, below the Sanctuary)

January 1 – No Forum

January 8 – Pastor Esther's Reflections. As Pastor Esther Dant retires from her position as Visitation Pastor at University Lutheran Church of Hope, she will share some of her ministry journey and her "take-aways" from her time on staff. She is a mother, a grandmother and a very fine artist. Esther has been in public ministry much of her adult life and has become an accomplished pastoral care minister. She joined University Lutheran Church of Hope following her years as pastor at Gethsemane Lutheran Church in Maplewood and accepted this position at Hope soon into her affiliation here. Before she becomes "just a member" again, we are eager to hear her reflections.

January 15 – Avenues for Homeless Youth

To think of 4,000 homeless and unaccompanied youth every night in Minnesota is shocking. Homeless youth are incredibly adept at hiding their need, and there are beds for only 13% of the homeless youth on any given night. The staff of Avenues for Homeless Youth believe the only way to end the gap between the number of homeless youth and the number of beds available for them is to make more people aware of the problem. Craig Freeman will increase our awareness of both the issue as a whole and how Avenues is responding.



January 22 – Journalism Today: What Is Truth? What's the role of journalism in a fact-challenged world? Recent developments have called into question the media's role as purveyors of truth. Political candidates have found ways around the media, and entrepreneurs are finding ways to make money by spreading false stories disguised as news. Hope member Eric Ringham, with a perspective developed over 40 years in journalism, leads a discussion of some troubling issues.

January 29 – Naming Your Spiritual Journey: The Dynamic Nature of Faith. What do we mean by faith? Faith can be thought of as a noun: a set of doctrines in which we believe. Faith can also be experienced as a verb: a relationship that changes and grows over time. As we seek to discover and deepen our spirituality, Brian McCaffrey will help us reflect on and share our changing and growing faith. Can't attend the Women's Retreat happening this very weekend? Here is a chance for a short spiritual retreat during Sunday Forum.

Bible Study 2017



As our Sunday readings turn to the Gospel of Matthew, let's take a closer look at the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7). These three chapters summarize the teaching of Jesus to any who choose to follow him. They are both a comfort and a challenge to every generation. Plan now to join the group for study and discussion. We will meet for six Sundays, beginning January 8 at 11:45 a.m. John Setterlund has prepared a study guide and will lead the conversation.

2017 Women's Retreat

Please consider joining in a wonderful weekend of women together. Much of the weekend is yours to spend as you wish. We will have Saturday morning time together as a group, then the rest of the time is yours. Get to know others, spend time on the trails at the retreat center or drive to William O'Brien State Park, get a massage, spend time in Stillwater, or just have quiet time in a place of your choosing. Here are the details:

Dates: Friday January 27, 6:00 p.m., through Sunday January 29, 12:00 noon

Theme: Connecting from Within & Without - Weaving Faith in Relationships

Location: Dunrovin Christian Brother's Retreat Center, Marine on St. Croix

Cost: Friday night through Sunday morning - \$205 (5 meals); Saturday - \$130 (1 or 2 meals, same cost); Saturday morning through Sunday morning - \$175 (3 meals). Scholarships are available – Talk to Pastor Jen.

Accommodations: Private and suite rooms include a sink, desk, chair, and linens.

Deadline to register: Wednesday, January 18 – **No Refunds after this date**

Registration: Forms available at the Welcome Center, or e-mail Ann Beane at spirit.beane@gmail.com

Questions? Call Ann at 651-245-8226 or email Beata Rydeen at beatarydeen@comcast.net

Congregational Life

Dates to Keep in Mind:

January 22: Farewell to Pastor Dant; Chinese New Year Fellowship Meal

January 27-29: Women's Retreat

February 12: Annual Congregational Meeting; Fellowship Meal

February 18-20: Winter Retreat at Mount Carmel

Life Events at Hope

We're a community of faith, called to hold one another in prayer. Here are a few of the life events affecting our community. We need your help to know what and whom we can pray for. Please alert a pastor or contact the church office. We include in prayer...

Births and Baptisms: Serafina and Arnd Scheel's family on the baptism of their niece, Anne Schuster, from Berlin, Germany, on Christmas Day.

Marriages: Maria French and Zac Wright, who will marry at Hope on January 15.

Deaths: Family and friends of Ila Mae Langguth, who died on December 5; Jacob Nordman and his family at the death of his grandmother, Margaret Canneff.

Significant Illness: Those living with illness, cancer, recovery, uncertain diagnosis, chemical dependency, and mental health struggles, especially Hannah Kiresuk, Grace Wagner, Barry Brooks, Janice (Rising) Minnich, and Chuck Lewis.

Fellowship Meals

Thanks to our Fellowship Meal hosts and everyone who participated in the Smorgasbord Potluck in December. For January we will celebrate Chinese New Year on Sunday January 22 with food from U Garden. In this meal we will also be giving thanks for Pastor Esther's ministry with us as she retires. Looking ahead, our February Fellowship Meal coordinates with the Annual Meeting on February 12.

Annual Meeting February 12

Plan to participate in the University Lutheran Church of Hope annual congregational meeting on Sunday February 12, after the 10:30 a.m. service. We'll give thanks for the ministry of 2016, elect leaders for the years to come, approve the 2017 budget, act on a proposed change to the Hope Trust bylaws, and more. Annual reports will be available in advance of the meeting.

Summertime Save-the-Dates

It might be chilly now, but spring and summer 2017 will come. As you look toward summer, here are a few dates to keep in mind.

May 13: Paddling on Lake Calhoun

June 17: Paddling and/or camping on the St. Croix River

July 15: Paddling on the Cannon River

August 19: Paddling on the Mississippi

October 7: Paddling on Lake Calhoun (one last time)

Also, watch for Day Camp dates, coming soon. Day Camp is for kids ages 4 thru middle school, with opportunities for older youth and adults to volunteer.

Would you like to attend the Winter Retreat?

Please join other Hope families, singles, and couples this year at our annual University Lutheran Church of Hope Winter Retreat at Mount Carmel near Alexandria. We arrive Saturday February 18 after 1:00 p.m. and depart late Monday morning February 20. Two overnights and four meals are included. We'll enjoy skating, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, sledding, saunas, board games, reading, fireside chats, and a chapel service on Sunday. For reservations email jill@mountcarmelministries.com or phone 800-793-4311. You can also call or text Bryan Kufus at 612-685-0402 or email at bkufus462@icloud.com for more information. Please make reservations ASAP; there's a non-refundable deposit of \$50 per unit. Send checks to Mount Carmel, PO Box 579, Alexandria, MN 56308, or pay by credit card on the phone. Hope you can come!

Don't Recruit, Relate!

When my parents joined our congregation in 1965, they enrolled me in “Saturday School.” Every Saturday for two hours, we had classroom instruction in the faith, and choir rehearsal. The youth choir (5th through 8th grades) filled the entire chapel with kids. We had to bring in folding chairs. In the alternate hour, there was an equally large choir for grades 1 through 4. Our classroom instruction filled the Education wing twice. And that’s only what happened on Saturday. On Sunday, there were two Sunday School hours, each also filling the Education wing. It was not uncommon, in that Baby Boomer childhood, for one Sunday School teacher to teach 30 kids at a time.

The Baby Boomers were the largest generation of children born in the United States in history, until their late-born Millennial offspring came along. Buoyed by the prosperity of the economic boom following World War II, they shaped the entire culture toward the celebration of youth and change. Most of their families could afford to have one parent at home to “raise” them and even have a little time left over for church volunteer work. When Sunday morning came, parents had both the energy and the commitment to bring their large families to church.

But they changed the culture as adults too. Investing more in education and in experiences such as travel and arts for themselves as well as for their children, they found it necessary to work more hours to afford the things of importance. The social safety net and relative economic equality that their parents relied on gave way to a cultural focus on material wealth and on rewarding those who could produce it. In the middle and bottom economic layers, two parents working outside the home became the standard for American family life (and often, that was not an adequate income.) More work, less “free” time, and more expenses for raising children meant that we had fewer children, later, and did not make it to church as often—if at all. Baby Boomers also revved up the “spiritual but not religious” revolution that continues to take religious participation out of the center of public life in the United States.

The Baby Boomers produced the next largest generation of children born in the United States, the Millennials. At the present time, the Millennials are numerically the largest generation in the United States. More than 25% of them were not brought to religious education or worship as children. Others, feeling abused by or confused about the religious experiences they did have, are reluctant to participate in religious communities. Current estimates suggest that less than 40% of these now-childbearing Americans identify as members or regular participants in religious communities, although more than 70% of them say that they pray regularly, usually to a single deity. Many of them also identify as religious “hybrids,” choosing aspects of differing religions as their spiritual practices. In many ways, they resemble their parents. They are getting more education, working more hours, marrying later, and having fewer children, later in life. And because of their financial vulnerability, they seek out less expensive neighborhoods and homes than their parents did, often in suburbs rather than in dynamic urban downtowns.

What this all leads to inside University Lutheran Church of Hope is that a smaller and smaller number of children participate in our worshipping community. Most Hope members cherish the presence of children, at least visually, in our midst, and are hospitable to their noise and physical activity when they appear. (Many of our children do not regularly come to worship). On a fairly frequent basis, members speak with me about their desire for more children among us and recommend that we “recruit more young families” by designing more exciting and compelling programs.

As much as I also wish there were more children among us, all of the evidence suggests that we are not in a position to recruit more young families through broad appeals to join us, or even by coming up with just that perfect youth activity that everyone will want to join. In fact, I feel as if “recruiting” is not a faithful way to think about our Christian responsibilities to children in our own congregation and in our communities. It sounds as if we are less interested in the children than in their numbers, and even seem to discount the importance of caring relationships, which is something many young families do yearn for.

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Don't Recruit, Relate! Continued from p. 7

There are fewer young families around, especially right around our very expensive neighborhood. Fewer of them have the kinds of experiences with congregations and congregation members that inspire curiosity about the church's mission or hope that something inside a worshipping community has ultimate value for them. Nearly all of them are stressed economically, for time if not for food, shelter, safety, health, and education.

But it's not hopeless. Here at Hope we are following the ELCA's commitment to building intergenerational faith formation structurally into all of our life together. This means bringing families on board with Faith5 at home, but also thinking through all of our projects and activities as places for children and youth to be engaged along with adults at every level and all times. One beautiful way this is happening is the plans for the children's play area in the courtyard, as part of the design of the courtyard itself. Another way we have long worked at intergenerational faith formation is the loving inclusion of children in worship, not just as wiggly spectators but as participants in leading through singing, reading, and acolyting. These are a strong beginning.

But we have more to do in all these areas. They won't bring us large numbers of new young families, but they can strengthen the children we have with us now for a more positive and sustaining relationship with Christ's church. We are working on learning how to address these areas, with the help of Monty Lysne and Ashlei Buhrow and a veteran Children's Ministry Team.

In the meantime, I hope the members of Hope will re-think "recruiting" and begin to think in terms of establishing loving relationships with children and families in their communities. Tell them about why you find participation in University Lutheran Church of Hope of ultimate value for your life. Offer them a ride, companionship in the pew, and assistance with their particular needs and hopes. Remember that you are called to be a "little Christ" to them and to welcome them into your heart and home, and eventually, to church.

Kirsten Mebust
Education Ministry Area

Pilgrimage into the Last Third of Life

Aging is something that comes naturally; all that is required is taking another breath. However, we've often associated the phrase "Growing Older" with "Growing Wiser." That takes a little more effort. In the Bible, wisdom is identified with the Holy Spirit. I would say that wisdom is a seed from God that is nurtured through reflection upon experience. Reflection means that we are willing to look at our inner and outer responses to daily encounters and events, with the purpose of learning from both our successes and our failures – the mountaintop joys and the valleys of shame and despair.

One of the gifts of age is an abundance of experience upon which to reflect. It offers a much broader perspective than the gift of youth. In their book, *Pilgrimage Into the Last Third of Life: 7 Gateways To Spiritual Growth*, Jane Thibault and Richard Morgan offer seven aspects of life to reflect upon through the lens of scripture. In an 8-week online course I teach, based on this book, I invite you to join with others in a spirit of pilgrimage, exploring parts of life we perhaps would rather avoid, and having written conversations that may feel awkward. Topics include: Aging and Dying, Living with Limitations, Doing Inner Work, Living In and Out of Community, Prayer and Contemplation, Redeeming Loss and Suffering, and Leaving a Legacy.

Through eight weeks of reading, reflection, discussion, assignments, and presentations, I hope that the Spirit will nurture your seed of faith, leaving you a bit wiser than when we started. The cost is \$60, and registration is at: www.BeADisciple.com

Brian McCaffrey

Gratitude and Generosity Committee: A Gratitude Story

My gratitude story is not based on one occasion or incident, but rather a lifetime of blessings given to me from my heavenly Father and my Lord Jesus, to whom I am thankful. Of course the blessing for which I have the most gratitude is that gift of everlasting life through the forgiveness of my sins.

Another most wonderful gift is that I know my prayers are answered. I was able to see from an early age the power of prayer in my life, beginning with a child's prayer for protection and safety for myself and my family, and continuing through adult years. Prayers for protection and safety continue for a larger circle of family and friends now, as well as prayer concerns for church members, acquaintances, and issues confronting our nation and world. I have seen God's hand in protecting and healing my family and loved ones. I know also that the answers to my prayers may not always be the exact ones I am looking for, but even at these times God is providing the answer and result that is the best one according to His plan and I am grateful for that.

Yes, I have received many blessings and am so very fortunate. I need only to look around my community, other areas in this country, and the world, to see want and suffering that I can't begin to imagine. For these blessings I am grateful, and I pray that God can use me in some small way to enable others to receive God's blessings as well.

This is why I feel compelled to be generous, by giving to the church and other causes that are worthy and do God's work in this world. I feel it is the very least I can do to show gratitude for all God has given to me.

Beth Ubbelohde

Gratitude and Generosity Committee

Youth Christmas Party



A winter storm on December 10 coated the ground with a few inches of snow, providing the perfect ambience for a frosty youth Christmas party on Sunday, December 11. Following the 10:30 a.m. service, the youth group enjoyed University Lutheran Church of Hope's annual smorgasbord potluck before embarking on an afternoon of fun. Some of our confirmation students went off to sing some much-appreciated Christmas carols to our homebound members. The rest of us traveled to the Roseville Oval, where we spent an hour ice skating outside. The weather was perfect for our time at the Oval: tree limbs outlined with a thin layer of snow, a slight nip in the air, snowflakes falling all around us.

After we finished skating, the Westwood-Pignatello family graciously hosted us at their home, the perfect place to warm up after time out in the cold. Together we revived ourselves with Christmas cookies, M&Ms, eggnog, and hot cider, and enjoyed a white elephant gift swap, exchanging chocolate bars for toy nativity sets and tea bags for bobblehead dolls. Finally, we enjoyed a Christmas movie, Will Farrell's classic *Elf*, before parting ways and wishing each other "Merry Christmas!"

As this year draws to a close and a new year begins, I look back with thankful reflection for the wonderful youth of this congregation and the time I get to spend with them each week. The youth are truly wonderful, bright, talented, and thoughtful people, and it is my honor and pleasure to minister with them. I also look forward in thankfulness to many more months of fun games, meaningful service, and thoughtful conversations. Our youth are a real blessing to this congregation.

Jim Vitale

Minister of Youth and Communication

Staff Transitions Report from the Personnel Committee

Transition for Pastor Esther Dant

After 31 years of ministry in the Lutheran church, Pastor Esther Dant is retiring at the end of January 2017. Join us on Sunday January 22 to honor her service and celebrate her ministry among us. Pastor Esther will preach, and we will gather for food and fellowship after the 10:30 a.m. service. This day will mark her retirement but not a good-bye. When she joined the staff in 2009, it was as a part-time visitation pastor, a contractual rather than a called position. She will continue to be a member of University Lutheran Church of Hope, worshipping with us and participating in the life of the congregation. We will acknowledge this transition from pastor to congregation member by honoring her and sharing our gratitude, and then walking together in her new role in our faith community.

From 1985 to 2002 Esther was an Executive Consultant for Stephen Ministries in St. Louis, where she led Caring Ministry Workshops and taught leaders' training conferences. She received her undergraduate degree from Concordia University in St. Paul, and a Master of Arts in Pastoral Theology and Master of Divinity from Luther Seminary. Her internship in the ELCA was at Central Lutheran Church in Minneapolis. She served for 20 years at Messiah Lutheran Church in Moundsview as Director of Youth, Stephen Ministry, and Pastoral Care, and for five years as Director of Congregational Care at Gethsemane Lutheran Church in Maplewood, before coming to University Lutheran Church of Hope.

Esther has three children: Michael, Janet, and Jack; and is grandmother to Monica and Polly. Formerly an Art major at Iowa State University, Esther has a passion for bringing together theology and the arts. She finds fulfillment making this a part of her caring ministry work.

New Faces

The front-page photo in the December *Visitor* depicts the dedicated, collaborative, and caring staff of University Lutheran Church of Hope. I remember a similar photo in the *Visitor* a year ago, but with a different set of faces! We are blessed to yet again have such capable people on our staff. We also give thanks to the Personnel Committee and many individuals who have volunteered their time to serve on search committees, plan farewell celebrations, and support new staff members who begin their ministry with us.

In preparation for Pastor Dant's retirement, a 15-hour/week contractual position for a Pastor of Care and Nurture is currently being advertised. The search committee (Joan Campbell, Garvin Davenport, and Brian McCaffrey) will begin reviewing applications January 10. We are seeking an ordained pastor so that he or she can assist the Lead Pastor by officiating at weddings and funerals and administering the sacraments. We hope to have this new Pastor of Care and Nurture join the staff in February.

The month of May marks the end of service for our Minister of Youth and Communication, Jim Vitale, our interim Minister for Faith Formation, Ashlei Buhrow, and our Congregational Faith Formation Coach, Monty Lysne. We look forward to more of their innovative activities for spiritual growth in the months to come while we plan how to carry their ministry forward when they leave. Current discussions in the Executive Committee and the Personnel Committee focus on a half-time position with a possible title of Minister of Faith Formation for All Ages. A complete job description is yet to be crafted, but we plan to conduct a job search in time for the new staff member to begin work in June. We ask for your prayers throughout this process.

Beth Kautz
Chair, Personnel Committee

Godspeed to Arun, Geethe, Irene and Sherwin

On December 11 we prayed Godspeed for Arun, Geethe, Irene, and Sherwin Anandharaj as they moved back to India. We continue to hold them in our prayers. Many have asked for their contact information: Arunkumar02@hotmail.com

Arunkumar Anandharaj and Family
9/2 Krishnasamy Layout
Palladam Road, Mahalingapuram
Pollachi — 642002
Tamil Nadu, INDIA



From the Visitation Pastor

Caroling for our Homebound Members

Wintry weather did not discourage members from visiting homebound members with plates of cookies and little poinsettias on Sunday December 11. The carol singing was beautiful, with our confirmation students and younger children joining us. Those we visited especially enjoyed these younger singers. They shared stories about who they are and where they were born. Paul Odenbach was amazed to learn that the three he visited were 95, 100, and 102 years old! Our number grew to 25 carolers, going in three directions and caroling for nine members and others who gathered around to listen. Thank you all for being part of this enjoyable event.



Farewell to Ila Mae

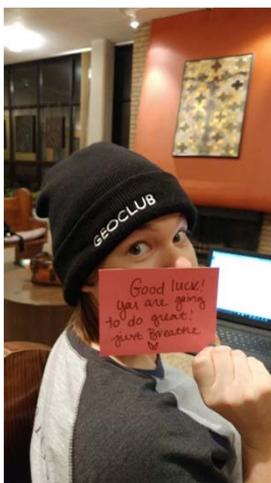
Again, our grief is fresh at the loss of beloved long-time Hope member Ila Mae Langguth. Her obituary says, “ULCH was a BIG part of Ila Mae’s life.” Her extraordinary teaching skills bring many stories from her former pupils. They remember “Speedy Look-Up,” learned at Saturday School. Her great love for sending cards brightened many people’s days. Their comments reflect the love they felt for her. At a recent worship service at Chandler Place, one of the worshippers, Carol (Watson) Kwiecien, told this story from years ago. She had received a call from Ila Mae, who was working on the memorial committee and suggested to Carol that her family might consider using her parents’ memorial gifts to donate a cross. It is the beautiful cross that now hangs in the center of our sanctuary. Ila Mae’s legacy lives on. Peace and thanks to her family from a grateful congregation.

Pastor Esther
Visitation Pastor

Welcoming Students: Finals Study Space and Goodie Bags

University Lutheran Church of Hope hosted Finals Study Space on December 15, 16, and 17, opening the lounge and library for students looking for a quiet place to study. On the very first day, about a dozen students avoided the cold temperatures by setting up in the lounge to prepare for final exams, papers, and graduate school applications! Thank you to all the volunteers who helped to welcome students, and to all of the students who came to study!

The students of Lutheran Campus Ministry were very grateful for the finals goodie bags that the congregants of University Lutheran Church of Hope made for them during last month’s smorgasbord. The chips and coffee were excellent, but the encouraging notes from congregants were by far the most welcome part of the goodie bags. Thank you to those who helped to make these gifts, and for the notes of support and encouragement. They were very much appreciated! What a great way to build and foster the relationship between Lutheran Campus Ministry and University Lutheran Church of Hope!



Nicholas Tangen
Community Engagement Coordinator

5.5%: A Solution

Ninth in a series of articles about the Hope Church Trust

What happens when you spend more than you make, whether “you” are a church, a family, or a business? Generally, the ultimate consequences are not positive.

Fifteen years ago the congregation voted to change the Trust bylaws to set a distribution rate of 5.5% of available funds in the Hope Church Trust for annual grants. It seemed like a good idea at the time, but as it turned out, due to circumstances beyond anyone’s control, since the 5.5% rate was set, the Endowment Fund has mostly been giving away more than it has been taking in. Grants given out during that time have no doubt been put to good use, but the Fund itself has suffered. In 2015 the Trust hit a tipping point. The total value of the Hope Church Trust actually declined, perhaps for the first time since the Trust began (excepting during the 2008 recession, from which the Trust did bounce back). Now we know that if the 5.5 % formula is continued, the Endowment Fund itself will almost inevitably “hit a wall” in the coming years, beyond which it will be unable to give any further grants without compromising Principal, which is prohibited under the Trust bylaws.

Accordingly, the Trust Board, after a year of in-depth review of the Trust, along with multiple internal changes and corrections, is proposing that the congregation alter the bylaws of the Trust to enable a more judicious formula for ensuring the ongoing viability of the Trust and its grant giving. The proposal is to replace the 5.5% rule with the following:

“The Trust Board shall set an applicable percentage disbursement rate based on factors such as the long-term return rates for Trust investments as well as prevailing economic conditions. This disbursement rate shall be reported to the congregation for review and comment at each rate adjustment (every three years).

“The objective shall be to preserve Trust principal and the Trust’s capacity for ongoing grants, and to ensure the growth and integrity of the Endowment Fund.”

Some advantages to this change include: a) flexibility, predictability, and more transparency in grant calculations; b) closer attention to the well-being of the Trust; c) more congregational input; d) continuity on the Trust Board for rate re-sets; e) no need for frequent bylaws changes by the congregation in response to changing economic circumstances.

Next Month: the new system; how it works; saving the Trust for future grant-giving.

Merrill Morse
Hope Church Trust

President’s Perspective and Vision & Governance Update

At our last Vision & Governance meeting, Hope’s Trust Board reported on proposed by-law changes. Please read Merrill Morse’s article above in *The Visitor* about this change. The V&G Board voted to approve the by-law changes. I want to thank the Trust Board for their work and commitment to Hope’s trust fund and to our faith community.

Ann Beane and Ann Agrimson presented preliminary plans for the children’s play area in the courtyard. Board members suggested taking the plans to the Facilities team for further action. Look for more information on this in the near future.

Recently Pastor Jen, members of the Racial Justice Task Force, and several other members of our congregation attended training sessions about sanctuary and how this movement fits into Hope’s mission. There was lengthy discussion at the Executive Meeting and also at this V&G meeting; many questions and concerns were expressed. The board approved a motion to continue the discernment process. As we move forward, there will be many opportunities for congregation members to learn and ask their own questions. We as leaders and staff want to hear all voices in the congregation on this issue.

Please pray for the people of Aleppo, that they may find peace and a future without war. From all my colleagues on the Vision & Governance Board, our wish is that you may be filled with the peace of the Christ child and have a blessed Christmas. Yours in Christ,

John Rydeen
Congregation President

Staff

Pastors:

Rev. Jen Nagel

Rev. Esther Dant

Minister of Worship & Music:

Zach Busch

Minister of Youth &

Communications: James Vitale

Interim Faith Formation

Minister: Ashlei Buhrow

Community Engagement

Coordinator: Nicholas Tangen

Congregational Faith Formation

Coach: Monty Lysne

Business Manager: Gayle Bidne

Custodian:

Geremew Beshah – weekdays

Ben Hartmann – Sunday

opening/closing

Child Care: Clair Gustafson

Working in partnership with

Lutheran Campus Ministry:

Rev. Kate Reuer Welton

Vision & Governance Board

Officers:

President: John Rydeen

Vice President: Eric Ringham

Past President: Beth Kautz

Treasurer: Ruth Hedman

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Worship & Music: Lisa Morse

Youth & Young Adults:

Leena Haugland Rapacz

Education: Kirsten Mebust

Hope in the World: Bruce Eldevik

Relational Ministries:

Nancy Swanson

Operations:

Ruth Hedman

Beth Kautz

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& Communications:

John Rydeen

Eric Ringham

Board Secretary: Ann Agrimson

The Visitor

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