

This Week

TODAY:

9AM: Choir Practice
9:15AM: Fellowship
10AM: Worship Service
11AM: Sunday School / Bible Study

Lord's Acre Meeting

Liturgists: Al Roesler
Scripture Reader: Matt Athey
Ushers: Bruce & Bonnie Ankeny
Greeters: Mavis Scheid / Tonia Weir
Accompanist: Staci Thompson

Monday, March 23:

NO SCHOOL / Pastor Godfrey off

Tuesday, March 24:

No School for PreK-5th Grade only!

Wednesday, March 25:

2:30PM – 4:15PM: Early Release
7-8PM: Confirmation

Thursday, March 26:

1-3PM: Interfaith Caregivers 30th
Anniversary Open House
5PM: Happy Hour w/Jesus at Lost
Saint Brewing

Saturday, March 28:

9:30AM: Easter Egg Coloring Event

Sunday, March 29:

9AM: Choir Practice
9:15AM: Fellowship
10AM: Worship Service with Kids
Singing & Baptism
11AM: Sunday School / Bible Study

PALM SUNDAY

Baptism of Lakeland Huber

Liturgists: Joni Jenkins
Ushers: Ben Roper & *Volunteer?*
Greeters: Roger & LaDonna Dutton
Accompanist: David & Sandra Murray

ANNOUNCEMENTS



The **LORD'S ACRE** group will be meeting today
after the worship service.

**Please get Lord's Acre payments into the
church office ASAP. Thank you!!**

Carolyn's Office Hours

For the week of 3/23-3/27/26:

Wednesday, 3/25/26 8:15AM-4:15PM

Thursday, 3/26/26 8:15AM-4:15PM



Interfaith Caregivers:

30th Anniversary Open House

Location: Hope United Methodist Church, Blue Earth

Date/ Time: Thursday, March 26th from 1-3PM

*We will be serving light refreshments to thank
everyone for their support of Interfaith over the last
30 years.*

NOTE TO PARENTS: On Palm Sunday,
March 29th, children will be singing during
worship. As there is a Potluck Dinner right
after worship, there will be **NO** Sunday
School that day.

2026 Radio Broadcast Sponsorship

The 2026 Radio Broadcast sign-up list is posted
in the Narthex! If you would like to sponsor/sign
up for a particular Sunday, please fill out your
name, message, and the sponsorship fee is
now **\$30** per Sunday.



Sunday, March 22, 2026

Fifth Sunday in Lent

Hope United Methodist Church

www.bhopeumc.com | (507) 526-2144 | hopeumc@bevcomm.net

Church office hours: see announcements for this week!

Pastor Godfrey Gakuru: (740) 803-6762 hopepastor@bevcomm.net

Administrative Assistant, Carolyn Kaiser: (763) 567-9004 hopeumc@bevcomm.net

Kids Coordinator, Megan Goshorn: (253) 592-5219 kidscoordinatorhope@gmail.com

*For more information and to see what else is happening at Hope, visit us at
bhopeumc.com and our Facebook page, Hope United Methodist Church-Blue Earth, MN.*

If Only You Were There

I remember that Friday morning, July 20th, when I was an international student in the United States. I had just woken up when my phone started ringing. I looked at the screen and saw my elder brother, Felix, calling. I had always answered his calls without hesitation, but this time something felt different, something told me that things were not right. As soon as I picked up, he said, “Dad has left us.” I understood what he meant—our father was gone. In that moment, everything shifted. My mind raced, trying to grasp what had just happened, while also wondering how my life would now be shaped and what my journey back home would look like.

My father had been battling illness for several years and had been receiving treatment in various hospitals. A few days before his passing, I learned that his condition had worsened. My heart sank, and I immediately called a close friend of mine, a manager at a well-known hospital near home. I told him I intended to have my father taken to that hospital and asked him to receive him, provide the best treatment possible, and, if necessary, ensure he was given oxygen or any support needed to keep him stable so that I could travel home to see him one last time. I also called my elder brother, who has been like a guardian to me and my other younger siblings. When God blessed him with a good job, he took on the responsibility of educating us. I shared with him my desire to see our father taken to a better hospital. He had a different opinion, suggesting another missionary hospital instead, which is where my father ultimately was taken, and it was there that he was promoted to glory. My desire to see my father treated in a higher-level hospital was not realized. I felt as though we had not done enough to save his life. I wished I had been there.

My next step was to book a flight to Kenya for my father's funeral. On arrival, I first went to the mortuary. In tears, regret, and agony, I saw my father's body lying in that cold room. I looked at his face, and although I recognized him, he was no longer the man I had known since birth; he was lifeless. Every time I thought about it, I wished I had been there, thinking maybe I could have done more, maybe I could have helped him live longer. I began to turn the blame on myself and others, especially my brother, who did not fulfill my wish because I was not there. For a moment, I forgot that this was not about me or others—it was about God. But in that moment, God reminded me that my life is His, and my father's life was His as well—not mine. It was then that I began to let go and started to thank God, recognizing that there is glory even in a lifeless body. Death has a way of exposing our deepest pain, even leading us into despair, especially if we shift our focus from Christ. That is why we need to fix our eyes on Jesus.

In John 11:17–29, we encounter a woman named Martha who struggles to understand why Jesus delayed in saving her brother Lazarus from death. Even with timely updates, Jesus arrives in Bethany after Lazarus has been in the tomb for four days, and his body had begun to smell—exactly what I felt when I visited my dad in the mortuary. Martha might have had the same feelings as me and may have said, “The situation is final, beyond human hope. Jesus can do nothing at this point. I wish He had been here on time.” Death has already done what it does. When Martha hears that Jesus is coming, she goes out to meet Him and says, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.” These words can be interpreted in different ways—some hear them as a cry of hope and faith, others as hopelessness and resignation. In reality, we hear more than sorrow, we hear regret, questions, and perhaps even a subtle sense of disappointment. Martha believes in Jesus' power, yet she struggles to understand His delay. But Jesus does not simply offer sympathy or reassurance. He offers Himself. He declares, “I am the resurrection and the life.” With these words, Jesus shifts Martha's understanding from a distant, future hope to a present and living reality. Resurrection is not only an event that will happen one day, it is a person standing before her now. Martha is focused on the past, on what could have been. This movement is crucial, and we all need it. Move from the past to the present that the road we need to walk on a road that recognizes not failure and regret but present grace. Living in daily Grace.

This passage speaks powerfully into our own lives because many of us carry the same cry: “If you were here.” It is the language of grief, regret, unanswered questions, and sometimes quiet blame. It echoes in moments when we look back and wonder if things could have been different—if we had acted sooner, done more, or been present in a different way. The pain of “if only” is real. Martha voices it, and many of us know it well. It is the place of guilt and second-guessing, where we replay events in our minds and question our actions. We tell ourselves, “Maybe if I had done this, things would have turned out differently and maybe better.” Yet even when we have done everything within our power, there often remains a lingering sense that it was not enough. Martha, too, believed that if Jesus had been physically present, the outcome would have changed. But this story reminds us of a deeper truth: there are things we cannot control, and therefore regret, blame, or fear does not change anything. This calls for a total surrender to Christ, trusting in His power.

In Ezekiel 37, God shows the prophet a valley of dry bones—completely lifeless, scattered, and beyond human hope. These bones represent the people of Israel in exile, who were saying, “*Our bones are*

dried up and our hope is gone.” But God reminds Ezekiel of something powerful: what looks dead is not beyond His power. He asks, *“Son of man, can these bones live?”* inviting Ezekiel to see that hope does not depend on human possibility, but on God’s power. God then promises to bring life, breath, and restoration—symbolizing that He will restore His people, bring them back from exile, and renew their hope. And what is surrender? It is the way Ezekiel responds to God: *“Sovereign Lord, you alone know.”* Ezekiel speaks from trust and leaves the impossible in God’s hands.

Today, we are reminded that not all delays mean neglect, and a delay does not equal denial. Delay can feel like absence, and absence can feel like a lack of love. I struggle with this as your pastor; when I receive a call about the loss of a loved one, like Maryann or Lois, I feel it would mean more if I had been there with the family when death happened. Even with delays, Jesus still loved Martha, Mary, and Lazarus deeply. God’s timing is not our timing. We are being called to be present in the moment and to live one day at a time, which allows us to see God even in difficult circumstances. Even in her grief, Martha expresses faith and declares, “I believe that you are the Messiah.” This reminds us that faith does not mean the absence of pain. Rather, faith is the choice to trust God amid pain. It is holding on to belief in what we cannot see, touch, or feel. Today, I look back at a moment when it felt as though my world was ending—when I could not save my father’s life and thought I had lost everything that mattered most to me. In my African culture, there is a deep, connection between grandchildren and their grandparents. So, when I see my daughter Nelly, I feel like my father is alive again.

Many of us carry our own “if you were here” stories—moments we wish we could change, decisions we replay, losses we struggle to accept. **Just as Ezekiel was commanded to speak to the dry bones and call them to life, Jesus calls us to speak hope and life into even the most lifeless situations. Jesus is never late; He is always right on time, bringing hope, restoration, and the power of resurrection. That power is now here. Amen.**

ANNOUNCEMENTS CONTINUED...

Join us on Saturday, March 28th from 9:30-11AM for a joyful Easter morning filled with food, fun, & creativity!

Families are invited to enjoy a brunch while kids decorate & color Easter eggs together.

This fun, come-and-go style event is for all ages as we celebrate the joy and hope of Easter.

All supplies provided.

Just bring your family and come ready to celebrate!



****ODD DATES - Pete's Bar and Grill****

115 E 6th St, Blue Earth, MN 56013 (formerly Average Jo's)

****EVEN DATES - Lost Saint Brewing****

317 S Grove St, Blue Earth, MN 56013

Order your beverage-of-choice and enjoy a casual group conversation about life, struggles, celebrations... and how faith, church family, and community fits in. No RSVP required! *To be added to the text group for reminders, please contact Mark or Megan Hanson-Haase.*

Cleaning out your closet?! We need your shoes!



funds2orgs



Blue Earth Area Tennis Team is doing a fundraiser for shoes – gently worn, used and new shoes. Collected shoes will not only help support the tennis team

financially but they will be reused and given a second life by those in need through Funds2Orgs Shoe Drive. There is a box to collect donated shoes in the Narthex by the Welcome counter. Last day to donate is April 30, 2026. Any questions, please contact Tina Prescher at 507-525-7924.



HOLY WEEK

Maundy Thursday Service 5:30PM (4/2/26)

Good Friday Service 5:30PM (4/3/26)

Easter Sunday Service 10:00AM (4/5/26)



We'll be filling "Lenten Jars" with coins collected that we will be donated to the Blue Earth Area Schools for their BUCC-y Bags program. *Lenten Coin Calendars are available on the bulletin boards by the restrooms.* "BUCC-Y bags" are made for K – 5th Grade students with weekend

food insecurity to help reduce hunger over the weekends so students return to class less hungry and ready to learn. A cart to collect your coin-filled containers will be available in the Narthex on both Palm Sunday and Easter Sunday. **"HAPPY HOUR WITH JESUS" is back, weekly on Thursdays @ 5pm!**