

Hope United Methodist Church
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Hope United Methodist Church NEWSLETTER



MAY 2026

Churching and Dechurching



In our modern times, many pastors remind us that the growth of the Church is ultimately God's work, not ours. Like Paul, we plant seeds with hope, trusting that God will cause them to grow. Recent studies show that congregations across nearly all U.S. Christian denominations are declining. According to the Pew Research Center's 2023–24 Religious Landscape Study (published February 26, 2025), only 62% of U.S. adults now identify as Christian, down from 71% in 2014 and 78% in 2007. This reflects a long-term decline in Christian

affiliation in America. This is just one study among many, and it confirms what many pastors are already witnessing in the lived reality of their congregations.

On the other hand, I feel that, as Hope Church, we have truly been blessed to have a vibrant congregation—made up of active children and youth ministries, as well as young families, adults, and the elderly—who are all filled with vigor and passion for sharing the love of Christ with open hearts. While the United States is currently experiencing a significant shift described as “the great dechurching”—with 40 million people topping regular church attendance in the last 25 years—this trend is part of a broader, global decline in religious attendance and affiliation, particularly in the Western world, including Canada and Europe. According to John Witvliet, finding on some of the causes of the failings, he argues that the church “failures related to racism, classism, ableism, and creation care; failures related to truth-telling and accountability; failures related to how we love God and our neighbor; failures related to how we preach and teach the Bible and pray for the world God loves”. ~Witvliet.

However, these reality presents a positive challenge for the disciples of Jesus Christ: to awaken, to rise, and to follow His command, “Go and make disciples of all nations” (Matthew 28:19). As we embrace this call with faith, courage, and hope, let us also remember Paul's message to the Church in Corinth during a time of division. Believers were focusing on personalities—claiming allegiance to Paul, Apollos, or others—rather than on Christ. Paul called this spiritually immature, “worldly,” driven by human feelings, jealousy, and rivalry rather than the Spirit. For any church to grow, Paul reminds us that leadership and ministry are not about personal followers. Leaders are merely instruments: Paul “planted the seed,” Apollos “watered it,” but it is God who makes it grow. True growth happens when a congregation moves beyond self-centered preferences and human instincts, embracing a Spirit-led unity that prioritizes God's work over individual agendas. Church growth is not just numbers or programs—it is the fruit of God's Spirit working through humble, faithful service, and a community committed to sharing Christ's love rather than personalities. We must, therefore, reflect on our past, look forward to hope, and ask how we can become a more inclusive church—with open hearts, open minds, and open doors. As Lovett H. Weems Jr. reminds us, “An inclusive church will be a growing church.” The revival of the Church in the 21st century will be shaped by our openness and our willingness to embrace those who are different from us, especially those who struggle to belong. Such renewal calls us to the faithful work of justice, prayer, and a deeper commitment to following Christ's true example of humility and love for all.

Rev. Godfrey Gakuru

Hope UMC, a faith community growing in Christian love, through discipleship, the inclusion of all, and fellowship.



OPEN HEARTS. OPEN MINDS. OPEN DOORS.

SUNDAY SERVICE: 10:00AM WORSHIP

A pre-recorded message airs at 9:30am on
KBEW 1560 AM. Visit behopeumc.com to stay updated
with current events, bulletins & newsletters.

Staff:

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

Jaymee Nelson, Administrative Assistant (507)-525-0267 cell E-mail: hopeoffice@bevcomm.net

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

Carolyn Kaiser, Bookkeeper (763) 567-9004 cell E-mail: hopeumc@bevcomm.net

Office: (507) 526-2144 hopeoffice@bevcomm.net (please note new address!!)

Office hours are Mondays 8:15am-12:15pm and Wednesdays 8:15am-4:15pm (may change soon!)

Newsletter items are due by the 17th of the month.

Please send announcements for the bulletin and the newsletter to the above email address or call the church office. Also, please notify the church office of any changes in names, addresses, incorrect birthdays or anniversaries, or if you'd like to receive this newsletter via email.

Mission Committee

First, THANK YOU to everyone who contributed to **BUCC-Y BAGS**, whether by bringing in Lenten Jars or directly into the offering plate. We raised **\$579.31** in this year's Lenten Offering! This is such a good mission project for us, it is local AND it is as close as we can be to ensure all our K-5 students have enough to eat through the weekends and are ready to learn come Mondays! Again, thank you!! This is an ongoing mission project for Hope, so whenever you can—the rest of this year and beyond—just label "BUCC-y Bags" on the memo line of a check and place in the offering plate (can be done online as well!).



Those participating in the 2025 **LORD'S ACRE** raised \$4,200 and met on March 22 to decide on the recipients with the final results as follows:



- \$2,000 toward Camp Scholarships for Hope Youth
- \$500 to Riverside Cemetery;
- \$500 to Interfaith Caregivers
- \$500 to our local Food Shelf
- \$400 for our Praise Band (equipment)
- \$300 to our Seed of Hope Garden Fund

This annual sign-up begins with planting season and ends the following winter to missions that the group decides needs our financial help. Next, the **2026 Sign-Up Poster** is in the Narthex awaiting your signatures! "Farmers" contribute the income from ONE ACRE and "Renters" contribute \$70 – as many times as you can! Each dollar goes directly to the mission without any overhead costs or fees. These gifts show Hope's sharing abundance!!

NEEDED !!! MAT WEAVERS !! Come join the fun and the sense of accomplishment of weaving mats from used shopping bags. Each 1st and 3rd Thursday of the month, enjoy the good company from 1-3PM. Hope, along with Open Doors UMC in Wells, Good Hope Lutheran in Frost/Bricelyn/Bethany and others locally have already delivered 50 to our new UMCOR Depot in Jefferson, IA. Presently, we have enough funds, bags (Florence's garage is full) and looms, just need more hands and hearts. This is all hand work with a loom and it takes between 1,000 and 1,200 bags to make one mat.

Another important mission at Hope is **BABY HUGS**. Anyone wanting to help support this can do so best by designating dollars specifically to "Baby Hugs" online or noted on an offering check. Currently, the cost to put ONE Baby Hug bag together is \$48. We also welcome folks in purchasing 0-6 month or 6-12 month sized socks. The socks can be dropped off on the Welcome table with other Missions, in the office, or directly to Joni Jenkins. Every baby born in Blue Earth receives a Hug and parents all know they're welcome and cared for by Hope UMC. Last year, 174 babies were born at UH. Projected in 2026 = 200. THAT'S A LOT OF HUGS!!

Finally, **our Welcome table** (in the Narthex) is a busy place! You can donate items for the Food Shelf, for the Emma Norton Shelter in St Paul, for our BUNDLE UP ... anytime! Baskets for each are labeled on the backside. AND, soon, Melissa Anne will be bringing in garden produce from our SEEDS of HOPE garden. These are available for anyone to take and also being distributed weekly by HOPE volunteers to those requesting produce. If you have any questions or would like to bring produce to share, please contact her.



HAVE A WONDERFUL MAY!!

My prayer is that we can remember the resurrection joy that we feel on Easter. Remember it each day and share it with others through our actions.

Happy May, and please don't forget our next UWFaith meeting on **Tuesday, May 5th, at 2:00!** All are welcome!

Be Blessed!
Your Sister in Christ,
Nancy

UWF CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

May Birthdays

May Anniversaries

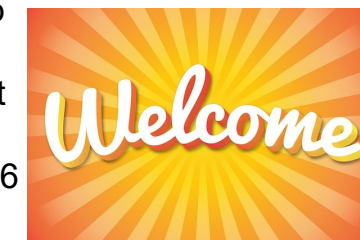
- | | |
|------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1- Tammy Davis | 17- Mark Haase |
| Susan Hinton | Mike Warringer |
| Jonathan Hill | |
| 4- Susan Salisbury | 18- David Berndt |
| Audrey Brod | TJ Lewis |
| 5- Florence Hacklander | 19- Ben Eckmann |
| Lloyd Hinton, Jr. | 20- JR Hanson |
| | Aiden Haase |
| 6- Jennifer Johnson | 21- Julianna Lewis |
| 7- Thomas Nesheim | 22- Roger Davis |
| 8- Gibson Haase | Kerrie Nesheim |
| 9- Brenda Millmann | 23- Dale Matheson |
| 10- AB Russ | Clint Hall |
| Terri Burns | 25- Ron Fox |
| 12- Jessica Eckmann | Linda Berndt |
| Pastor Godfrey Gakuru | 29- Lucille Christensen |
| 13- Robin Parsons | Mavis Scheid |
| 14- Kathy Anderson | Avery Asmus |
| 16- Judy Bailey | Magnus Steele |
| | 30- Izabylla Gonzalez |

- 5- Terry & Jody Johnson
- 14- Nicholas & Crystal Uecker
- 17- Tim & Sue Perrizo
- 18- Pastor Godfrey & Christine Gakuru
- 22- David & Linda Berndt
- 24- Jarett & Alesha Stauffer
- 29- Dale & Francine Russell



NEW ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT!

We would like to welcome Jaymee Nelson to our staff! Jaymee grew up in Blue Earth and still lives in the area with her husband and three children. She comes to us after working 16 years as an Office Assistant at Darling Ingredients. She is very excited to be here at Hope working 15 hours a week! Jaymee started her training on Monday, April 20, 2026 and will continue through the first few weeks of May. Her "scheduled hours" will be determined after training has wrapped up.



During the same time frame, Carolyn will be transitioning to 10 hours a week as the bookkeeper for Hope but working from home on the church financials (payroll/HR items as well).

Both of us appreciate your patience and cooperation during this time!! Thank you, Carolyn & Jaymee

CAMP SCHOLARSHIPS!



If you have Hope children attending camp this summer, you may be eligible for a scholarship to help with the cost of camp! **\$400 for each child**, you send us proof of registration and payment, then the church will reimburse you. Camp flyers for the MN and IA Methodist camps (not the only camps available, just what we've received here) are available on the bulletin board outside the restrooms in the church.

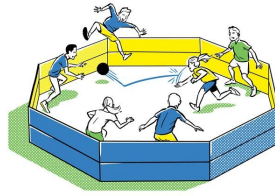
If you need additional financial help or have any questions/concerns, please reach out to Carolyn Kaiser or Megan Goshorn.

KIDS KORNER



The Kids of Hope are starting a pumpkin patch! We'll be planting seeds after the Worship Service on Sunday, May 24th. All kids and youth are welcome to participate in the seed planting. The patch will be located behind/next to the garage. Stay tuned for some exciting events in the fall!

An outdoor gaga pit for the church has been ordered! Be on the lookout for a summer event to kick off this youth favorite!



SAVE THE DATE for VBS this year! The week of August 3rd!

~Megan Goshorn, Kids Coordinator

Attention: 2026 High School Graduates!



For those that are graduating high school this year and who are planning on continuing their education and have previously participated in either Hope's Youth or Confirmation program, you may be eligible!

In order to receive a total of \$2,000 over 2 years, participants must submit an application to Hope's Scholarship Program. After being reviewed and accepted, they will be required to submit their transcript to us (after completing each year or each semester) and provided they have performed sufficiently, we will send them a check! Please see Daryl Murray or Carolyn Kaiser for an application or for more details.

Graduation Sunday will be held on May 17, 2026, at 10AM.

The following high school students will be graduating this year and will be recognized with special cake & coffee fellowship after the worship service:

CLASS OF 2026

- | | |
|-----------------|------------------|
| Gibson Haase | Jacob Murray |
| McKinley Hanson | Erin Prescher |
| Julianna Lewis | Katelyn Storbeck |
| Lola Lundquist | Berkley Wielenga |

Friends of Hope that we would like to also celebrate their graduations in prayer:

Marcus Eckles, Addison Prescher, Parker Stauffer

Music Notes



Hope Choir has regular Sunday morning rehearsals at 9am. We enjoy fellowship as we prepare anthems to sing for worship. You are invited to join us. All are welcome! ~Bonnie Miller

Please contact the church and leave a message if you know someone who needs a ride to church or call Al Roesler at 507-525-0630. Let's fill the bus!



Please lift up in prayer....



Members and Friends in Health Care Centers and those at their homes including:

- | | | |
|----------------|---------------|-------------------|
| Mae Hove | Mike Rubatt | Terry Hassing |
| Jean Nelson | Mary Ochs | Muriel Hanna |
| Cindy Steinke | Scott Steinke | Lillian Kohlmeyer |
| Fran Fenske | Todd Olson | Damian Prescher |
| Layne McCleary | Mary Toland | Ryan Foster |

Armed Services personnel and their families including: Eric Becker, Hunter Spencer & Cole Steinke.

All those that have a lost a loved one recently: the family of Mary Toland. Please help us update this list if you have names to be added or omitted.

Need Prayer?

We have created a form on our website so that you can submit your prayer requests. You can choose to be anonymous or not, and you can even choose how your prayer is shared. Whether you want just Pastor Godfrey to know or the entire church is up to you! So go to our website: behopeumc.com and click at the top on the tab that says "prayer request."

United Women in Faith (UWF)

Tuesday, May 5, 2026 at 2pm

Circle Meetings:

Joy Circle: Thursday, May 14 at 2pm

Faith Circle: Thursday, May 21 at 9:30am

May 14-17: United Women in Faith Assembly (Indianapolis, IN)



United Women in Faith

"Every Morning Is Easter Morning" is a contemporary Christian children's hymn celebrating daily resurrection joy, published in 1972! I learned it MANY years ago when my kids were small. The lyrics affirm that every day offers a new beginning to us as "Easter People" because Christ has risen. The song emphasizes leaving behind guilt and fear by welcoming the "Easter People" lifestyle, and spreading the word of God's love.

Every morning is Easter morning from now on!
Every day's resurrection day, the past is over and gone!
Goodbye guilt, goodbye fear, good riddance!
Hello, Lord, Hello, sun!
I am one of the Easter People!
My new life has begun!

Verse 2:
Yesterday I was bored and lonely:
But today look and see!
I belong to the Easter people!
Life's exciting to me!

Verse 1:
Daily news is so bad it seems the Good News seldom gets heard.
Get it straight from the Easter People!
God's in charge, spread the word!

Ending:
Every morning is Easter morning,
Every morning is Easter morning,
Every morning is Easter morning,
From now on! "

Maybe the lyrics will resonate with you in today's world as much as they do with me, even after all these years!






UWF CONTINUED ON PAGE 2



HOPE UMC ~ MAY 2026

"New month, new goals, new mindset, new focus, new intentions, new results."



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					1 9AM: Naomi Circle—Kitchen Cleaning	2
3 <i>5th Sunday of Easter</i> 9:00AM: Choir Practice 9:15AM: Fellowship 10AM: Worship & Communion Service	4 11AM: Celebration of Life of Elsie Olson	5 12PM: Worship Committee Meeting 2PM: St. Luke's Communion 2PM: UWF Meeting	6	7 10AM: Sermon Scriptures Bible Study 1-3PM: Mat Weaving 5PM: Happy Hour w/Jesus	8	9
10 <i>6th Sunday of Easter</i> 9:00AM: Choir Practice 9:15AM: Fellowship 10AM: Worship Service 11AM: Sunday School Bible Study 	11  	12 2PM: Membership/History Mtg	13	14 2PM: Joy Circle	15	16
17 <i>Ascension Sunday</i> 9:00AM: Choir Practice 9:15AM: Fellowship 10AM: Worship Service Graduation Sunday UMC Student Day Sunday 	18 1-3 PM: Interfaith Caregivers BINGO	19	20	21 9:30AM: Faith Circle 10AM: Sermon Scriptures Bible Study 1-3PM: Mat Weaving 5PM: Happy Hour w/Jesus	22 RESERVED 12-8PM: Private Event	23 RESERVED 12-3PM: Private Event
24 <i>Pentecost</i> 9:00AM: Choir Practice 9:15AM: Fellowship 10AM: Worship 11AM: Church Conference 9:00AM: Choir Practice 9:15AM: Fellowship 10AM: Worship Peace with Justice Day	25 NO SCHOOL/Office Closed  RESERVED ALL DAY: Private Event	26	27 Last Day of School	28 10AM: Sermon Scriptures Bible Study 5PM: Happy Hour w/Jesus	29 RESERVED 6PM-10PM: Private Event	30 RESERVED ALL DAY: Private Event
31 <i>Trinity Sunday</i>						

"Yesterday is history, tomorrow is a mystery, today is a gift of God, which is why we call it the present." ~Bill Keane