



Hope Lutheran Church Atascadero, CA Winter 2024 Newsletter

HOPE LUTHERAN CHURCH

8005 San Gabriel Road

Atascadero, CA 93422

805-461-0340

ourhopelutheran.net

Pastor: Aaron Smith

Pianist: Greg Zocher

Youth Director: Rebecca Evans

Office Administrator: April MacLean

office@ourhopelutheran.org

Church Office Hours:

Tuesday –Friday 9:30 am to 2:30pm

PASTOR'S UPDATE

By Pastor Aaron Smith

Dear Friends,

As we continue to try to spread news of happenings at Hope, it seemed good to council to include an abridged version of my annual report for 2023 in this initial newsletter of 2024. In the report, I gave thanks for the growth in spiritual maturity and in raw numbers that we saw last year and shared a few signs and examples of that growth. The first measure of spiritual maturity that I identified was adaptability.

For example, the congregations of Hope and Bethel Lutheran tried something new for both churches and shared regular worship, gathering for joint midweek services during Lent. The endeavor was so well-received, we repeated it during Advent. And in the summer, we held a joint adult Bible Study on what it means to be Lutheran today. We look forward to sharing soup suppers and midweek worship during Lent this year.

Perseverance is a second sign of spiritual maturity. At the start of the year, council proposed an ambitious budget with a projected deficit of nearly \$16,000. This meant asking any who were able to stretch in their giving each week, beyond what they had already pledged. Many did so, and those who couldn't faithfully gave what they could each week. This collective determination and regular perseverance made up the deficit, even with an un-budgeted parking lot expense that materialized over the summer.

Fellowship signals a mature interest in belonging to the full Body of Christ. How pleasing it was to find so many stick around after worship each week to check in and talk with each other; participate in events like Family Day at the Youth Director's House and Trunk or Treat; help organize and take part in the Thanksgiving Dinner and 30th anniversary celebration; and share cookies and sing carols during Advent.

Attendance at weekly worship is probably the most obvious indicator of numeric growth. Hope's total weekly attendance in 2022 was 2,414. That number grew to 2,775 in 2023, an increase of 6 persons on average each Sunday (from 46 to 52). Our online attendance jumped from a total of 2,236 in 2022 to 2,527 last year, averaging about 5 more digital worshippers each week (43 in 2022 and 48 in 2023).

We experienced financial growth last year, as well. The congregation nearly balanced the year's extra expenses, expected and unexpected, with an income of \$263,700. That amount was \$17,400 more than what was budgeted, \$25,000 more than 2022 income, and \$40,000 more than what was pledged.

As Hope's pastor, I encourage us to continue in the good work that God has begun among us, pressing on to ever-greater growth in Christ Jesus. Our 30th anniversary gave us occasion to look back at God's faithfulness throughout Hope's history, and look forward to the new things that God is doing among us – to encourage one another to live each day into the new creation that God is making in and around us.

Pastor Aaron

INSPIRATION FROM THE FAITHFUL

By: Pastor Ellen Ayres

**December 28 Holy Innocents, Martyrs
Matthew 2:16-19**

The Magi came from the east, brought gifts to baby Jesus , departed for home. Having asked for help from Herod the Great to find the child, they agreed to tell him when they did so but were warned not to. Herod realized he had been duped and sent soldiers to kill all children two and under in Bethlehem. Mary and Joseph fled to Egypt with Jesus. This is a horrible story, a heartbreaking story, a Bible story often omitted even while children are dying around the world in wars and from starvation.

One of my favorite New Testament scholars, Richard Swanson, reads Matthew through this story. Jesus. Son of God. Promised Messiah. Matthew is the "Law and Order Gospel", " the outer darkness", the " gnashing of teeth" Gospel.

When we read Matthew as story, as a cohesive narrative, we can recognize the potential for survivor's guilt in Jesus. Matthew doesn't start with Mary and Joseph in Nazareth but in Bethlehem. The murdered children and their murdered parents, grandparents, siblings who struggled with those soldiers--they were Mary and Joseph's friends and close family. Jesus must have wondered why he had no cousins, why his family lived so far from home. As survivor Jesus was rigid, a perfectionist--this emerges in his parables and continues till on the cross he screamed his despair. Perhaps his faith faltered in that moment, and he would have condemned himself for that lapse. Except something changed. Everything. Jesus alive again, alive, forgiving the disciples who had failed him and fled. Matthew 28 overflows with mercy and joy.

Our creeds speak our belief that Jesus is both human and divine, yet too often we see him as God wearing skin but so far above us, not feeling our human fears and joys. When we read Matthew as that cohesive narrative we can see the humanness, the frailty of Jesus, and find hope for ourselves in all our humanness as Jesus promises to be with us always.

COUNCIL HIGHLIGHTS

January 10, 2024 Council Meeting Minutes

Call to order – 7:03 by Stephen Peuker

Opening prayer – Pastor Aaron

Approval of December 2023 minutes- accepted

Amend/Adopt agenda- accepted

Council Reports:

Pastor's report – Pastor Aaron –

1/11/24 – Conference pastors meeting hosted by Bethel. Bishop will be present, printed material will be requested about synod stance on Igelsia Lutherana.

The state has new requirements for working with youth. Will reach out to our insurance provider for guidance as well as the synod. Land Use committee meeting 1/11/24 will prepare a recommendation, regarding what can be pursued, at the congregational meeting 1/28/24. A report will be shared with the congregation after ballots have been cast. Member has suggested choir needs a riser. Briefly discussed, Property and musicians discussed. Synod Assembly to be May 31 – June 1st.- Jen and Mark Koegler asked to represent Hope. Clergy are required to take boundary training every 3 years. 4 hour zoom conference, Pastor Ellen will also be attending.

Worship committee to work with Bethel for Lent. Music, food and alternating locations. Pastor and family are leaving town for memorial service and will be gone 5 days. Annual report is being prepared; committee reports are needed. Reports needed by 1/18/24. Confirmation for Bella Brown. May 12, 2024 Men have requested reading the bible in a year. John Hunt is willing to lead this group with some assistance from Pastor. Intern Monica has been granted an accelerated end date. She will complete her program in February.

President report – Steffen -

Will need to transition emails to new council members

Webpage administrator is currently Steffen.

COUNCIL HIGHLIGHTS

Vice President report – Bill McCall

Review of Time and Talent survey. Annual review for Rebecca (youth director) was completed. She has surveyed the parents and made some changes. She will be moved from 15 to 20 hours. Greg (music director) is due for annual review.

Secretary report – Diane Schmidt

Open positions Co- chair education, audit x2, nominating Diane Schmidt will stay on for 1 more year or until someone steps forward for the position of secretary. Informational ballot on Iglesia Lutherana will be held on Sunday 1/14/24.

Treasurer report – Alden Shiers

December was a great month, net income \$8,000. We ended the year at minus \$2000. Budget 2024 – 31 giving units, Congregation has grown. Formula= Pledges plus 27 ½%. Pastor is lobbying for not receiving a raise this year to allow other staff to receive a raise. Council respects his offer ,but chose to given him the raise he is due.

Team reports:

Worship report: No report, meeting postponed

New Business: Jennifer Koegler

Musicians -Modified symphony concerts proposed to use the church in the early evenings or late afternoons and charge for tickets. They would like to donate to the church. They ask if they can pour wine for donations. Recommended donation to the church has been recommended \$400.00. Motion was made by Bill to extend invite to symphony to perform in our church. It was seconded by Alden, motion passed.

Adjourn: Next council meeting 2/15/24, 7 pm change of date due to Ash Wednesday.

Late Entry: We were contacted by Emily Thompson requesting to use the church parking lot and breezeway to hold a church wide garage sale to assist her in earning money for her mission trip. This had been offered previously. Permission was granted. She will address the congregation on Sunday requesting items for her to sell. She will organize and run the sale with help from church members and her friends.

UPCOMING AT HOPE....

Special Lenten Worship - Join us as we reflect on the ways that we encounter God's grace in the midst of our brokenness during the season of Lent!

Feb. 14: Ash Wednesday 12p (Bethel)

Feb. 14: Ash Wednesday 7p (Hope)

Feb. 21: "Faith" 6p/7p (Hope)

Feb. 28: "Grief" 6p/7p (Bethel)

Mar. 6: "Forgiveness" 6p/7p (Hope)

Mar. 13: "Relationships" 6p/7p (Bethel)

Mar. 20: "Healing" 6p/7p (Hope)

Mar. 28: Maundy Thursday 7p (Hope)

Mar. 29: Good Friday 7p (Bethel)

"But we have this treasure in clay jars, so that it might be made clear that this extraordinary power is from God and not from us." (2 Cor. 4:7)

Lent 2024

Jars of Clay



Worship 9a on March 31

Easter Egg Hunt &

Potluck Brunch 10:30a

YOUTH MINISTRY

By : Rebecca Evans

As we know, one size does not fit all when it comes to education. Each child is fearfully and wonderfully made by the Creator, and uniqueness is purposeful. As educators we should strive to be sensitive to the individual gifts and needs of the students with whom God has called us and blessed us to work. Over the course of the past two years as Director of Youth Ministry at Hope Lutheran, I have come to know our congregation's youth through children's sermon time (AKA youth message), Sunday School, youth group, summer day camp, field trips, Harvest Festival, all-congregation game nights, and other events. One of the many blessings that came out of that was realizing that a group that's widespread across ages and grade levels, even though the total number of kids is small, contains diversity that should be acknowledged in order for the kids to be better served. For example, we need Sunday School curriculum that contributes to faith formation at age-appropriate levels for each of our kids. Therefore, we are no longer considering our Sunday School class offerings restrictive by grade level. Instead, each child (as determined by the parents/guardians and myself through conversation) should attend the class that is appropriately challenging for their stage of development so that they may build upon their foundation of past learning and continue progressing in their understanding of and personal ownership of the Christian faith—both before and after Confirmation. This overall “bigger picture” is something that Pastor Aaron and I have been talking about and working on since I was hired. As it takes a village (a family of God) to raise a child in “the way that they should go,” we hope that everyone at Hope sees the value in this adaptability to the needs of our kids and supports the intentional nature of the program we're developing.

“Bible Adventures” is a class geared toward younger students who perhaps are in elementary school or are new to church/Christianity and not yet extremely familiar with the classic Bible stories that many of us grew up with in our Sunday School experience. The curriculum for this class is designed to appeal to kids of multiple ages and grades. Class activities include prayer, reading and discussing a Bible story, hands-on crafts, action-oriented games or exercises, and cooperative learning. This class is taught by a team of teachers in rotation (thank you, teaching team!) and meets in the first classroom in the hallway. A class session lasts approximately 45 minutes. “The Journey” is a class geared toward students who are ready for more than what Bible Adventures curriculum offers. Perhaps the student is older, academically ready for more critical thinking opportunities and personal sharing through discussion for the purpose of understanding the life application of the Scripture being read.

The theme of the curriculum in this class is the Parables of Jesus as found in the Gospels. Each week, a different parable is read and discussed, with questions thoughtfully crafted to engage the student's prior knowledge and personal insights, help them understand the moral of the story, enlighten them about who Jesus is, and help them apply the message to their own life. "On a case by case basis, depending on what the content of the Parable is that week, supplementary/illustrative activities like games or crafts may be included to reinforce the day's message. However, the staple ingredients of the class are reading and group discussion. This class is team-taught by Rebecca Evans and Cristie Lea and meets in the youth group lounge. A class session lasts approximately 1 hour.

I would like to take a moment to also acknowledge how valuable it is for the youngest members in the Body of Christ to be surrounded by older mentors—whether they be adults of any generation or simply older kids who are modeling a life of Christian faith by coming to church, attending Sunday School, etc. It is a powerful thing for young kids to see the faithfulness of those they look up to. On that note, I am grateful for the way the eldest students in each Sunday School class rise up as leaders by coming alongside other students and helping them do activities or better understand the lesson.

As time marches on, our kids grow up. Therefore, programming and curriculum needs to evolve with them in order to be effective. Right now, we have these two classes in addition to Confirmation, which is typically a 2-year course most often begun in 7th grade or later. We are seeking to offer a meaningful bridge between the most basic Bible instruction and Confirmation; moreover, we aim to offer (in the future) a class that is designed specifically for high schoolers and kids who have completed Confirmation. Offering additional classes for more specific contingents means there is a need for more teachers. If you are willing to serve as a Sunday School teacher, please contact Rebecca or Pastor Aaron! We will be glad to welcome you onto our awesome, fun, supportive, and dedicated teaching team! If you are new to Hope Lutheran and want your child to start attending Sunday School or youth group, please see Rebecca Evans, Director of Youth Ministry, at church or email her at youth@ourhopelutheran.org or call her at (619) 459-4702. She will be happy to tell you more about the classes and help you determine which is the best fit for your child.

YOUTH GROUP for middle and high school students meets on Wednesday nights at church. The usual time is 7:00-8:30 PM. During Lent and Advent, however, the meeting time is earlier in order to finish in time for soup supper and worship service. Youth group typically involves prayer, Bible study and discussion, games, art projects/crafts, snacks, and socializing. Rebecca communicates with all youth group kids and their families via a group text chat and asks for RSVPs each week. Youth group is a lot of FUN—we'd love to have you join us! Stay tuned for updates about the youth's participation in this year's Easter service! 😊

In Christ,

Rebecca Evans

ATTENDANCE & FINANCES

Are you interested in joining Hope Church? Pastor Aaron is putting together a New Member Orientation class. Please contact Pastor Aaron for more information.

At Hope, there is a place ready and waiting for you to get to know others, to grow in your faith and to serve others. It's a place of belonging, believing and becoming. We are the little church that has ***strength for today and bright Hope for tomorrow.***

WORSHIP ATTENDANCE

December

Attendance Inside: 271

YouTube: 171

Financial Summary:

Financial Summary:

January – December 2023

Actual income = \$263,675.83

Budgeted income = \$246,296.00

Actual Expenses = \$265,629.30

Budgeted expenses = \$262,004.52

Ending actual balance = **-\$1,953.47**

BIRTHDAYS & ANNIVERSARIES

February

1 Ed Naretto
9 Diane Lund
17 Amanda Corcoran
18 Marjorie Sewell
26 John Maggi
27 Joan Helgren

March

6 Holly Moen
4 Pastor Aaron
11 Freida Daugaard-Hansen
14 Wendell Brown
18 Joel Kloth
18 Dan Johnson
23 Dawn Smith
26 Linda Doust
26 Laurie Petersen

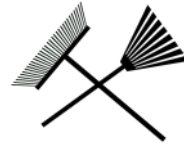
Happy Anniversary!

Ken & Leanna Werner 2/14

Russ & Peggy Collins 2/23

Bent & Freida Daugaard-Hansen 2/24

UPCOMING AT HOPE....

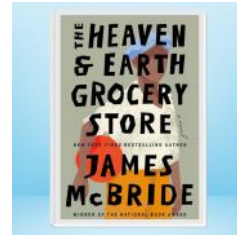


**Please join us for
our next Hope
Work Day:
March 9th, 2024
Saturday at 9 am**



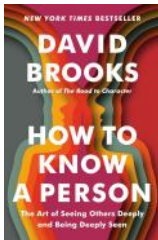
UPCOMING AT HOPE....

Women, Wine and the Word:



February 27 at 7pm

(The Heaven and Earth Grocery Store by James McBride)



April 16 at 7pm

(How to Know a Person by David Brooks)



May 21 at 7pm

(West with Giraffes by Lynda Rutledge)

ANNOUNCEMENTS



Internship Housing Needed: Hope is exploring the possibility of serving this summer as the field work site for a seminarian at Duke Divinity School. We would need to provide affordable housing for a young couple and their 2 young boys from late May to the first week in August. Let Pastor Aaron know you have anything to offer, or any leads. Thank you!



New Faith Based Movie coming out in Theatres February 22rd!



Based on a remarkable true story, **ORDINARY ANGELS** centers on Sharon Steves (Hilary Swank), a fierce but struggling hairdresser in small town Kentucky who discovers a renewed sense of purpose when she meets Ed Schmitt (Alan Ritchson), a widower working hard to make ends meet for his two daughters. With his youngest daughter waiting for a liver transplant, Sharon sets her mind to helping the family and will move mountains to do it. What unfolds is the inspiring tale of faith, everyday miracles, and ordinary angels.



Intern Monica admitted to Ph.D. program at Princeton Seminary: Monica Holman, who interned over the last year at Bethel Templeton, has been admitted to the doctoral program in New Testament Studies at Princeton Seminary. Here's her email address, in case you'd like to send a note of congratulations on this terrific achievement: intern@blctempleton.org. And here's the official announcement that was shared with the congregation at Bethel:

The most common question Monica has been asked as she finishes her internship here at Bethel has been, "What are your plans after this?" Well, she can finally announce that, after she graduates from Luther Seminary in May, she will be moving to Princeton, New Jersey in August! Monica will be swapping Bethel's historic building for halls that are even older! She has been admitted to the PhD program at Princeton Theological Seminary (PTS) in Biblical Studies/New Testament. This is a fully-funded, five-year program at one of the most academically prestigious theological institutions in the world. Monica has been awarded a 5-year doctoral fellowship and additional scholarships, including the Trustees Merit Scholarship, which "is awarded to students in each entering class whose applications, in the judgment of the PhD Studies Committee, are of superior quality. This represents the highest award offered by the Seminary to an entering doctoral student." Monica is especially excited to get lost in PTS's Wright Library, which is the second-largest theological library in the world, outranked only by the Vatican. Monica will still be completing the steps for approval for ordination in the ELCA in the coming months, and will be exploring options to do pulpit supply or find a very part-time call in or near Princeton while she completes her studies. She hopes to serve in both academia and congregational ministry in the future. She will be going to PTS carrying her Bethel family in her heart, and will keep you all updated!

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Calendar

February 27: Women, Wine and the Word at 7pm

March 9: Hope Work Day at 9am

March 12: Echo Dinner at 5pm

March 13: Worship & Council Meetings at 6pm and 7pm

March 21: Gather Bible Study at 12:30pm

April 16: Women, Wine and the Word at 7pm



Lost and Found items are now available for pick up by the Mailboxes in the Narthex. Have you lost a **sweater or umbrella** this year?

YouTube Social Media

Did you know that our worship services are livestreamed and recorded on YouTube. Subscribe to Hope Lutheran Church Atascadero! And follow us on Facebook. Look for Atascadero Hope Lutheran Family, request to join.

Ministry

Updates



Do you have an update on your area of ministry at Hope for our next Newsletter?

Please let us know. Please email the office at office@ourhopelutheran.org or call at (805) 461-0340. Thank you.

Mission Statement:

The mission of Hope Lutheran Atascadero is to live in and proclaim Christ's love through worship, faith formation, fellowship, and service to the community.