The Anchor February 2018

The Newsletter of Hope Lutheran Church 211 Elton Adelphia Road Freehold NJ 07728 Phone (732) 462-7545 Fax (732) 462-9320

Worship Services with Holy Communion: Sunday Worship 8:30 AM and 10:45 AM Sunday School 9:30 AM Wednesday Evenings Worship and School 7:00 PM

Pastor: The Reverend Doctor Edward E Kropa, Jr Church Administrator: Cheryl Hurd Minister of Music:

Hope Christian School Director: Judy Canfield
Communications Director: Kathryn Johnson
Bookkeeper/Financial Secretary: Stephanie Siino

Hope Lutheran Church Email: Hope Lutheran Church Website: www.hopefreehold.org
Hope Christian School Email: Judyc08723@yahoo.com
Hope Christian School Website: www.hopechristianschool.org
Counseling Center for Human Development: (908) 276-0590

Anchored in Christ, Growing in Faith, Love and Service! We have this hope, a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul....

A COVENANT NOT A CONTRACT

A new year has begun. In fact, it's well underway. For those of us who still pay our bills by check, we have to remember to write "2018" instead of "2017" on them. For those of us who annually commit ourselves to improving certain aspects of our lives, it's that time for those proverbial "New Year's resolutions." (Some, or even many, of which may have already fallen by the wayside at this point!) And for those of us who are a part of the faith community known as Hope Lutheran Church, it's time once again to sign the "Hope Lutheran Family Covenant."

This practice of annually recommitting oneself to the ministry of the congregation was first popularized in the 1960's, back when Hope was being formed. In response to all that God has done for *us* we, in turn, promise to do certain things and to make certain commitments in our lives. Thus, as we read in the Hope Lutheran Family Covenant:

Having been called into a living, loving relationship with God through Jesus Christ, we desire to respond with a covenant in which we express our intent to:

Actively participate in the worship services and programs of the church. Make diligent use of the Means of Grace -

God's Word and Sacraments – Baptism and the Lord's Supper.

Prayerfully consider giving a proportion of our substance to support the work of the Congregation and The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

Live a Christian life in accord with God's Word.

Assume a ministry for Christ as dictated by our talents.

It then concludes with the words, *This is our covenant with God and by the help of God*.

Notice, however, that we, in fact, use this word "covenant," and not the word "contract." That's because, while closely related, they are really not the same thing. In our lives, we define a whole host of relationships by contracts. They usually involve financial transactions for goods and services. Home and auto loans, for example, are contracts. Each side promises to do certain things. The seller promises to provide said home or car; while the buyer promises to pay the agreed-upon price. But here's the thing. When either the buyer or the seller fails to deliver on those promises, the contract is thereby broken.

In a covenant, however, specifically the kind of covenants we find in the Bible between God and God's people, there is a major difference. If you fail to pay back the loan for that home or car, the contract is broken and the bank will foreclose on your house, or repossess your car. But, in sharp contrast, even if you fail to fulfill the promises you make with *God*; believe it or not, God will never withdraw *God's* promises! In other words, God continues to bless our lives and to love us unconditionally, no matter how faithful or unfaithful we may be.

Thus, freed from the fear that we might somehow lose God's loving grace and favor by failing to keep our promises, we are also set free then to fully commit our lives to God and to God's church without worrying about how things will turn out. As I like to tell our catechism students, "There is nothing we can do to make God love us more. And there is absolutely nothing we can ever do to make God love us *less*!

In baptism, God makes a covenant with us; a covenant that God will never break. And, trusting in that promise, we respond by offering our lives to God's mission and ministry in the world; a commitment to the mission and ministry that is summarized by our Hope Lutheran Family Covenant.

So I encourage you, if you have not already, to sign our Hope Covenant and I look forward to striving with you to live it out in the coming year!

Pastor Ed

HOPE STATS							
Sun/Wed	Attendance	Sun School	Offerings	-did NOT	+ reached		
Nov 26	109	34	\$3,722	-\$1086			
Dec 3	100	44	\$3,814	-\$994			
Dec 10	217	27	\$4,134	-\$674			
Dec 17	174	36	\$6,899		+\$2091		
Dec 24	382	8	\$13,279		+\$8471		
Dec 31	80	N/A	\$2,399	-\$2409			
Jan 7	112	17	\$3,222	-\$1586			
Jan 14	103	22	\$3,401	-\$1407			
Jan 21	103	20	\$3,964	-\$844			

Average Offering needed <u>weekly</u> to meet the proposed budget offerings of \$250,000 is \$4808

Official Acts....

Baptism.... Received into the Church of Jesus Christ through the Sacrament of Holy Baptism on December 10 was: **Gavin Luke Carroll**. Parents are **John and Jennifer Carroll** and sponsors are **Anthony Zazzarino** and **Lauren Bronner**.

Our Love and Sympathy.... We extend our love and sympathy to the families of two of our former members; *Betty Theiss* and *Mark Vickers*; who have entered Life Eternal; also to *John and Sharon Black* in their loss of *Doris Vendetti*.

Prayer Shawls.... Wanda Nebiolo made and gave a prayer shawl in November to a dear friend *Andy* in Texas suffering from health ailments; *Wanda Nebiolo* also made and gave a prayer shawl in January to a dear friend in Louisiana suffering from arthritis.

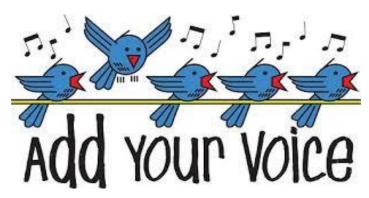
More News....

Hope's Nursery School Attendant is NOW Anna Marie Sirico...She has come HIGHLY recommended from Hope Christian School where she volunteers two days a week to help with the After-Care Program. Please welcome her!! Her hours begin at 8:15AM and usually last until Noon, although some events may require extra time.

On that note...We need VOLUNTEERS!!! Any members that would be willing to fill in as needed for Anna Marie in the event she is ill or can not make it to Church that day. We are looking for as many volunteers as possible, please email or call Cheryl at the office and make your preference known if you would like to cover the early or late service.

Saint Peter's Meals....

Our current coordinator *Karen DonMoyer* is unfortunately stepping down from overseeing our Saint Peter's Meal hostings after this year. If anyone has interest in taking over for her, **NOW** would be a great time to do so and you can work side by side with her through our next two hostings, **March 23** and **April 27.** It would be a great opportunity to help with the transitioning process. Please if you are interested, kindly let Cheryl know as soon as possible!! This really is a great commitment to be a party of. Thank you so much for your anticipated consideration!



JUNIOR CHOIR -

Hope will begin to have "Junior Choir" practices each Wednesday from 6:30-7:30, starting January 17. Parents are welcome to attend the service

while children practice in the rear Sunday School hallway. Younger siblings are invited to attend Sunday School. Praise Songs will serve as our warm up from 6:30-7 and at 7, we will spend a half an hour learning sheet music/anthems for upcoming church services. If you would like to sing traditional choir anthems in church on Palm Sunday and Easter please join us on Wednesdays at 6:30PM! For questions, call or text Rebekah Heilman at 862-755-6868.



February 4, 2018

The Souper Bowl of Caring is a nationwide event to engage young people in service to help fight hunger and poverty. At Hope the high school youth will make homemade soups to sell with profits going directly to Open Door Food Pantry. We are also asking Sunday school

families and congregation members to bring a canned good to donate to Open Door Food Pantry. Help us to create joy by serving and giving to those in need.



We are a very small group of women from Hope that are a part of the ELCA church wide organization, WELCA. At Hope we have initiated many projects, like the Christmas giving tree, the annual high school scholarship, quilt and shawl ministries

plus many other Lutheran World Relief projects. Our monthly meetings focus on the studies outlined in the "Gather" magazine that many of us subscribe to and would encourage others to take advantage (10 per year @ \$19.95). Ask in the office for subscription information, or see Joan Drager. We recently completed a 3 session study of the Apostles' Creed (learned a lot), and the next 4 months will focus on "multiple meanings" of familiar stories in the Bible. The studies are all written out in the magazine with explanations from the authors that are easy to follow and do not need any previous "homework" or knowledge. Just in talking things out between us we learn from each other and lasting, loving, friendships have resulted.

We invite all of you ladies to join us for our monthly meetings, usually the *second Tuesday evening of every month*, except February we will meet *February 5th* because of Shrove Tuesday. We meet at *7:30PM* and refreshments are enjoyed.

Women of Hope Memorial Scholarship Fund Sponsored by: Women of Hope Donations may be given directly to Kim Jones, Women of Hope Treasurer. Checks should be made out to Hope with the notation in the memo line Memorial Scholarship Fund. Please be sure the Women of Hope's Treasurer is aware of your donation so proper acknowledgement may be directed. This is tax deductible and 100% of the money donated is used for Scholarship grants. Thank you! Your generous donations have made it possible to award scholarships each year since this fund was established in 2003 in memory of Karen (1961-1986), the daughter of Janice and Bill Seifert.

<u>In Memory of Katy Luther</u> (submitted by Women of Hope)

This article on Katharina von Bora (Katy Luther) appeared in the January/February issue of the WELCA "Gather" Magazine. She was born January 29, 1499 and was such an important help mate to Martin. The article is introduced with this statement: "We can only try to recovery her life from a century in which most women could not read, had limited legal rights, faced death from pregnancy, buried half their children and disappeared into the shadows of history. But here are 15 facts related to this incredible woman about which most scholars agree."

- ~*1. The von Bora family was of noble lineage but lost its fortune and lived in near poverty. Katharine's mother died of an unknown disease. Her father remarried Margaret von Ende.
- ~*2. At age 9, she entered Nimbschen Covent near Grimma, in Germany's Mulde Valley. Because her father could not afford a dowry, future marriage was impossible; she could become a nun or face spinsterhood, a disgrace at the time.
- ~*3. Katharina took her final vows of silence, poverty and charity at age 16. These promises were irreversible upon penalty of excommunication, shame and eternal separation from God and the Holy Mother Church.
- ~*4. We do not know her reason for leaving the convent. We do know that six years after the firestorm of the 95 Theses, she and others secretly left in 1523. They may have been aware of the peasants' march for religious freedom by limited contact with a nearby Augustinian monastery where some of them had brothers. Luther had visited that monastery.
- ~*5. After their rocky trip to Wittenberg, Luther found jobs and sometimes husbands for the young women. Katharina learned household duties in the upscale Reichenbach and Cranach homes. She met and almost married a student, Hieronymous Baumgaertner, from Nuremberg. His parents refused permission and arranged a "suitable" marriage for him with a 14 year old. Marriage with a former nun was a crime.
- ~*6. Luther offered a solution: Dr. Glatz, his old colleague, known as the Miser of Wittenberg, was willing to marry her. Katharina said, "NO!" Perhaps Martin then knew he had met his match in stubbornness.
- ~*7. He proposed; she accepted. He said, "Who read in the stars that I would cause my father so much trouble and get into an argument with the Pope and take a runaway nun as my wife? Somehow, while I was doing other things,

Katharina was given to me!"

- ~*8. They were married on the steps of the church. Weddings within a church did not occur until later. Following the ceremony, there was a promenade, meal and dancing at the Black Cloister, their new home. It had been a monastery, housing 40 monks, and had not been cleaned in years.
- ~*9. Katharina rose at 4:30AM to clean the musty place, cook for family (Luther's favorite dish was a stew of sardines, mustard and peas) and students (who lived with them), brew beer ("She makes the best beer in Germany!" Martin once said), tend vegetable gardens and rear children. Hence her husband's name for her: "Morning Star of Wittenberg."
- ~*10. Many wedding gifts were goblets to be put away and sold when money was scarce. She became the treasurer of the family and his them when Luther gave many away to needy folks.
- ~*11. The Luthers had six children: Hans (Johannes), Elisabeth, Magdelena, Martin, Paul and Margarethe. At Hans' birth, Martin wrote, "My dear Kethe brought into the world a little son...I must stop. Sick Kethe calls me." Baby Elisabeth, born during the plague when Katharina tended the sick and dying, did not live long. Their teenage daughter, Lena, died of a lingering illness. Luther wrote, "My Kethe is sobbing with eyes red with weeping." Knowledge of medicine was limited. Nobody could help. Superstition reigned over and controlled life and death.
- ~*12. In the cold winter of 1546, Katharina begging an ailing Martin not to travel to Eisleben. He went anyway. She worried; he wrote: "To holy worrisome Lady Katharina...my heartily beloved housewife...Pray for us and let God worry." He died a week later.
- ~*13. His will challenged Saxon law where a widow was given only a cane, a chair, and a coat. Children and property became wards of the state. He willed both to her. His will survived. That document and Katharina's determination in the legal fight that ensued, helped give widows their first rights.
- ~*14. After his death, she wrote: "I cannot tell the sorrow of my heart...I hardly know what to think or feel. I cannot eat or drink nor can I sleep...The Lord God has taken from me, and not from me only, but from the whole world, this dear and precious man. Herewith goodbye, Katharina, Martinus Luther's relict."
- ~*15. She died six years later while escaping danger in Wittenberg from injuries when her wagon overturned.



Hope Christian School is hosting a Valentines' Day drop off event. Friday, <u>February 9</u> from <u>6PM-9PM</u> \$10 per child, ages 3-11, OPEN TO ANYONE WHO IS INTERESTED!!!

WINTER YOUTH ASSEMBLY NJ SYNOD HIGH SCHOOL RETREAT FEBRUARY 9-11, 2018

Our synod's exciting, faith-filled senior high youth retreat, The Winter Youth Assembly, is a great opportunity to connect with other Lutheran youth from around New Jersey and explore God's Love and how together we can make a difference in the world.

For registration or information, contact Tara Zigler @ tzigler2@gmail.com

Gathering of Men Breakfast



Meets the 2nd Saturday of each month at 9AM (February 10)

Join the Gathering of Men for breakfast, fellowship and sharing. We'll have breakfast and conversation. Any questions may be directed to: Gerry Bergh, 732-972-2799.



Hope Lutheran Church is hosting a BLOOD DRIVE!! Sunday, February 11 from 9:00AM until 1:00PM in the Fellowship Hall.

Each blood donation can save up to THREE LIVES!!

To schedule an appointment, you can go directly to the CJBC website, search for "Hope Mobile Blood Drive" and schedule!

Some helpful information for Donors; DO NOT FORGET! You must have a photo or signature ID in order to donate; PLEASE eat and drink plenty of water before donating; DONORS must be in good health, at least 17 years of age and weigh at least 120 pounds.



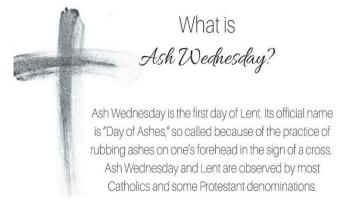
FELLOWSHIP- During Lent (February 11 – March 25) we will abstain from sweets and treats during fellowship hour. Please sign up in the narthex if you would like to bring pretzels, crackers, or other

unleavened and plain snacks on Sundays during Lent. On Easter we will break our fast together! There is a separate sign up sheet near the coffee maker on the clipboard for this specialty sign up.



TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 13 6:30 PM: Sign-ups are out and about for Shrove Tuesday!! Please let us know if you are coming so we can plan accordingly! There are sign-up sheets in the Narthex on all of the tables! You can always call and email the office as well to let Cheryl know you

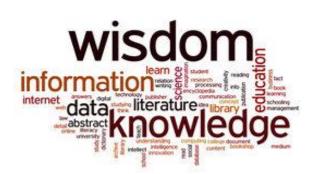
will attend. Jersey Comics will be making an appearance with entertainment for the children, ALL AGES ARE WELCOME!!



JOIN US!! Wednesday, February 14, 2018 at 12:30PM and 7:00PM for our Ash Wednesday services.



Wisdom Club meets Thursday, February 15 at 11:30AM in the Church Narthex.



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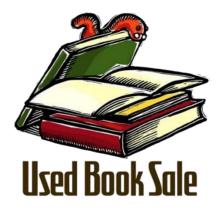
SUNDAY SCHOOL WORLD HUNGER PROGRAM

During Lent, our Sunday School children and Hope Christian School children will be learning about world hunger and how God can use us to help others. One of the programs helping to alleviate hunger in the world today is ELCA World Hunger's Good Gifts program. This program gives food, livestock, health supplies, clean water wells, education, and other resources to people in countries all over the world, including our own. One hallmark of their program is to give a "hand up" not just a "handout". Their agricultural program, for example, helps families in poor countries break the cycle of poverty, by allowing them to produce food for themselves and others through livestock and crops, and use money made from the sale of extra eggs, milk, wool, etc. to afford healthier food, healthcare, and education for their families. Offspring from livestock are sold or given to other families to produce the same results. This becomes a sustainable cycle. We have chosen to support this program because of its relationship to the ELCA, but also

because it is very financially responsible – over 90% of the donation money they receive is used directly to help people; less than 10% is used for administrative costs and fundraising.

During the week of February 18th, the children will be hearing the true story, **Beatrice's Goat**, which tells how the gift of one goat allowed a Ugandan family to provide milk for their family, education for their children, and additional goats for other families in their village. The children will also be bringing home little piggy banks they can use to donate toward livestock, and a calendar of daily thoughts and activities to help them focus on helping hungry children. The children will bring their banks back to church and help choose which animals our church will contribute. We are very excited about this project and about seeing the children learn that **all** our gifts and effort, no matter the size, can help people to lead better lives! Please help your children participate in this worthwhile activity.

Also, bring your Parents to Sunday School is scheduled for Wednesday, February 7 at 7PM and Sunday, February 18 at 9:30AM to be part of this worthwhile and awesome activity!



BIKES AND BOOKS

The Freehold Area AAUW is again collecting books for its used book sale in June. Please drop off any hardback or paperback fiction and non-fiction (no text books or readers digest condensed books) at the church at any time between now and mid May. Joan Drager will take it from there. Also, John Drager will take any used bicycles to the Ministry in Asbury Park.



First Holy Communion classes begin Wednesday, February 21 at 7:00PM for 3rd grade students and up. Following class dates will be: February 28, March 7 and 14

First Holy Communion is scheduled for Sunday, March 18 at the 10:45AM service

Catechism Classes

Sundays @ 6:30 PM to 8 PM

7th & 8th Graders continue their Catechism instruction.

February 11, 18, & 25, 2018 March 4, 11, and 18, 2018

The Wedgwood Gardens Worship Service First Thursday of every month February 1 and March 1 at 3:30PM

3419 US Highway 9 North in Freehold
Worship Service with Holy Communion
You are invited to join Pastor Kropa for assistance with this Nursing Home service,
please arrive at 3:15PM.

The Manor Worship Service Sunday, February 18 and March 25 (Palm Sunday) at 2:00PM

689 West Main Street in Freehold (right in front of CentraState)
Worship Service with Holy Communion
You are invited to join Pastor Kropa for assistance with this Nursing Home service,
please arrive at 1:45PM.



Emergency Housing

The Emergency Housing Program, a project of the Freehold Clergy Association is *well underway!!* We will open our doors to the local homeless gentlemen on Friday nights at Hope Lutheran. Volunteers are needed to help, either by bringing a meal, hosting the men, or volunteering to be a driver for transportation between Saint Peter's and Hope. Please look for sign-up sheets in the Narthex. For more information, please contact

Andrew or Zinke McGeady at 732-363-8520. Thank you for your anticipated support!

Emergency Housing Wish List

Please consider donations for the Emergency Housing Clients: 32 liter backpacks, duffle bags, nail clippers, reading glasses (over the counter), inexpensive watches, Q-Tips in individual travel packages, tissue packs, body wipes, disposable cell phones, flashlights, inexpensive wallets, sweatshirts, boxer shorts & under shirts (sizes M, L, XL, XXL), socks, hats, gloves, food store gift cards, Walmart gift cards, toiletries (shampoo, razors, shaving cream, body wash, deodorant, etc.), Advil, Tylenol, Tums, Cough Drops, Postage stamps, one-zone bus tickets, New or slightly used (clean) twinsheets, pillow cases and blankets are needed for Hope's Emergency Housing Ministry.

Bring with you on Sunday mornings – a basket will be waiting for these items.



CROSS ROADS MIDDLE SCHOOL RETREAT 7TH AND 8TH GRADE "HUMAN KIND, BE KIND" April 20-22, 2018

Registration is \$95, Contact Tara Zigler at tzigler2@gmail.com

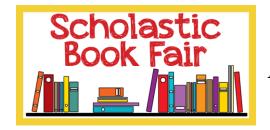
We will focus on what it means to be called by God to be kind to ourselves, our neighbors and our world. The weekend retreat will be filled with games, bible study, awesome food and laughter!



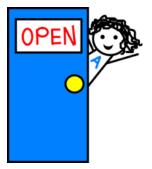
March 4, 2018 at 10:45AM SERVICE

Support Commission

- **Have you signed the Hope Covenant this year? Signatures are significantly below last year.
- **Looks for your annual statement of contributions by the end of January.
- **Jeff Smith has constructed a database which is being populated with individuals' interests and talents. We have added to the database functions that are being performed by folks who did not fill out a form. This includes some of you. The task will conclude in February. Cheryl is populating the database, which now include indications of Sunday attendance, as registered by our sign forms. We will also add a field indicating folks who have signed the Hope Covenant.
- **The finance committee will meet, probably in February to review 2017 Year End Actuals.
- **The Pastoral Support Committee continues to meet bi-monthly. We will report as appropriate.



IS COMING AGAIN!! FEBRUARY 22 – MARCH 1



The Open Door Report: The Mary Owens Foundation awarded us a grant of \$15,000. We received \$875 from the Thanksgiving Ecumenical Service offering. Other large donations were a Pharmacy Owner \$3,000;

Knights of Pythias \$1,000; and \$1,300 from Federici's Restaurant for the sale of lollipops that are kept by the cash register. An Applewood resident celebrated her 90th birthday and asked for donations for Open Door. We received a total of \$600 so far.

180 Turning Lives Around assists families affected by domestic violence. They are opening the Monmouth County Family Justice Center at the court house and we have been asked to provide food assistance. Erika will go there once a month to do intakes and gather documentation. Because Erika will be out of our building we added Errors and Omission coverage to our Liability Insurance.

Erika will now be working with Provision Pharmacy on Main Street in Freehold Boro for our clients' RX needs.

In November, we served a total of 572 people a three day supply of food. Thank you for all your donations.

Sandra Taylor, Trustee and VP



Hope Christian School receives 10 cents for everyone of these that we hand in. They come on the packaging of many products (Ziploc bags; Motts products; etc). You do not have to be affiliated with the school in anyway to participate, simply drop them off in the container on the

table right inside our entry/exit doors. Thank you for your support!!



Soooo Many Thank You's!!!

We would like to extend a heart-felt thank you to all the families and friends of Hope who participated in our annual WELCA Giving Tree Program again this year. Each year we are overwhelmed by your caring generosity to help those in need, and this year was no exception. Your contributions of over \$3,100 helped 29 people in 11 families, as well as families in the "180 Turning Lives Around" program that assists families who are victims of domestic violence. Know that your gifts have brought the love of Christ to many and are truly appreciated by the recipients! Thank you again for being willing to let God's love and generosity flow through you!

In Christ, The Women of Hope

To all those who helped decorate the church for Christmas. This is a wonderful tradition that is highlighted by the Fellowship and great food we all shared. The "Party" guests included the Somodi, Sprunger, Weiss, Page, Hart, Hedin, Woods, Wolven, Buckley/Clarke, Kropa and Kuehn families, along with Rich and Letty Topp, Doris and Rob Green, Bill and Debbie Unger, Veronica Krause and mom Kathleen, Wanda Nebiolo and Angelo Ranaudo, Anne Marie and Grace Hagemann, Janice Seifert, Joseph and Sharryn Papinchak, Suzy Coulter, and myself.

<u>Undecorating</u> the church was held on our freezing cold snow day and yet Wanda Nebiolo, Debbie Unger, Janice Seifert, Tom Landes, Ken and Janet Creech, Siggy, Julie and Kelly Kuehn, Steve and Christine, Autumn, Harper, and Riley Hedin, and Diane "braved" the storm like true Lutherans we all enjoyed homemade chili, chicken and tortellini soups, hot and delicious. Suzy Coulter came Saturday morning with her truck (along with an angel) and took "out the old" to the dumps.

The Worship and Altar Committees are truly grateful and deeply appreciate the love and service of each and everyone of you.

God's Blessings to all... Much Love, Diane Kless

TOM TYRRELL for keeping up with our rock salt supply, and keeping our walkways clear and safe all winter; also for finding coverage when he goes away and taking care of all of us here at the Church and School....

BARBARA, **OUR PAPER ANGEL**, for dropping off reams and reams of paper and sparing us that expense by keeping us well stocked all year....

JOHN FINK for always being available and helpful to all of our concerns here in the office....

TOM KENDRICK who is also always flexible and helpful as far as always finding the time to come here and fix things, buy supplies, running around, and never complaining....

SUZY COULTER for her knowledge and expertise with insurance....

JEFF SMITH for his help with implementing the new program to keep track of times, abilities, and attendance....

GERRY BERGH for his weekly dedication and input on editing and proofreading the Weekly bulletin you all receive via email....

KAREN ALESSI, CHARLOTTE SHAW, AND SANDY SANDOR for their consistent help and dedication coming to Church and helping assemble the Anchor and get it ready to mail each month...

EVERYONE for the love, support, and patience I receive every day, week, and month getting acclimated in my new position, it does not go unnoticed and is always very appreciated!!!

Easter Lilies will be placed on our Chancel area for Easter Worship Services. If you would like to order lilies, please complete the form and return it to the church office before <u>Sunday</u>, <u>March 18</u>. Plants may be taken home any time after the second service on <u>Easter Sunday</u>, <u>April 1</u>.

Price: \$7.00 each for 6 inch plants.

The forms will be available in the office, Narthex, and also by the flower chart on the Sacristy closet door, beginning the first week of February for your convenience.

MY FAITHFUL WELCOME TO 2018

With the flurry of Christmas activities behind us, many folks now focus on the excitement of a new year. Annually we craft manifestos of sweeping change to come. Resolutions we hope to keep, admirable intentions we sometimes accomplish, but not always. Nonetheless, we tell ourselves, this will be a year of great things. I love this renewal of hope and intent!

Perhaps we dress to impress, eat fine food, play games, listen to music, dance, watch the ball drop and raise our glasses and hearts...toasting with the ones we love, to health and happiness as we ring in the new year.

Every New Year's Eve, my husband and I host a small and intimate gathering of primarily family, and a few friends that are essentially family to us now. Several years back we introduced a handful of new year's activities we now call "traditions" and engage in them each December 31st.

Our "WISHING TREE" is donned each New Year's Eve with paper ornaments that hold each attendee's most desired wish for the new year. Crafted by hand and written that night, we ceremoniously place the, on the branches and pray for fate to take its course.

The "THIS YEAR" activity sheets pose the same questions each year: A new skill I would like to learn, a person I would like to be more like, a good deed I would like to do, etc.

We gather around one another, read last year's party goer answers and reflect on our accomplishments and shortfalls. We then shuffle this year's sheets and read aloud. Guessing whose answers are whose, just makes it FUN! You should try it.

This year, after my Good Luck New Year's Day dinner was prepared and eaten, and my out of town guests departed, I was more than ready for some "me" time. Aside from composing the answers for my activity sheet, I needed to engage in thinking about what I wanted this year to look like for myself.

I know that if I "Let go and let God" that I am letting go of my own will. "Father, if you are willing, take this cup form me; yet not my will, but Yours be done" (Luke 22:42). "Father, I place my life in Your hands!" (Luke 23:46) I try to embrace and live this philosophy and life practice, however I seemed more focused this year than ever on these questions: What can I do to celebrate and welcome 2018 as a Christian? What Christ centric actions can I take to mold my destiny? How can I faithfully welcome this new year?

I decided to do some digging – both internally and through a plethora of

resources. In doing so, I created a very personal list of intentions. It was an exercise I highly recommend. Upon doing my research I found a LifeWay article by Don Whitney "CONSIDER YOUR WAYS IN THE NEW YEAR." I had planned to edit down the content to share with you but, what questions may speak to me, may not speak to you, and vice versa…therefore, I present this article in full. Glean what triggers something in your soul and perhaps you too can turn one or more of these questions into resolutions for 2018!

I also leave you with this poem, I stumbled upon the other day. Wishing you an amazing new year, full of good health and happiness!

Kathryn

A New Year's Plan

I tried to think of a clever new phrase – A slogan to inspire the next 365 days, A motto to live by this coming New Year, But the catchy words fell flat to my ear.

And then I heard His still small voice, Saying, "Consider this simple, daily choice: With each new dawn and close of day Make new your resolve to trust and obey."

"Don't look back caught in regret Or dwell on the sorrow of dreams unmet; Don't stare forward anchored by fear, No, live in this moment, for I am here."

"I am all you need. Everything. I Am. You are held secure by my strong hand. Give me this one thing – your all in all; Into my grace, let yourself fall."

So, at last, I'm ready; I see the way.
It's to daily, follow, trust and obey.
I enter the New Year armed with a plan,
To give him my everything. All that I am.

~Mary Fairchild

Prayerfully ask yourself these 31 questions.

Once, when the people of God had become careless in their relationship with Him, the Lord rebuked them through the prophet Haggai. "Consider your ways!" (Haggai 1:5) he declared, urging them to reflect on some of the things happening to them and to evaluate their slipshod spirituality in light of what God had told them.

Even those most faithful to God occasionally need to pause and think about the direction of their lives. It's so easy to bump along from one busy week to another without ever stopping to ponder where we're going and where we should be going.

The beginning of a new year is an ideal time to stop, look up and get our bearings. For starters, here are 31 questions to ask prayerfully in the presence of God as you, "Consider your ways." Think on the entire list at one sitting, or answer one question each day for a month.

- **1.** What's one thing you could do this year to increase your enjoyment of God?
- **2.** What's the most humanly impossible thing you will ask God to do this year?
- **3.** What's the single most important thing you could do to improve the quality of your family life this year?
- **4.** In which spiritual discipline do you most want to make progress this year, and what will you do about it?
- **5.** What is the single biggest-time-waster in your life, and what will you do about it this year?
- **6.** What is the most helpful way you could strengthen your church?
- 7. For whose salvation will you pray the most fervently this year?
- **8.** What's the most important way you will, by God's grace, try to make this year different from last year?
- **9.** What one thing could you do to improve your prayer life this year?
- **10.** What single thing that you plan to do this year will matter mot in 10 years? In eternity?
- 11. What's the most important decision you need to make this year?
- **12.** What area of your life most needs simplifying, and what's one way you could simplify in that area?
- 13. What's the most important need you feel burdened to meet this year?
- **14.** What habit would you most like to establish this year?

- **15.** Who do you most want to encourage this year?
- **16.** What is your most important financial goal this year, and what is the most important step you can take toward achieving it?
- **17.** What's the single most important thing you could do to improve the quality of your work life this year?
- **18.** What's one new way you could be a blessing to your pastor (or to another who ministers to you) this year?
- **19.** What's one thing you could do this year to enrich the spiritual legacy you will leave to your children and grandchildren?
- **20.** What book, in addition to the Bible, do you most want to read this year?
- **21.** What one thing do you most regret about last year, and what will you do about it this year?
- **22.** What single blessing from God do you want to seek most earnestly this year?
- **23.** In what area of your life do you most need growth, and what will you do about it this year?
- **24.** What's the most important trip you want to take this year?
- 25. What skill do you most want to learn or improve this year?
- **26.** To what need or ministry will you try to give an unprecedented amount this year?
- **27.** What's the single most important thing you could do to improve the quality of your commute this year?
- **28.** What one biblical doctrine do you most want to understand better this year, and what will you do about it?
- **29.** If those who know you best gave you one piece of advice, what would they say? Would they be right? What will you do about it?
- **30.** What's the most important new item you want to buy this year?
- **31.** In what area of your life do you most need change, and what will you do about it this year?

The value of many of these questions is not in their profundity, but in the simple fact that they bring an issue or commitment into focus. For example, just by articulating which person you most want to encourage this year, you will be more likely to remember to encourage that person than if you hadn't considered the question.

If you've found these questions helpful, you might want to put them someplace – in a day planner, PDA, calendar, bulletin board, etc. – where you can review them more frequently than once a year.

So let's evaluate our lives, make plans and goals, and live this new year with biblical diligence, remembering that, "The plans of the diligent lead surely to advantage" (Proverbs 21:5). But in all things, let's also remember our dependence on our King who said, "Apart from Me you can do nothing" (John 15:5).

2017-2018 LifeWay Christian article:

<u>http://lifeway.com/Article/church-leader-pastor-Consider-your-ways-in-the-</u> New-Year



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If we have missed you, we apologize — it's probably because our records are incomplete. Please give us a reminder so we can place your name in this column next month & proper month next year.

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