

The Hilltopper



January 2022

From Pastor Mike

I have been your pastor for 30 months. The first wave of COVID-19 hit in March 2020 - almost 2 years ago. So, for two-thirds of my time here, we have been dealing with this pandemic. The Omicron variant is our latest challenge. Hopefully, it will burn out quickly, but time will tell.

As we enter a New Year when we hope for better things ahead, many feel we are overdue for a “normal” year and would be fine with that. However, my prayer for 2022 is that it will be a year where we will learn to live with COVID and move on with our lives.

I know. Easy to say.

The Post-Pandemic Recovery Group (PRG) has worked to adjust our precautions as COVID evolves. Despite the challenges of the latest variant, the PRG met in December and decided to restart the Children’s Sunday School in January. After consultation with our Parish Nurse, Dana Breeding, it may be best to let the post-holiday infections run their course for the next couple of weeks before we resume the children’s Sunday School. The date to restart is now Sunday, January 30th.

While writing this for the newsletter, I received a text from my brother letting me know that my niece’s husband tested positive for COVID-19. I spent 3 hours with him on December 27th celebrating Christmas with my extended family. I will take a rapid test today (Friday, 12/31) and again Saturday. If both tests are negative, then I will be at church on Sunday. If I have a positive test, then I will isolate for the recommended time and monitor any symptoms.

I am not worried about testing positive. I am fully vaccinated and boosted. It is unlikely I will get seriously ill, but I would feel awful if I passed the virus on to someone who is unvaccinated and/or immunocompromised.

As I mentioned, my prayer for 2022 is that we will learn to live with COVID and move on with our lives. For me, moving on with our lives means getting everyone who is eligible vaccinated and boosted. The unvaccinated make up 80% of those hospitalized with COVID. More vaccinations mean less COVID patients in the hospital. More vaccinations let our healthcare workers know that we care about them. More vaccinations let our neighbors and friends know that we want to protect our community.

Vaccination is a personal choice. If you are on the fence about getting vaccinated, talk to your primary care doctor. Do not just “do your own research” unless that research includes a conversation with a trusted medical professional.

May God continue to bless our ministry together.

Happy New Year!

Yours in Christ,

Pastor Mike



I am the New Year. I am unused, unspotted, without blemish. I stretch before you 365 days long. I will present each day in its turns, a new leaf in the Book of Life, for you to place upon it your imprint.

It remains for you to make of me what you will; if you write with firm, steady strokes, my pages will be a joy to look upon when the next year comes. If the pen falters, if uncertainty or doubt should mar the page, it will have been a learning lesson... one to grow from.

I am the New Year. Each hour of the 365 days, I will give you 60 minutes that have never known the use of man. White and pure, I present them; it remains for you to fill each of them with 60 jeweled seconds of love, hope, endeavor, patience, and trust in God.

I am the New Year. I am here - but once past, I can never be recalled.

Make me your best!



The following are the minutes from the [DECEMBER 2021](#) meeting of the Church Council. The minutes are available for you to help the entire church family *Stay In The Know* about how this group is caring for New Hope UMC!

Church Council Meeting Minutes - December 2, 2021

Present: Kevin Armstrong, Alicia Copeland, Cindy Deavers, Wanda Harding, Pastor Mike, Bruce Rogers, Cindy Sheets, Dallas VanLear and Karen Whitmer

The meeting was called to order by chairman Dallas VanLear, with devotions and prayer by Wanda Harding.

The minutes from the November meeting were accepted as distributed.

Finance Report: *(Kevin Armstrong reported)*

- ~ We have enough money for our monthly apportionments.
- ~ Thanks to everyone for their continued support.
- ~ Kevin made a motion to move \$1,000 into the Discretionary Fund. According to Pastor Mike, we currently have \$750 in that fund. Cindy Deavers seconded the motion and it was approved by all members present.
- ~ Kevin will have a full 2021 End-of-Year Report in January 2022.

Treasurer's Report: *(Cindy Deavers reported)*

- ~ All bills and giving have been reported thru the end of November.
- ~ We made our annual donations to: the Valley Mission, the District Mission, the Verona Food Pantry and the Board of Mission Asking.
- ~ \$415.00 has been received in memory of Henry Breeding, Gladys Riddle and Morene Morris. We now currently have about \$2,000 in the Gifts & Memorial Fund.
- ~ Apportionments for November have been paid. After we make our December apportionment payment, we will be 100% for the year.

Financial Secretary: *(Pastor Mike reported)*

- ~ Offering Envelopes for next year have been set out in the Narthex, we invite everyone to pick theirs up next time they are at church. If you don't see your envelopes, please see Robin Craun or Pastor Mike.

Trustees: *(Pastor Mike reported)*

- ~ We received 3-4 estimates from local landscaping businesses to be our next lawn care provider for 2022, and we have decided on one of them. The new contractors went to Fox Outdoor Services (our current landscaper through the end of the year) and got the rundown from them as to our church's unique needs. The new lawn service provider will charge us the same as Fox OS have charged us in the past, currently \$8,000 for lawn care and leaf removal throughout the year. We will take it a year at a time and see how well they do, and we may reassess next year if necessary. Fox OS is getting out of the lawn care business. We will continue to use Fox OS for their snow removal services.

Pastor's Report: *(Pastor Mike reported)*

- ~ Kids' Rock has been restarted. Thanks to Sam Brensinger, The Via Family and all the others who have helped her restart this ministry. Each week they have 3-6 kids participating in Kids' ROCK.
- ~ The Bible Study has currently ended, but it was very successful with an average of 14 people regularly participating, between both the afternoon and evening classes.

Worship: *(Pastor Mike reported)*

- ~ This year we will try something a little different with an earlier Christmas Eve Service starting at 4:00pm on Friday, December 24th, lasting approximately one hour. We are hoping this will be more kid friendly, so that the little ones won't have to stay up as late. Also, we hope that the earlier time will encourage more people to come who are not comfortable driving after dark.
- ~ THANKS to everyone! - There was a team of at least 12-15 people who came throughout the week of Thanksgiving, who helped decorate our church for the Christmas Season. From putting up the Christmas Tree and decorating it, to hanging the banners in the Sanctuary, to the wreaths on the front doors, to the nativity scenes decor on the window panes, the Nativity scene and manger in the Narthex ...and more! We all greatly appreciate your efforts in this ministry, and it helps us all get in the holiday spirit! Thank You!

United Methodist Men: *(Bruce Rogers reported)*

- ~ Last month, 15 men attended the November UMM Meeting. That number of attendees is almost as high as it was before the pandemic shut us down. The ladies of the Circle of Love made a delicious meal and we thank them!
- ~ On Sunday, December 12th, we will have our Church-wide Christmas Breakfast partnering with the United Methodist Women. The breakfast will begin at 9:00am. Don't bring anything, just come and enjoy the food and fellowship.
- ~ Working at the New Hope Dump has already proven successful. The men who are volunteering there are getting into a rhythm and the paychecks are coming in each month. - The UMM use this money for their mission projects throughout the year.

United Methodist Women: *(Wanda Harding reported)*

- ~ The UMW will partner with the United Methodist Men to host the Church-wide Christmas Breakfast on Sunday, December 12th @ 9:00am.
- ~ The Sisters of Faith will meet on Tuesday, December 7th for lunch.
- ~ The Circle of Love will meet on Tuesday, December 14th @ 7:00pm

Staff/Parish Relations: *(Pastor Mike reported)*

~ We will need to have another SPRC meeting soon, as the Appointments are due on Friday, January 7th, 2022.

Membership: *(Karen Whitmer reported)*

~ So far this year, we have 8 people pass on to be with the Lord; we have had 3 members transfer to New Hope UMC, and we have added 1 member by Reaffirmation.

Communications: *(Cindy Sheets reported)*

~ Currently working to update the church computer in the a/v room. Updating and renewing some software, renewing the anti-virus protection, adding remote access capabilities, etc.

~ Wanted to thank everyone for their patience and support over the last 21+ months; while we worked to keep people connected via livestream worship, and shifted to a more online presence.

Youth: *(Pastor Mike reported)*

- ~ The Youth had a Bowling Day on Saturday, November 13th, at Staunton Lanes in Staunton, starting at 3:00pm, with 6 youths participating. A good time was had by all.
- ~ The Youth are in charge of our Church's Christmas Float in the New Hope Community Christmas Parade. They are helping to come up with the design and working to see that design comes to life on Friday, December 10th @ 6:00pm. All are welcomed to attend and/or participate in the parade.

Unfinished Business:

- ~ The light in the library has been fixed. Thank you to all who made that happen!

New Business:

- ~ The Charge Conference Nominations Report is not completed as of yet. We still need to fill the following positions. If you are interested in serving on any of these committees, please contact Pastor Mike.

NEEDED: 2 people needed on the Nominations Committee
3 people needed on the Staff / Parish Relations Committee
2 people needed on the Trustees Committee

~ The Boy Scouts of America are going through bankruptcy and are currently working on a bankruptcy plan. The UMC as a whole, needs to vote whether or not to accept their contingency plan, which would mean that we could/would be included in any future lawsuits. It is recommended that we vote no on being apart of this plan, and there will be a district meeting this Sunday, December 5th, to cast our votes and discuss our options.

~ Dallas thanked everyone for coming and for keeping the church running behind the scenes. He wanted everyone to know that their efforts are appreciated.

Dallas closed the meeting, and Pastor Mike sent us off with prayer. The meeting ended at 7:03pm.

Respectfully submitted by:
Cynthia Sheets
Recording Secretary

The next Church Council Meeting will be on Thursday, January 27th, 2022 at 6:30pm.



12-31-1997

THIS YEAR, FOR NEW YEARS, I AM RESOLVING TO DO ALL SORTS OF BAD THINGS SINCE I NEVER EVER STICK TO MY NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTIONS

On New Year's Eve, Aaron was in no shape to drive, so he sensibly left his van in the parking lot and started walking home.

As he was wobbling along, he was stopped by a policeman.

'What are you doing out here at four o'clock in the morning?' asked the officer.

'I'm on my way to a lecture,' Aaron answered.

'And who on earth, in their right mind, is going to give a lecture at this time on New Year's Eve?' enquired the officer sarcastically.

'My wife,' slurred Aaron grimly.

My resolution is to read more... so I put the subtitles on my TV.

Where can you go to practice math on New Year's Eve?

Times Square.

What's the one group that hates New Year's Day?

The New Year's Eve cleanup crew.

What is a New Year's resolution?

Something that goes in one year and out the other.





Birthdays & Anniversaries

3 - Sam Arnold
- Dana Breeding
- Jack Walker

4 - Michelle Chittum
- Brooke Darrah

5 - Dave Critzer
- Bucky Darrah
- Shirley Western

6 - Gary Campbell
- Michael Herman
- Phyllis Jarvis

7 - Kristin Walker Kniss

9 - Barbara Arndt
- Jacob Schreckhise

10 - Vinda Shaver

11 - Jackie Wilberger

12 - Phyllis Fretwell

13 - Amanda Corbett

14 - Will Bergman


17 - Mildred Hartman
- Candice Kincaid
- Jason Shiflett

18 - Crystal Abbe
- Lynn Shaver

19 - Kathy Campbell
- Gina Davis

20 - Michael Breeding
- Laura Jenner

21 - Kenny Fretwell

22 - Heather Abbe Fitcham
-  Bob & Jean Critzer

23 - Linda McKibbin

24 - William Critzer

25 - Christian Deavers
- Richard Ritchie

26 - Jeremy McLaughlin

28 - Gary Lewis

31 - Denise Duncan

Accomplishing Your New Year's Resolutions

by: Edd Sterchi

What New Year's resolutions have you made? Most will have made ones that were designed to make their lives or the lives around them better. Such resolutions may include: losing weight, stopping a bad habit, exercising more, becoming more organized, or having a better attitude. Now, I'm not going to be sarcastic like the man who made the New Year's toast, "May your troubles be as short lived as your resolutions!" I sincerely hope you succeed in every resolution you make (that is within the Lord's will, of course).

So how are you going to get your resolutions accomplished? Hebrews 12:1-2 can give us a lot of encouragement and help along that line. Even though the true context of the passage is ridding our lives of sin and striving toward heaven, we can make application to accomplishing worthy earthly goals, as well.

"since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses"

– Involve others. There are many in your life who can motivate and encourage you. Look to the example of those who have already completed what you are trying to accomplish.

"let us lay aside every weight"

– Get rid of all the obstacles that are hindering success. There are plenty of ways to fail, and the world will make sure to bring them all out. To succeed, all obstacles must be avoided or overcome.

"and let us run" – Exercise yourself in a specific plan of action to complete the goal. Accomplishing goals is often a matter of each of us being determined to run – then running.

"with endurance" – You need to be persistent in accomplishing your resolutions. You can't give up, even though there may be setbacks. If you stumble, get back on your feet and get running again.

"looking unto Jesus" – Keep your eyes upon Jesus who overcame earthly obstacles, completed God's plan, persisted, and made it back to heaven. Remember what all He went through and how what you are trying to do is much less demanding and that you can do it.

Henry Ward Beecher once said: "We have passed through one more year. One more long stage in the journey of life, with its ascents and descents and dust and mud and rocks and thorns and burdens that wear the shoulders, is done. The old year is dead. Roll it away. Let it go." May I only add, "let it go, and let's go on to greater things in 2022."



Kids' Corner ~ Church and Respect

By: Sharla Guenther

Have you ever been to a King or Queen's palace? How would you act if you were invited there? Would you run around and talk loudly? Would you push your brother or sister and talk back to your parents? Would you ignore the Queen if she talked to you?



I'm sure you would be on your best behavior. You would listen to your parents, mind all your manners, say "please" and "thank-you", and be careful not to break anything.

One last question, why would you be on your best behavior at the Queen's palace? Is it because the Queen is important and she has lots of nice things, and you just know that you are supposed to be good in a fancy place like that?

This lesson is about how we should behave in God's house. Church is a special place where we learn more about God and worship him. God doesn't actually live there because God is everywhere but it's one of the special places we can go just to honor him without any distractions of the outside world.

Have you ever noticed that people dress up when they go to church. That's because people are trying to be respectful to God and to get ready to worship him. Have you ever wondered

why people close their eyes and bow their heads when they pray? People do that so they can think about what they're praying to God and not looking and thinking about other things. We bow our heads because God is our King and he deserves respect like a King and so much more!

When you are respectful you listen to others and treat others the way you want to be treated. So how can you respect others at church? By treating church like God's house and listening to your teachers and parents, by walking instead of running and using your quiet voice instead of your loud voice.

Sometimes in church there are special times that we're allowed to run around (in the church gym or a during a special lesson in Sunday School) and that's okay if the teachers or parents give you permission but otherwise

we need to learn and listen to what the leaders say.

Your teachers spend lots of time getting ready for a special Sunday School lesson just for you. They care a lot about each one of you and want you to learn important things that can help you. It makes them sad and disappointed if you don't listen and that makes God sad.

When we respect others we are also respecting God. So you may have guessed that we aren't just supposed to be good in church but everywhere! Respecting everyone we pass by. Since God is everywhere he can see how we treat others and if we are making them happy or sad.

There's a verse in the Bible (Romans 12:10) that says, love each other honestly and treat others better than you would treat yourself.

That means listening to your teachers at school, babysitters, parents and grandparents. It also means respecting other people's things. So when someone has a toy or book that you want it's not right just to take it away from them. Ask them nicely and if they still don't want to share play with something else until they're finished. I know that can be tough but that's what God wants us to do.

Start to think about respect everywhere you go (the grocery store, other people's houses, even restaurants). Sometimes it's important to be on your very best behavior, but your parents understand you need play time and a time to be loud too.

So have lots of fun but just keep in mind that church is a special place to learn about God and we need to treat it just like a king's palace (because God is our king). Listen to your parents and teachers, they love you and want the best for you and that's how you can make God happy!

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Sermon**

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