

New Hope United Methodist Church's Monthly Newsletter



The Hilltopper



July 2023



From Pastor Mike

As we celebrate Independence Day, it is a time for us to reflect on the precious gift of freedom. In our nation, we enjoy freedoms that many people around the world long for. But as Christians, we also have a deeper and more profound freedom that goes beyond earthly boundaries. We have freedom in Christ.

Galatians 5:1 says, "It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery."

Through His sacrifice on the cross, Jesus has set us free from the bondage of sin and the weight of the law. He has broken the chains that once held us captive. We find true freedom in Him -- freedom from guilt, shame, fear, and condemnation.

This freedom in Christ is not just a one-time event but a continuous journey. It is a daily choice to live in the freedom that has been granted to us. It means surrendering our will to God's will, allowing Him to guide and shape our lives.

True freedom in Christ is not about doing whatever we want without consequences. It is about living in alignment with God's truth and walking in obedience to His Word. It is about experiencing the abundant life that Jesus promised.

As we celebrate our earthly independence, let us also remember our freedom in Christ. It is a freedom that transcends borders, cultures, and circumstances. It is a freedom that empowers us to love and serve others, to live with purpose and meaning, and find joy and peace in any situation.

In this freedom, we are no longer slaves to our past mistakes, our insecurities, or our worldly desires. We are children of God, co-heirs with Christ, and ambassadors of His kingdom.

As we reflect on the privilege of earthly freedom, let us also remember the responsibility that comes with it. Our freedom in Christ calls us to be a light in a world that desperately needs the hope and truth of the Gospel. It calls us to stand firm in our faith, even when the world may try to silence or diminish it.

Let us cherish and protect the freedom we have in Christ, holding it dear to our hearts and allowing it to shape every aspect of our lives. May our lives be a testimony of the transforming power of God's love and grace.

As we celebrate Independence Day, may we also celebrate and give thanks for the freedom we have in Christ -- a freedom that will never fade or be taken away. Let us live as free men and women, walking boldly in the path that God has set before us, for His glory and the expansion of His kingdom.

Yours in Christ,
Pastor Mike



Sunday, July 9th

**Mission to Cuba
Presentation
&
'Baby Shower'**

On Sunday, July 9th, after worship service, Pastor Mike will share a presentation about his mission trip to Cuba. We will see how our donations were given and see the people that will be able to use those donations to help in their local communities.

A light lunch will be provided with a special dessert.

We will also hold a 'Baby Shower' during this time for our nursery.

Our nursery has been blessed recently, with several little folks on Sunday mornings. We will also have some new babies who will be arriving very soon. Therefore, we are now in need of a new changing table and a Pack 'n Play playard. Our glider chairs in the nursery are in need of new cushions and the window treatments need to be replaced. We are also in need of several small items like baby wipes & tissues.

A basket for monetary donations for the nursery will be there for a free-will offering.

Please plan to join us and learn about the mission trip to Cuba and enjoy good food and fellowship with each other.

If you have any questions, please call or text either:
Wanda: (540) 290-1054 or
Martha: (540) 290-2275





The following are the minutes from the [JUNE](#) meeting of the Church Council.

The minutes are available to help the entire church family *stay in the know* about how this group is caring for New Hope UMC!

Church Council Meeting Minutes - June 22, 2023

Present: Kevin Armstrong, Becky Breeding, Bianca Brensinger, Alicia Copeland, Robin Craun, Cindy Deavers, Phylis Fretwell, Wanda Harding, Beth Howdyshell, Linda Howdyshell, Corey Johnson, Bill Lalla, Pastor Mike, Bruce Rogers, Cindy Sheets, Dallas VanLear, and Karen Whitmer.

The meeting was called to order by chairperson Dallas Van Lear. And Bianca Brensinger read a devotion from Genesis 1:27-28 and prayed.

There was a correction to the May 2023 meeting minutes: David Gibbs is the attorney that is working for the disaffiliation process.

Finance Report: *(Kevin Armstrong reported)*

- Next Finance Committee meeting is August 10th at 6pm. Reminder that the chair of every committee is also a member of the Finance Committee and should make an effort to be involved in these finance meetings too.
- So far, June looks bleak, as we have only taken in \$6,373 as of today in tithings and offerings; and we need \$10,000 each month to pay the church staff.
- Kevin recommended that we do not pay any apportionments for June to the District.
- Kevin stated that in the summer there is always a financial dip, but it is stiffer this year.

Treasurer: *(Cindy Deavers reported)*

- On the current balance sheet: Under payables to vendors - this is our property and liability insurance, it is due on July 3rd, but has not been paid as of yet. It's \$6,500, that's up \$500 from last year. And the worker's comp insurance is actually down slightly from last year. We budgeted for \$7,000, and we will be over in total \$433 more than what we budgeted for our insurance.
- The monthly bills for June have been paid for.
- The apportionment payment that you see on the current budget is for May's apportionments.

Finance Secretary: *(Robin Craun reported)*

- Becky Breeding will be taking over Robin's position as Finance Secretary. Starting in August, Becky and Robin will be transitioning in and out of this role. They will work together to make it as smooth of a transition as possible for everyone.
- Pastor Mike made a motion to nominate Becky Breeding as Assistant Finance Secretary for now and to also make her a member of the Finance Committee and the Church Council. Kevin seconded it and the motion was passed by all.

Trustees: *(Corey Johnson reported)*

- There was no meeting in June.
- They are still "chasing propane tanks" because at our price point they go fast when they come up for sale.

Pastor Mike: *(Pastor Mike reported)*

- On Sunday, July 9th, Mike will give a presentation on his mission trip to Cuba. We will also have a light lunch at this time. Also on Sunday, July 9th, we will hold a "Baby Shower" for our nursery. We will be asking for donations of needed nursery items, along with monetary donations. We are anticipating at least 3 new babies coming into our church family very soon, along with a number of new toddlers who have been joining us on Sunday mornings.
- The first class on the summer bible study was held last Tuesday with 15 people participating.

Worship Committee *(Pastor Mike reported)*

- On July 10th, the Worship Committee will meet again.
- We are still in need of a Hospitality Chairperson.

Spiritual Nurture: *(report from Samantha Brensinger)*

- We have leaders established for all the VBS stations, but still need several volunteers.
- We have scheduled the Old School Burgers food truck to be here on Monday, July 24th, the first day of VBS, to serve dinner. We are going to advertise to the community to also come and buy dinner off the truck. This will help pay for our costs for dinner of VBS kids and volunteers.
- There is a poster in the Narthex with a place for monetary donations, to help pay for supplies, decorations and the dinners to be served each night of VBS. There is a lot to still purchase, so any donations would be appreciated.
- We will be handing out school supplies again this year on the Sunday after VBS, we will be posting what kind of supplies that we need soon. Green Valley Book Fair will be having a school supply sale soon and could be a great opportunity to get those supplies for VBS Sunday.

UM Men and UM Women: *(Bill Lalla / Wanda Harding reported)*

- No meetings during the summer.

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

- Met in June, and the annual evaluation was turned into the District office.

Membership: *(Karen Whitmer reported)*

- The membership list for the District Superintendent is completed.
- There are 255 names on the list with addresses that were available from various sources.
- At this point, 17 names have been eliminated from the original list because no address could be found.
- 6 names were those of deceased persons.
- 11 names were removed by letter of transfer.
- 13 names were listed as those who voluntarily withdrew their membership.
- These names will be submitted to the Charge Conference for approval and formal removal of their membership status.
- Karen would like to thank Pastor Mike, Wanda Harding and all the church family members who helped her gather information.

Lay Leader: *(Cindy Deavers reported)*

- Cindy stated that it was a privilege to be able to serve as Lay Leader. And that she plans to get more involved as our Lay Leader in the coming months.

Youth: *(Bianca Brensinger reported)*

- The Sight and Sound trip was a success with 23 people enjoying the trip. We were able to get a gift card for the unsold tickets, which some of it was used to allow all the kids and youth to get something from the gift shop. There was positive feedback and much interest in doing the trip again next year to see Daniel.

Disaffiliation Business:

- Dallas will send the District Superintendent the needed information, i.e, trustees info, property deeds, etc., by the end of next week, so that they can move forward.
- David Gibbs is our out-of-state attorney and Jonathon Bailie is our in-state attorney. We do not know a cost for the attorneys. So far the church has not paid anything out of pocket.
- The District Conference attorney's fees are \$300 per hour.
- October 7th is the last call for disaffiliation in our conference. Churches will need to have a vote at least a month before this date.
- We need copies of the deeds - church property, cemetery deed, deed to the parking lot across the street from the church, and other information.
- The District Superintendent will write up the communications about the vote that will go out in letter form to the members of the church.
- The District Superintendent will run the meeting for a vote. He will have a membership list, check names off, give people a ballot, they will go vote and when everyone who is eligible has voted, then the votes will be counted and we will know the same day what the results are.
- We need 66.67% of the vote to disaffiliate.
- We may not know the full amount that we would owe the District at the time of the vote.
- If we would vote to disaffiliate and do not pay the District their outstanding amount before the end of the year, then we will stay with the United Methodist.
- The church council can still vote to pause the disaffiliation process at any time before the vote.

New Business:

- Cindy Deavers stated that under the current Rules and Regulations of the Cemetery Fund, that the money in that account can not be used to pay for mowing of the cemetery. That the money in the Cemetery Fund can only be used for projects in the cemetery.
- The Rules and Regulations of the Cemetery Fund are dated April 23, 2015, but there was some discussion as to whether they had been revised since then.
- Corey Johnson, as chairperson of the Trustees; Cindy Deavers, as Lay Leader; Teresa Barr, as Cemetery Custodian and one other person as assistant Cemetery Custodian make up the Cemetery Committee.
- The Cemetery Fund money is in CDs with a low earning interest rate. The Cemetery Fund Rules and Regulations state that the principal amount is not to be used at all. The interest has never been moved out of the Cemetery Fund.
- There was discussion about whether or not we could use that interest money to help pay for maintenance, which mowing the grass may or may not be covered under that definition.
- It was recommended that the Cemetery Fund Policy be revised for better clarity within the Cemetery Committee, and then they will bring those recommendations to the Trustees and then to the Church Council.
- Karen made a motion for the Cemetery Committee to be reorganized, reconvene and to revisit the details on using the interest in the Cemetery Fund to help pay for mowing and to present their decisions to the Trustees. Bill Lalla seconded it and it was passed by all.

Dallas thanked us all for our time to move the church and the community forward. And stated his appreciation for all we do on behalf of the entire church. Pastor Mike prayed and the meeting ended at 7:23pm.

Respectfully submitted by:

Cynthia Sheets, Recording Secretary

The next church council meeting will be Thursday, July 27, 2023



Vacation Bible School

July 24th-July 28th

Vacation Bible School 2023:

VBS 2023 will be held from Monday, July 24th to Friday, July 28th from 6:00pm-8:30pm, with dinner provided every night at 5:30pm.

On Monday, July 24th, we have scheduled Old School Burgers Food Truck to be here and people in the community can come and eat from the food truck.



On Sunday, July 30th at 10:30am, we will have a VBS Sunday Service Celebration, with a picnic for the whole church family following our morning services.

Donations: We are asking for donations of food, school supplies, decorations and/or monetary donations for Vacation Bible School this year. Please consider giving to help offset some of our costs, the sign-up sheet is in the Narthex.

School Supplies: We will be handing out school supplies again this year on the Sunday after VBS, we will be posting what kind of supplies that we need soon.



BIRTHDAYS and
ANNIVERSARIES



1 - Kyle VanLear

4 - Rita Lambert

6 - Emma Via

8 - David Shiflett, Jeffrey Walker

8 - Mike & Lauren Kelly ❤️

9 - William Harding

10 - Clara Breeding

12 - Natasha Ritchie, Tuck Rogers

13 - Debbie Arnold

15 - Jerry & Susan Coffman ❤️

16 - Jase Harding, Andrew Viers

17 - John & Helen Morse ❤️

19 - Jenn & Jim Strother ❤️

23 - Freddie Craig, Tim Howdysshell

27 - Becky Breeding

31 - Julia Arndt, Nancy Howdysshell





07-04-2014

AS CHRISTIANS WE ARE INDEPENDENT OF EVIL AND AN ETERNITY OF PAIN AND SUFFERING ... WHEN DO WE GET FIREWORKS?



Why were the first Americans like ants?

They lived in colonies!

Which flag is the most highly rated?

The American flag. It has 50 stars!

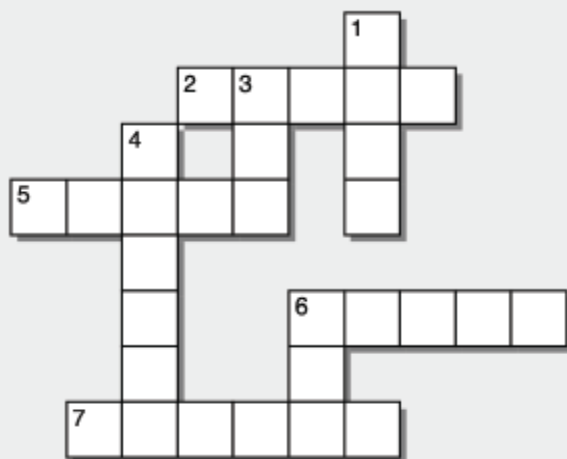
Why should you research fireworks before purchasing them?

To get the most bang for your buck!

How come there aren't any knock-knock jokes about America?

Because freedom rings!

⚓ CrossWORD



"The First Murder"

Genesis 4

Across

- 2) An emotion Cain felt.
- 5) The place where Cain killed Abel.
- 6) Abel's professional occupation.
- 7) What Cain tilled.

Down

- 1) "If you do ____, will you not be accepted?"
- 3) Cain's new home.
- 4) "Am I my brother's ____?"
- 6) Something at Cain's door.



Annual Conference Report

Last Saturday we concluded the 241st annual conference of the United Methodist Church which was held in Roanoke. Besides being a business meeting, this was a spiritual experience for the over 2,000 attendees representing every church in The Virginia Conference.

By necessity, a portion of this gathering was about conducting the business of the church. I will skip over these figures as all of these facts and figures are in the book of reports, which is on the conference website at VAUMC.org.

One particular statistic that grabbed me was that the UMC is actively involved in global, as well as local missions. Over 14,000 kits of all kinds (flood buckets, first aid, hygiene, etc.) were collected with over 3,200 coming from our district alone. These will be supporting missionaries in over 60 countries worldwide. Also, as of June 1st, over \$27 million dollars has been raised for Ukraine alone for food, clothing, shelter, medicine, and refugee resettlement.

To me, one of the resounding themes of our conference is that every lay person is also a minister. The responsibility of greeting new attendees, sharing our stories, welcoming others to come worship with us and helping others; either emotionally, spiritually, or with physical needs, is the job of every one of us. A question posed to every congregation. "When a new person visits, does everyone whisper "I wonder who that is?" or do we make it a point to greet them?"

A highlight of our event was a celebration called "The Ordering of Ministry". This was the consecration of those willing and able to move into positions of spiritual leadership. In total, 47 people were ordained either as lay supply, deacons, local pastors, provisional elders, or full elders.

Another special time occurred one morning when there was a meeting of just the laity of each church (sorry, no preachers allowed). We discussed what was going on where we have been planted, challenges we faced, opportunities for lay ministry, and our hopes for the future.

If you only ever decide to listen to one message other than Pastor Mike's, I encourage you to listen to the opening address and message of Bishop Sue. It was not at all political, just spiritual, I can promise that after hearing it, you will want to share it. Again, it's on the conference website VAUMC.org (forward to 1 hour 3 min, 1:03), it will be a valuable 15 minutes.

As a matter of course, the topic of disaffiliation did arise at various times. The estimate is that by the October deadline about 9.3% of churches will have chosen to leave the Virginia Conference. The Bishop graciously had prayer for them, thanking them for their years of service and wishing them well in the future.

Another way to look at this statistic however is that over 90% of churches will have chosen to stay, and the projection is that after October we will have over 900 churches and more than 95,000 United Methodists in the Virginia Conference.

Considering the large number of churches remaining; 47 people of faith dedicating themselves to be UMC church leaders; the numerous mission opportunities the UMC is involved in; and the report of brand new start up congregations in Northern VA, I believe a bright future lies ahead for the United Methodist Church to carry out Christ's work in this World.

God Bless,
Bill Lalla ~ Conference Delegate

Donations for July

Collecting **Canned Fruit** and **Shampoo**



To help people in our local communities, through local agencies, such as:
the Verona Food Pantry,
the Blue Ridge Area Food Bank,
the Valley Mission,
and the Open Doors Shelter
in Harrisonburg.

Contact Cheryl and Nathan Kutz
(202) 495-1346



Donations Given In The Last 2 Months



23 containers of rice
45 toothbrushes
12 cans of vegetables
9 sunscreens
10 bags of clothes



Moving On

Nathan and I were in court again this week...yes again. Sigh...and it is always at no fault of our own. It has been going on for over four years now. It is frustrating and tiresome. I won't get into details, but the question arises, when will this person move on?

There are many different types of moving on. Moving on from an old job to a new one, moving on to a new grade or school, moving on from a past relationship to a new one, moving on after the loss of a loved one or pet, moving on to a new home. There are many different times in our lives where we need to move on. Sometimes forced, sometimes voluntary. Moving on can be easy, difficult, take you out of your comfort zone, but is usually always for the better. It leads to new beginnings, new experiences, and new memories.

Isaiah 43:18-19, KJV, "Remember ye not the former things, neither consider the things of old." "Behold, I will do a new thing; now it shall spring forth; shall ye not know it? I will even make a way in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert."

Throughout the Bible, we see many examples of people moving on. Ruth moved on from Moab after her husband died and decided to go back to Israel with Naomi. Paul faced persecution and regardless of how much of that he suffered in being an apostle to the gentiles, he never stopped in his pursuit of Christ. Most importantly, Jesus moved forward with his ministries, loving and caring for all, bringing sheep to the flock even when he faced ridicule, rejection, punishment, and bloodshed. All moved on no matter how much hell they dealt with and it led them to the ultimate greatness.

We will face having to move on many times in our lives for many different circumstances, but we can take refuge in knowing that this helps to connect us to Ruth, Paul, and Jesus. They experienced moving on for different reasons and in different ways. They showed us how to move on with patience, persistence, and grace. They showed us how to trust God in the process of it all and relish in the blessings of the new. Remember to be grateful and thankful for the opportunity to move on because it is God's way of protecting us. Trust him always!

Thank you and we pray you are all blessed,
Cheryl & Nathan Kutz
Real Life Heavenly Hands

Our History Falls

On Wednesday evening, the tree in the front of the church was damaged and lost a large limb. We thank God that no one was hurt. We are also very thankful for all of those who came out to help with the clean-up.



*In light of our picturesque church tree being damaged,
I thought that I would republish this poem that I wrote
back in 2004. That tree was my muse for this poem.
Oh, to reflect on everything that it has seen! ~ Cindy Sheets*

The Tree

I am like a tree,
rooted in the word.

From the tiniest seed, I sprouted.
Now I stand strong and mighty and proud.

I look upon the world with a greater view.
My branches reach to heaven, my home.

Through the year I am ever-changing,
growing and nurturing new life.

My leaves may wither and fall.
But, fear not!
Because I do not die, I only sleep.
Until I am born again,
in a new season of my life.



Though the wind may blow my branches,
I will not waver.
If lightning strikes my trunk,
I will not fall.

Even if the fires of hell reach up from the ground
and burns me to ashes,
do not give up on me, for I will not be destroyed.

For I am truly rooted in the word,
and I will sprout up again from the long-forgotten and
unseen roots that have kept me standing and able to survive.

I will live again.
I will grow again, stronger and prouder than before.
And my seeds of the Good News will fall and be carried on the wind
and travel to the places of the world that I cannot see,
from where I stand.

So go and plant a seed!
Plant a seed of hope, of peace, of salvation.
Go and plant,
a forest of believers!



FRUIT TREE

A Joyful 'toon by Mike Waters



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www.joyfultoons.com

The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life,
and he who wins souls is wise.

— PROVERBS 11:30 NIV



***If you would like to add an article or announcement
to the Hilltopper, please contact us! Call/Text: (540) 280-1860 or email
NewHopeUMC.Virginia@gmail.com***

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