

# ***New Hope United Methodist Church's Monthly Newsletter***

## **The Hilltopper**



**April 2023**

### ***From Pastor Mike***

We are most likely moving forward to a Called Church Conference for a final vote on the future of New Hope United Methodist Church. All professing members of New Hope UMC who are present at this Called Church Conference will have the right to vote.

How we will get there is a little more complicated. Let me share a few things with you.

The straw poll conducted after worship tells us that 55% of those in church on a typical Sunday morning would like to disaffiliate from the United Methodist Church with 45% preferring to stay in the United Methodist Church. Since the majority voted to leave the UMC, church leaders felt those voters deserved the opportunity for a final vote which requires a 2/3 majority (66.67% or higher).

I disagree with this decision. However, after speaking with several clergy colleagues earlier this week and spending time in prayer, I will defer to the will of your church leadership in this matter. We must work toward the end of this process. We have been in it for a long time, and we are all fatigued. And our stewardship is suffering.

According to the disaffiliation checklist provided by D.S. Gomez after the straw poll, the following steps must be completed before we can schedule the Called Church Conference.

Provide the District Office with the following information:

1. Local church Trustee names and contact information supplied to DS, who will forward to Conference Trustees and their attorney.
2. Local church attorney contact information supplied to DS
3. DS will connect the local church attorney and Trustee Chair or local church contact person with the Conference Trustees' attorney. Together they will finalize the Disaffiliation Agreement.
4. List of all professing members with contact information
5. Copy of all deeds, including parsonage and cemetery (if applicable)
6. Copy of the most recent "Exhibit A" registering the Trustees with the county court.

Once we complete these steps, the DS will schedule the Called Church Conference. All professing members will be notified by U.S. mail of the upcoming conference.

The Disaffiliation Agreement terms will be presented at the Called Church Conference. All professing members who are present may vote and a 2/3 majority is required for disaffiliation.

If you are an adult who is not a professing member but have attended worship regularly over the past year, you are welcome to contact me about professing membership. However, no other new members will be received prior to the Called Church Conference.

After the Called Church Conference, then what happens?

If the 2/3 majority vote is met, the Annual Conference will approve the disaffiliation at a Special Called Conference on October 29, 2023. Any United Methodist Church planning to disaffiliate must complete its due diligence as outlined in the Disaffiliation Agreement no later than December 31, 2023. My last day as your pastor would be the date the Disaffiliation Agreement is legally settled.

The Church must pay its assigned "Taylor Number" which is currently estimated at \$134,158. You can see a breakdown of how the amount was calculated on the worksheet which follows this article. D.S. Gomez covered all of this at the October 11, 2022, information session.

Following satisfactory completion of our due diligence, the agreement will be executed, and transfer of property to the new entity shall take place. Removal of all UMC symbols (i.e. signage, flags, etc.) must be completed; UM Hymnals or Bibles with the cross and flame UMC logo may be retained by the local church.

All final accounts payable, including payroll and employment taxes, along with filing of required reports (including W-2's) must be completed prior to execution of the Disaffiliation Agreement.

If the church fails to reach a 2/3 majority vote on disaffiliation, then this church will remain in the United Methodist Church.

Whatever the results of the Called Church Conference vote, New Hope Church will be a different church. Each person will have to make a choice whether to stay or leave. Familiar faces will be missing from our lives.

We must be kind to one another. We can disagree without being disagreeable. But as someone said to me earlier this week, it feels like we are stuck in the mud.

We cannot stay there. We must keep moving.

Yours in Christ, *Pastor Mike*



# **Church Disaffiliation Worksheet for a Church Seeking Disaffiliation** **(Under Paragraph 2553)**

**New Hope UMC:** District Shenandoah River GCFA 483905

**Figures Used in the Pension and Health Liabilities Calculation:** *(Subject to change until locked)*

Church's share (apportionment decimal) of liabilities 0.00072881

Total Annual Conference Pension Liability: \$45,764,525

Total Annual Conference Retiree Health Liability: \$53,847,081

## **Estimate of Amount to be Paid if Church Disaffiliates**

### 1. Church's share of Annual Conference Pension and Health Liabilities

Church's share of AC Pension Liability: \$33,354

Church's share of AC Retiree Health Liability: \$39,244

Total for Pension and Retiree Health Liabilities: \$72,598 (Two Years of Annual)

### 2. Conference and District Apportionments

Annual Conference (2023 Apportionments x 2): \$56,280

District (2023 Apportionments x 2): \$5,280

Less: Total Paid (may not reflect recent payments): \$0

Total for Two Years of Apportionments \$61,560

*Total of #1 and #2 above is our **Taylor Number (2553 Number): \$134,158***

*(This is the minimum amount to be paid if we disaffiliate, not counting the items in #3 listed below.)*

### 3. Other Amounts to be Paid - (Not Yet Determined)

3a. Repayment of Conference Grants

3b. Conference's legal expenses related to church's disaffiliation

3c. Remaining salary, housing and benefits for appointed clergy through the end of the appointment year if the clergy stays with the Annual Conference.

JOIN US ON  
**EASTER**  
*Sunday*

*Sunday, April 9th, 2023*



6:30am



7:00am



10:30am



and



After Worship Services



The following are the minutes from the **MARCH** 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 - March 23, 2023**

Present: Andy Breeding, Alicia Copeland, Cindy Deavers, Wanda Harding, Beth Howdysshell, Linda Howdysshell, Nathan Kutz, Bill Lalla, Kim Maugans, Pastor Mike, Bruce Rogers, Cindy Sheets, Jennifer Strother, Jim Strother, Dallas VanLear, and Karen Whitmer.

The meeting was called to order by chairperson Dallas Van Lear. And Pastor Mike read a devotion from Reflecting God's Perfect Love.

\* The minutes from the February meeting were accepted with the following amendment: **We did not make any apportionment payment for January.** Bill Lalla made a motion to approve the corrected minutes. Cindy Deavers seconded it and it was passed by all.

### **Finance Report:** *(report from Kevin Armstrong)*

- Still waiting on several audits that are due next Sunday.
- The giving is really only meeting the staff payroll.
- I recommend we pay \$2,000 from reserve/checking toward Active Clergy Health in Apportionments just to get the process started.

### **Treasurer:** *(Cindy Deavers reported)*

- After the last meeting, \$2,640 was paid to the district in apportionments.
- We received 2 fuel bills totaling over \$3,300 in February. And we have been reimbursed by Asbury UMC for half the amount.
- So far in March, we have received \$8,490 in giving to the General Fund, with one more week to go in the month.
- As of the date of this meeting, we have \$18,831 in our checking account; and there will be payroll to pay and a few other bills before the end of March, so it'll probably be down another \$8,000 by the end of the month.

## **Trustees:** *(Pastor Mike / Bill Lalla reported)*

- The Trustees met in March.
- They are planning on doing a workday on April 1st, to cleanup before Palm Sunday and Easter.
- They are looking to find someone who can strip and refinish our floors in the Social Hall.
- Still working on switching propane providers.
- The Boy Scouts are disbanding and will be moving all of their stuff out of the old social hall.

## **Pastor Mike:** *(Pastor Mike reported)*

- There will be no Maundy Thursday service.
- There will be a Community Good Friday Service at Mt. Horeb Presbyterian at 7pm with Pastor Mike preaching.
- On Easter Sunday we will have Sunrise Service at 6:30am, followed by breakfast sponsored by the UMM. And our Easter Services start at 10:30am. Individual classes can decide if they are having Sunday School on Easter Sunday or not.
- The Worship Committee is getting back together, asking Helen Morse to sit in for the first meeting to help guide the committee.
- The Nominations Committee will be meeting in April. They need to work on changes to the hospitality policy.

## **United Methodist Men:** *(Bill Lalla reported)*

- A wonderful meal was served by the Circle of Hope with 9 members present on March 16th.
- Planning is in progress for doing a scaled-down HOTS in November.
- On Easter Sunday, the UMM will have breakfast for us following the Sunrise Service. Dallas Van Lear is heading that up and will let us know if he needs any additional help.
- They are discussing having a Spaghetti Supper in May. It was agreed to do it in conjunction with the UMW and possibly the Youth.
- The Audit is due in April and Mitch Brensinger has agreed to do it. The form was given to Kenny Fretwell, as he also had to get the checkbook to Mitch.
- A Churchyard Spruce Up is set for Saturday, April 1st starting at 8:30am. This will be to freshen up the mulch, pick up limbs, leaves sticks, etc. - in order to get ready for Palm Sunday and Easter.
- Our UMM charter fees for 2023 need to be paid. Since the budget has not yet been approved, Kenny Fretwel called for a motion to take care of this. The motion was made by Dallas Van Lear and was seconded by Jack Walker, with no dissensions.
- The meeting closed with prayer by Pastor Mike.



## **United Methodist Women:** *(Wanda Harding reported)*

- The Circle of Hope meets on Monday, April 3 at 6:30pm
- The Sisters of Faith meets on Tuesday, April 4 at 1:30pm
- The Circle of Love does not meet, but will serve a meal to the UMM on Thursday, April 20th at 6:30pm.
- There are plans for a Fiesta Brunch on Saturday, May 6th from 11:00am-1:00pm. All ladies and their friends are invited for the covered dish brunch.

## **Staff Parish Relations:** *(Andy Breeding reported)*

- The SPRC received a request from Alicia Copeland to reduce her salary down to \$500 per month effective March 1st. Andy made a motion to proceed with this request, Cindy Deavers seconded it and the motion was passed by all.
- The Parsonage Review and the Parsonage Inventory Review is due on July 1st.
- They will also be doing water testing at the parsonage.

## **Membership:** *(Karen Whitmer reported)*

- John Luke Casey Mize was born on February 28, 2023, to parents Jake and Abigail Mize, and grandparents Kevin and Gail Armstrong.
- Michael and Becky Breeding were received into membership by letter of transfer from Community Fellowship Church on February 26, 2023.
- Work continues on locating contact information for members.
- Some members will be purged from the roll, according to the Book of Discipline, while locating members past and present.
- We should form an "ad hoc" committee to deal with issues of membership.
- Karen asked for guidance on what to write in a letter about a potential final vote, and how best to find current addresses for people. There are approximately 40-50 people with no current address that we would have to try to get in contact with.

## **Lay Leader:** *(Jennifer Strother reported)*

- Jennifer reminded us that we are still in the Lenten Season. And that the collection for baby bottles for ComfortCare will end the day before Good Friday.

## **Communications:** *(Cindy Sheets reported)*

- Austine Belsky donated a tv and dvd/vhs player for the kids to have a newer entertainment system in the nursery.
- Cindy Sheets is in the process of cleaning up the a/v room.

## **Youth:**

- The Youth is working on the Peanut Butter Easter Eggs.
- There will be an Easter Egg Hunt for the kids, and a Scavenger Hunt for the youth on Easter Sunday.

## **Evangelism:** *(Nathan Kutz reported)*

- In the past month, they have dropped off 25 pounds of food, including 5 cans of food and 28 boxes of macaroni. And 19 boxes of toothpaste, 21 deodorants and 18 pairs of socks.
- Next month, in April, they will be collecting pancake mix and underwear for the Open Doors Shelter in Harrisonburg.
- Wanda mentioned that the Valley Mission is in need of furniture to resell in their thrift store.

## **Unfinished Business:**

- All audits are due by April 1st.

## **Disaffiliation Business:**

- There are still some things that we need to do on our end before the District Superintendent would give us a date for a potential final vote.
- More time was taken to continue to discuss and express people's opinions and viewpoints on how they feel about whether or not we should move forward with a church-wide final vote to disaffiliate or not.
- It was agreed that we should take some more time to think about everything before we decide anything further. We will continue any discussions / decisions at next month's Church Council meeting in April.

Dallas Van Lear ended the meeting, Pastor Mike prayed and the meeting ended at 7:39pm.

Respectfully submitted by:  
Cynthia Sheets  
Recording Secretary

*The next church council meeting will be Thursday, April 27, 2023*



# Collections for April

*We need your help!*

**WHAT:** Donations of **Underwear** and **Pancake Mix**



**WHEN:** The entire month of April

**WHERE:** Place donations in the marked bins in the Narthex.

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



**WHY:** To help others in need in New Hope, and the surrounding areas.

**QUESTIONS:** Contact Cheryl and Nathan Kutz.

[RealLifeHeavenlyHands@gmail.com](mailto:RealLifeHeavenlyHands@gmail.com)

(202) 495-1346

# The Walking Wounded

*An observation from the middle of 'the battle'*

By: Cynthia Sheets

As most of you know, over 159 years ago, in 1864, our church served as a makeshift hospital, caring for wounded Confederate soldiers, during the Battle of Piedmont.

And since I last wrote for the February Hilltopper, I have had a chance to look around... *look outside of myself...* and I have discovered that I am not the only one who is hurt by talk of our church potentially disaffiliating.

When I wiped my eyes from all of *My* crying and heartbreak, I was able to see more clearly, and I can now see all the others around me who are hurting too. Those who are on '*my side*' of this issue, and also those on the '*other side*' of this issue. Much to my surprise... *We are all hurting... We are all wounded.*

Obviously, you won't see any blood being shed, but it's beyond clear that most of us... *if not all...* have been emotionally, mentally and/or spiritually injured in this process.

How sad it is to think that after 159 years, our church is seeing a metaphoric repeat of what it witnessed before... People are once again fighting a *battle* against their brothers and sisters over what they believe.

And New Hope Church is once again housing the *Walking Wounded*.

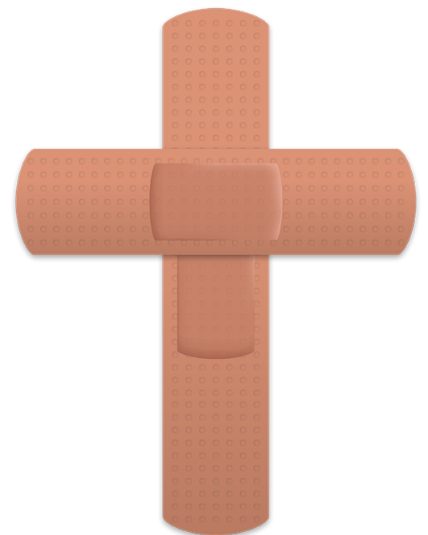
Each side believes that they are *in the right*. And each side is getting hurt by the other. Of course, we are not using real weapons to fight each other, but we are using real words that wound and scar people who do not feel the same way as we do.

One side takes the bible in their hands and pulls out words and scriptures that they believe will prove that they are right in how they feel...  
... *and then the other side does the exact same thing.*

I do not believe that the anger that I hear thrown about into the wind is from a hate-filled place... rather from a place of conviction, hurt and even mourning.

Some of us are crushed to think that the church that has been such a huge part of our lives for decades, the church in which generations of our families lay resting in peace on its grounds, may divide into a shell of its former self. The once shining beacon on the Round Hill may one day be extinguished. And we, as a collective body of God, will be unable to continue to do the work for Him that we have been doing for so many generations.

And others feel so strongly in their beliefs of the teachings of the bible, that they know that they can not remain here unless there is a change.



And as I stand witness to all of this, all I do now is simply wonder... *What is God thinking right now?*  
As we *battle* each other over this. Is this what He wants us to be doing? Is this a way to move us onward...  
forward... for His grand plan? Is this a way to scatter the seeds to flourish and grow... *into other fields?*

One day these questions will be answered, but for now, we are still in the middle of the battle.

For now no one can escape this. Even those of you who have not yet taken up arms and started shooting your  
metaphoric muskets on the frontline. You too are an active part of this, even as you continue to stand in front of  
your homestead protecting your family from unseen danger.

Everyone is part of this.... Everyone is in the middle of this *battle*.  
As bullets fly over our heads and cannons shoot across the fields.  
Everyone will have to pick a side. Everyone will have to make a choice.

*Vote... Don't Vote... Vote Yea... Vote Nay... Leave... Don't Leave...*

You can not escape making some kind of decision in this process!

And when it's all over... when the smoke clears and the dust settles... there will be no winners.

Both sides will be lesser... weaker than we once were before... because we won't be *Fully* together.  
We will no longer be working *Together* as the hands and feet of Christ here at New Hope Church.

No matter the outcome, we will all lose some of our brothers and sisters in this church family.  
We will all lose some of our brothers and sisters in this battle at Round Hill. *We will all lose.*

In the end, everyone will come out ... *Wounded... Broken... Divided.*

and it is truly Heartbreaking

But, all we can do now is call out for help... *For our help does truly come from the Lord... The Healing God.*  
The only one who can Mend us all... the only one who can Heal us all... the only one who can bring us  
*All back Together* one day... into our heavenly home... as part of the family of God.

And even if in the end, we are not all physically together every week... worshiping and working together as the  
hands and feet of Christ... I pray that we will all be fully mentally, emotionally and spiritually *Healed*.

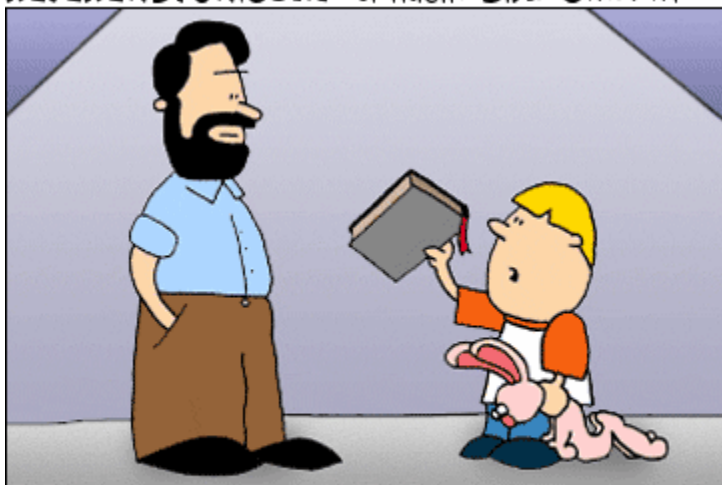
And that we will all once again become whole in the spirit, and flourish where the Lord will lead us.

I ask that we pray this prayer *together...for all of us:*

***"Be gracious to me, O Lord, for I am languishing; heal me, O Lord, for my bones are troubled."***

*(Psalm 6:2) (ESV)*

*Amen.*



04-13-2006

DAD, I NEED YOUR HELP TO FIND OUT WHERE IT TALKS ABOUT THE EASTER BUNNY IN THE BIBLE

## Easter Funnies

Why don't rabbits get hot in the summer?

*They have hare conditioning.*

What did the Easter egg ask for at the hair salon?

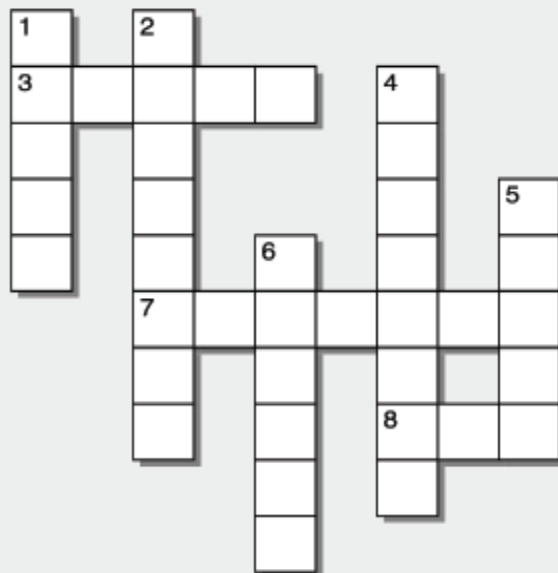
*A new dye-job.*

Which side of the Easter Bunny has the most fur?

*The outside.*



## ⚭ CrossWORD



### "In the Beginning..."

Genesis 1

#### Across

- 3) "Let us make Man in Our..."
- 7) Dark side of a day.
- 8) Allow

#### Down

- 1) Day God created light.
- 2) God called this "night."
- 4) God told Adam and Eve to do this.
- 5) The first "Let there be..."
- 6) What God called the firmament.

What kind of beans never grow in a garden?

*Jellybeans.*

How can you tell which rabbits are getting old?

*Look for the gray hares.*

What do you get when you cross a bunny with an onion?

*A bunion.*

United Methodist Men (UMM) - Minutes from the March 16, 2023 meeting,

The meeting was conducted by President Bill Lalla.

There were 9 members present: Kenny Fretwell, Jeff Hitt, Corey Johnson, Bill Lalla, Pastor Mike Reaves, Jim Strother, Dallas Van Lear, Jack Walker and Lewis Whitmer.

Devotions were provided by Dallas VanLear. The meal was prepared and served by the ladies from the Circle of Hope.

**PROGRAM:** There was no scheduled program.



**MINUTES:** The minutes for the last scheduled meeting on February 16, 2023 were presented by Bill Lalla. There being no questions, the minutes were approved as submitted.

**TREASURER'S REPORT:** The Treasurer's Report was given by Kenny Fretwell. It included a monthly report for March 2023. It includes all expenses and revenue since our last meeting. A copy of his report is part of these minutes.

Checking: \$ 5,113.10 + Savings: \$ 2,224.60 = **Total: \$ 7,337.70**

#### **OLD BUSINESS:**

- Planning for some form of HOTS on Saturday, November 11 is continuing. Suggestions for the Committee to consider should be presented directly to a member of the Committee. HOTS can only be considered if we have the support of the entire church. The Committee will continue with planning for that date.
- The UMM sponsored Fat Tuesday Pancake Supper on Tuesday, February 21, 2023 was a success. We served 56 people and collected a good will offering of \$357 for the Verona Community Food Pantry.
- Members of UMM helped Austine Belsky move her mother from an apartment to Austine's home. Some things were moved to Austine's house and other things placed in storage.

#### **NEW BUSINESS:**

- UMM will sponsor a breakfast for the community, immediately following the Easter Sunrise Service at 7:00 am on Easter Sunday, April 9th. All are invited to join us for breakfast. Dallas VanLear will coordinate the breakfast.
- There is discussion about having a spaghetti supper in May. It would be coordinated and sponsored with the UMW.
- The Treasurer's Audit is due in April. Mitch Brensinger has agreed to conduct the audit. Kenny will give the paperwork and checkbook to Mitch.
- On Saturday, April 1, we will do a Spring Clean-up around the church: freshen mulch, pick up limbs, leaves, sticks, etc. to get ready for Palm and Easter Sundays.
- Our UMM charter fees for 2023 need to be paid. Since the budget has not yet been approved, Kenny Fretwell called for a motion to make this payment. Motion (Dallas/Jack) to pay our 2023 charter fees was made and approved.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned after a prayer by Pastor Mike Reaves.

The next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, April 20 at 6:30 pm. Jeff Hitt has devotions.

Respectfully prepared and submitted by Bruce Rogers, Secretary.



# Hope For The Weary Soul

There is a place of perfect peace, a place where your soul can feel constant ease.  
It isn't where our minds would initially think, because where that place is nothing ever sinks.

That place is not made with human hands, and it is not determined by the will of man.  
Please listen to me if you can, and I will tell you about that place where your heart, soul,  
mind, and body can stand.

But first, you must put down your thoughts, because they only create even more of your faults.  
I say this to one and I say this to all, because we all stumble and fall.

You must pick up what is true, because of everything it has been through.

I invite you to stand on the Word of God,  
and to ask yourself if you're humble enough to be guided by the Lord's staff and rod.

You see in him there is nothing wrong,  
and no matter what the words that he wrote still stand strong.

How important is God's word you ask? You must comprehend how much it takes us to task.  
Many questions of yourself you will ask, and through God's word the answers come  
to pass.

Are you on your way to the great city of God? Do you want to walk where Angels have trod?  
Do you know how to get there, or has walking through this world left your memory bare?

Does your mind need to be cleansed? And your heart put on the mend?

My friend, why has your soul grown dark and cold?  
Why is your walk with God no longer bold?

Why is your soul so weary, and your outlook so dark and dreary?

Maybe you are not in the fortress of the Lord, and that's why you have lost your sword.  
Because if you are not fighting for the kingdom of God, then the devil has given you his nod.

Who's word provides your needs? That always gives you bread on which to feed.

If your soul is starving, you have not eaten the bread of life.  
If you are walking in darkness, you have let the world's wind blow out your light.

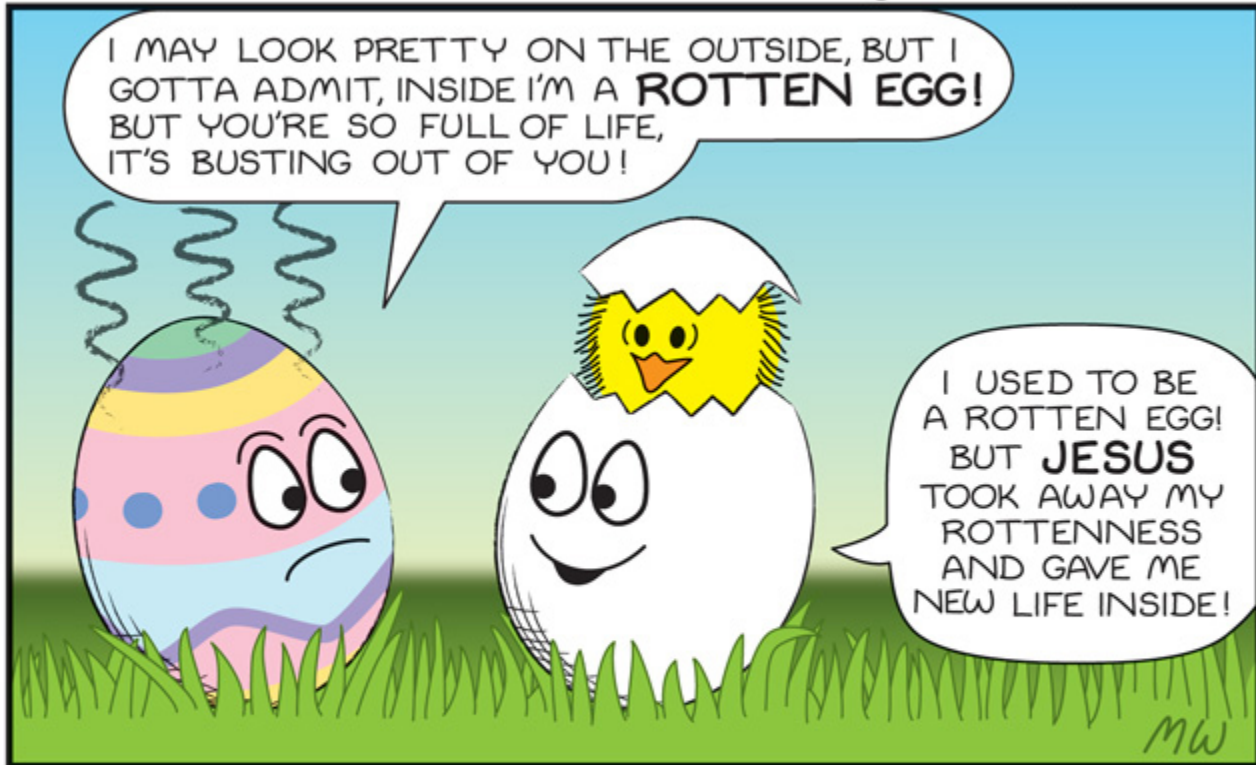
Come back to the well today, and drink water that will help you never stray.  
Because the Son of God has power over the grave.

Walk in accordance with his word and your soul will hear Grace that will keep it stirred.  
My friends, God's word will judge us on the last day, especially if his Holy Grace we have  
betrayed.

*~ Thank you and we pray that all of you are blessed, Nathan & Cheryl Kutz ~*

## EASTER EGGS

A Joyful 'toon by Mike Waters



But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

- JOHN 20:31 NIV

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

New Hope United Methodist Church  
Pastor Mike Reaves  
55 Round Hill School Road; Fort Defiance, VA 24437  
Mailing Address: P.O. Box 86, New Hope, VA 24469  
Church Phone: (540) 363-5940  
Parsonage Phone: (540) 363-5612  
Pastor Mike Reaves' Phone: (757) 653-8537  
Pastor Email: [michaelreaves@vaumc.org](mailto:michaelreaves@vaumc.org)



***NewHopeUMC.online***

***Facebook & Instagram: @MyNewHopeUMC***