



Mission Statement

God calls us to Mission and Ministry in our rural community and to the world. Gathered in Faith and nurtured by Word and Sacraments, we commit ourselves to share a hope for the future, to use our resources and talents guided by the Holy Spirit, and to work together to expand our ministry to serve others in the name of Jesus Christ.

HOPE LUTHERAN & ST. PAUL'S LUTHERAN CHURCH NEWSLETTER

December 2025

Sunday Worship:

Hope—9:00 AM
St. Paul's—10:30 AM
With Communion
on the first and third
Sundays

GLOW:

(Sept-April)

God's Love On
Wednesdays
5:30 PM Supper
6:00 PM GLOW
6:00 PM Ignite
(Confirmation)
Classes/Teen Power

Coffee & Fellowship:

Following Worship at
Hope

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Welcome

WORSHIP TIMES:

Hope Lutheran - 9:00 am Worship

(Communion 1st and 3rd Sundays)

St. Paul's Lutheran - 10:30 am Worship

(Communion 1st and 3rd Sundays)

Christmas Eve Services
Wednesday, December 24th
4:00 pm at St. Paul's
5:30 pm at Hope

No Christmas Day Services

Hope Lutheran Church

**113 South Jefferson Street
PO Box 87
Minneota, MN 56264-0087**

St. Paul's Lutheran Church

**412 East Lyon Street
Minneota, MN 56264**

Lay Minister Cell: 320-305-4955

Office/Kitchen: 507-872-6446

Parish Secretary: Chris Pesch

Secretary's Cell: 507-530-5666

Lay Minister: Jenn Warnock

Email: Jennifermcwarnock@gmail.com

Missionary: Dr. Elisabeth Johnson

Missionary Email: elisajo@msn.com

GLOW Directors: Erin Roberts

Custodians: Jason & Jen Johnson & Family

Organists: Valerie Buysse, Wendy Sarazyn

Jubilation: Kasey Denney & Nona Gottskalkson

Church Email:

hopelutheran87@gmail.com

Church Website:

www.hopeminneota.org

Bible Studies for Men and Women

Gather Magazine Bible Study	November 3, 6:30 pm	At Church
Women of the Bible Study	November 12, 10:00 am	At Sandy Tolk's Home
Men's Bible Study	November 7, 8:00 am	At Porter Cafe

**2025 Church Attendance**

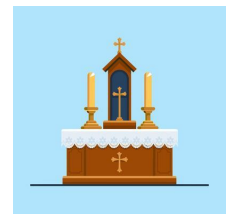
September 7	N/A	October 5	69	November 2	73
September 14	58	October 12	114	November 9	84
September 21	88	October 19	71	November 16	91
September 28	60	October 26	125 Est	November 23	79
Total:	206	Total:	379	November 30	64
Average:	69	Average:	95	Total:	391
				Average:	78

**Workgroup Chairpersons**

Nick & Nicole Esping

Altar Guild (November 26-December 25)

Marlys Skaar 872-6600
Gayle VanVooren 872-6927

**Date Sound Operators**

December 7	Scott Josephson
December 14	?
December 21	Todd Sonnenburg
December 28	Cole Myhre

Date Acolytes

December 7	Kalli Neyens & Cami Neyens
December 14	Levi Pohlen & Colten Kloos
December 21	Ava Buysse & Padraic Moriarty
December 28	Camden Johnson & ??

**Money Counters:** December—Rose Van Uden & Jeff Van Keulen**Upcoming Dates:*****December 10**—Bible Study, 10:00 am at Roberta Josephson's Home***December 14**—Reverend Peter Soli from *Dialog Works* will be leading worship. Following worship, please gather for a brunch and an open Listening Session / Q&A with Peter.***December 17**—Zoom meeting at 7:30 pm, for review, follow up, and continued conversation. **You may come to church and view the zoom meeting in the Fellowship Hall.**Join Zoom Meeting: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87472635437>—Meeting ID: 874 7263 5437***December 21**—Christmas Program; Walk Around Offering for GLOW.***December 24**—NO Youth Ministries***December 24**—Christmas Eve Services with Communion:

4:00 pm at St. Paul's; 5:30 pm at Hope (No Christmas Day Services)

December 28**—NO CommunionDecember 29**—5:00 pm, Year End Cutoff for Offerings***December 31 & January 7**—NO Youth Ministries

Church Council Notes – November 5, 2025

Fund Balances:	General Fund:	\$ 36,250.73	Cornerstone Fund:	\$ 71,584.88
	Building Fund:	\$ 5,723.15	Petty Cash Fund:	\$ 634.10
	GLOW:	\$ 9,555.61		

Attendance:

Attending in Person: Emily Hennen, Rose Van Uden, Jen Anderson, Deb Belaen, Amie Ascherman, Sandy Josephson, Angie DeVos, Jasmine DeSmet, Barb Knutson, Jeff Van Keulen, Terri Myhre

Attending via Phone: Chris Pesch – Church Secretary

Absent: Cory Myhre, Jason Johnson

President's Report

- Jenn – lay minister: Jenn is SAM authorized, and she is on the 4-year track to become an ordained minister. There was a discussion about offering her a contract while continuing with the call process. It was agreed that we should have additional discussions with Jenn after the holidays to understand how she is feeling about the situation before doing anything with a contract.
- Camera/Lock Quote: Southwest Glass is working on the automatic lock; the Building Committee also discussed re-keying too.
- BMQ: Amie had an appointment with Megan about QR codes for payment, and process for treasurer to have online access to statements. The credit card application for the church has been declined.
- MSP Review: There was a meeting with the call committee, and they made some changes to the MSP.
- Centralize information – Microsoft Office: E-mails are set up. Dawn and Jeff Van Kuelen are working on backing up information and a database.
- Bell Tower: An agreement was signed with Buysse Roofing for the remaining work on the Bell Tower roof. This work will be deferred until next year as the weather needs to be warmer.
- Text In Church: This is an app for churches to utilize texting to connect with congregations. Chris and Amie attended a ZOOM meeting to learn more about it. They thought it was very user friendly, and it would be cheaper to add a line through this rather than a phone bill. We can pay monthly or annually; annual cost is \$470. We can do a trial period. Amie would like to vote on this in December.
- Meeting with Altar Guild: They need additional members to learn the tasks that they do. Look into pairing confirmed youth with long time members?
- Additional Items to Work on:
 - Prayer chain – Looking to technology and best practices.
 - Constitutional amendment meeting – They will be taking a pause.
 - Council Manual – Started to outline and received synod financial best practices.
 - Set up or meet with Music?
 - Looking ahead - Fall Gathering – social committee? Endowment Drive – to replenish funds? Wednesdays with Jenn – adult Bible study, gathering? Review to see what will work.
 - Outreach – Youth/Adult event – going into holidays for home bound / senior citizens prior to holidays
 - Record review/retention

Secretary's Report – Motion made to approve secretary's report by Angie DeVos. Jasmine DeSmet seconded the motion. Motion carried.

Treasurer's Report

- Bills: Bills for the month of November were sent out prior to the meeting for review. Total General Fund bills are estimated at \$8,769.45 with three additional bills: bulletins/inserts, copier paper, and light replacement.
- **Motion made by Terri Myhire to approve the Treasurer's Report. Deb Belaen seconded the motion. Motion carried.**

Board of Trustees Report

- Bills: Total General Fund bills are estimated at \$8,769.45 with three additional bills: Augsburg for bulletins/inserts, ONE Office Solution for copier paper, and B&B Electric for replacement of a light that is under the Building Fund.
- **Motion made by Deb Belaen to approve payment of bills. Barb Knutson seconded the motion. Motion carried.**

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Church Council Notes (continued)

- MN ESST and Paid Leave:
 - MN Earned, Sick, Saved Time - Minnesota law requires employers to provide earned sick and safe time (ESST), a type of paid leave, to workers in the state. An employee earns one hour of sick and safe time for every 30 hours worked and can earn a maximum of 48 hours each year. It allows for accrual and use of paid time off and provides job protections for employees who are unable to work due to a qualifying reason. At the end of the accrual year, your employees carry over or are paid out unused ESST hours, depending on how you have chosen to provide ESST hours. There are 3 different ways to manage this, and we will need to determine how we want to handle this. More information to come at our next meeting.
 - Paid Leave – Beginning January 1, 2026, MN employers need to provide job protections and partial wage replacement for individuals unable to work due to a qualifying condition lasting at least seven days. It is funded through employer and employee premiums starting in 2026. Amie is working to get us registered. We also need to identify a paid leave administrator.
- Peter Soli – Professional Services Agreement: The council has had an opportunity to review the agreement, and it was agreed that this process is a good opportunity for our congregation to use an outside resource to help address our divisions and find a positive way forward. There was a suggestion to modify the contract to state that we wouldn't exceed \$2,000 without additional approval. As we will be billed monthly and can stop work at any time, it was determined that we didn't need to modify the contract to address this concern. Once the contract is approved, we will need to provide a \$500 down payment. **Motion made by Terri Myhre to approve the Professional Services Agreement with Peter Solil with no changes. Deb Belaen seconded the motion. Motion carried.**
- Mission Trip / Attorney Engagement Letter: Amie has reviewed the engagement letter from the attorney who has offered to work with us on trying to recover some of the money from the travel agent fraud with the mission trip earlier this year. **Motion made by Barb Knutson to authorize Amie Ascheman to retain an attorney on behalf of Hope Lutheran based on the engagement letter; authorize Amie Ascheman to work with the attorney as Hope Lutheran's representation; and authorize the executive count to be able to approve and accept any settlement offers. Angie DeVos seconded the motion. Motion carried.**
- **Motion made by Deb Belaen to approve the Board of Trustees' report. Emily Hennen seconded the motion. Motion carried.**

Board of Deacons Report

- Walk Around Offerings: 4th Sunday of the month - Endowment matches walk around offerings 2:1 up to \$500.
 - November 23 – Christmas Angels / YOH Christmas Blessings; December – There will be a Christmas tree in the narthex for hats and mittens; December 21st – Christmas program - GLOW offering & regular offering; January – Lutheran World Relief
- Communion Dates: December communion dates – December 7 and 24.
- Christmas Services: Christmas Eve – 4 pm at St. Paul's; 5:30 pm at Hope; Christmas Day – No Services
- Work Groups: The deacons will meet on November 17th to find chairpersons for the work groups for 2026.
- **Motion made by Deb Belaen to approve the Board of Deacons report. Emily Henne seconded the motion. Motion carried.**

Board of Education Report

- GLOW: Christmas program planning and practice is underway.
- Confirmation: 8 students were confirmed on October 26th. They were Sydney Hennen, Brycen Myhre, Parker Minnehan, Beckham Norby, Kingston Ryker, Blayze Hulzebos, Colton Bitker, and Logan Esping.
- Youth of Hope: This is for students in 6th thru 8th grades. SW MN Junior High Youth Gathering. This is for youth in grades 7th – 9th grade, and the theme for this year is "Strengthened by Faith," based on Isaiah 41:10. This is the afternoon of November 21st through the morning of November 22nd at the Willmar Conference Center in Willmar, MN. This is free for Hope Lutheran youth; Youth of Hope will cover the cost of transportation, hotel, food (while at the event) and the event fee. Snacks and additional spending would be on their own.
- Mission Trip: They have started fundraising for the 2027 mission trip. All students in grades 8 – 12 this fall at Minneota Public School are welcome to attend the next trip.
- Fundraisers –
- **Mission Trip and Faith Apparel Fundraiser** – <https://hopelutheran2025.itemorder.com/shop/home/> The store is open until Sunday, November 9th at 11:59 pm. This is a great way to promote our Mission Trip organization as well as identify ourselves at various fundraisers throughout the year. They make great Christmas gifts, too!
- **Christmas Baking Orders**—We are taking orders now, and all orders are due December 1st. Baking will take place at Hope Lutheran Church at 10:00 am on December 7, 2025. Checks can be made out to Youth of Hope, and order forms are in the newsletter, weekly bulletin and the back of church. We will be selling and baking lefse, Oreo truffles, and Belgian cookies. Contact Emily Hennen at emhaugland@hotmail.com or 507-828-6797 if interested in going on the 2027 mission trip.

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Church Council Notes (continued)

- Upcoming Dates:
 - Let it Shine and Bible Distribution for 3rd and 7th Graders – November 16, 2025
 - Christmas Program – December 21, 2025, at 9:00 am.
 - Scholarship Sunday – January 4, 2026
 - First Communion – April 12, 2026
 - Baccalaureate – May 10, 2026
- **Motion made by Angie DeVos to approve the Board of Education report. Deb Belaen seconded the motion. Motion carried.**

Other Business

- Jeff Van Keulen Update: Jeff has been looking at all the information we have from a 30,000 foot level. He is building a database in Microsoft Access to store contacts, both at the household and individual level. Part of this is cleaning up e-mails and cell phone numbers that we have. As this information is cleaned up, we can use this database as a resource for contacting people in different church groups. We also are completing a Google document for month-to-month duties for the council. Deb has a list, and she will share that with Chris. Once it is completed, it will be circulated to council.
- Council – Next Year Planning: Rose, Barb, Emily, and Terri have completed their 2nd 3-year terms on council. Thank you very much for your service! Jeff's term will also be completed, and since he was completing a term for someone else, he is eligible to be nominated for a full term. The Nominating Committee is Roberta Josephson, Kevin Larson, and Moriah Reiss. Two of the people who will be exiting council are also part of the committee, so we need to start talking to people about being willing to be on council.
- Building & Property Committee: The Building & Property Committee met, and we need a new snow blower. We did a walk-around offering last year to make repairs to it already. **Motion made by Sandy Josephson to authorize the Building & Property Committee to spend up to \$5k to buy a snow blower with the cost being split 50/50 between the building fund and undesignated funds. Barb Knutson seconded the motion. Motion carried.**
- Informational Meeting: Scott Josephson informed Amie that there is a follow up meeting to answer questions from the previous meeting with the LCMC rep. There will also be a video of the previous meeting for those who couldn't attend the first meeting.
- **Motion made by Deb Belaen to adjourn. Angie DeVos seconded the motion. Motion carried.**

Next Executive Discussion on Agenda: Week of December 1st via e-mail.

Next Council Meeting – Wednesday, December 3, 2025, with committees at 7:00 pm; full council at 7:30 pm.

Respectfully Submitted, Deb Belaen

From Jenn Warnock, Lay Minister

“The people walking in darkness have seen a great light” Isaiah 9:2

In the last few years, I have really come to appreciate Advent. A quiet season of contemplation, or anticipation, and of comfort. The candles of hope, joy, peace, and love: not only do they represent those wonderful gifts, but also the Light of the world. Jesus tells his disciples and us in John 8:12, “I am the Light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”

It is no mistake that we celebrate this season with joyful lights and mellow candles. By the gift of Jesus' presence in this world, the world has been brought from darkness to light, from death to life. With the angels we sing, and with the shepherds we seek, and with the Magi we fall on our knees in worship. May it ever be so.

Blessed Advent and Merry Christmas, beloved church!

In Christ Alone,

Jenn

Council President's Report

As we enter the Christmas season, we are reminded once again of the profound gift God gave the world through the birth of Jesus—hope, compassion, and a love that reaches every corner of our lives. This season invites us to slow down, look around, and recognize the many blessings we've received. It is a time of giving, not only through wrapped presents, but through acts of kindness, encouragement, and generosity that reflect Christ's light in our community. There will be a separate mailing this month with an envelope for Christmas giving for your consideration in supporting Hope Lutheran in your end-of-year giving and generosity.

This is a busy time of year for all, and Hope Lutheran is especially active each weekend leading up to Christmas. Upcoming events include:

- **December 7** – Christmas Baking for the Mission Trip Fundraiser
- **December 14** – Reverend Peter Soli Service, Brunch, and Question & Answer Session
- **December 21** – Hope Lutheran Youth Ministries Christmas Program

As we look around, let us be thankful for all the contributions made by the members of Hope Lutheran. We are blessed by a strong foundation of volunteers whose dedication makes everything possible. Stewardship is more than financial giving—it is a faithful response to God's blessings in every part of our lives. Our time, talents, and resources all play a role in strengthening the ministry and mission of our church. All members' volunteer work small or big is much appreciated and what is needed for our congregation to continue to thrive. Through regular giving, volunteering, and prayer, we build a foundation that allows our church to grow, serve, and share Christ's love with our community.

Here is an update on some of the work that has taken place behind the scenes this past month:

- I approved the engagement letter with the South Dakota attorney who has agreed to represent Hope Lutheran in the civil proceeding to recover funds taken by the travel agent for the Minnesota Area Mission Trip. He has graciously agreed to represent Hope Lutheran **pro bono**, and we now have a plan in place for how to proceed. While there may be restitution in the criminal file, the progress there has been too slow to wait for that outcome.
- We are finalizing the contract with Reverend Peter Soli and coordinating his first meeting at Hope Lutheran. I am very excited for Reverend Soli to work with our members in our discernment to "Hope Together."
- As a reminder, following the December 14 service, Reverend Soli will hold a follow-up Zoom meeting for review, continued conversation, and next steps:
 - **Zoom Meeting – December 17, 2025 at 7:30 p.m.** Meeting ID: 874 7263 5437
(Zoom link will be emailed after the December 14 service)
- Chris and I are working to bring Hope Lutheran into compliance with the new Minnesota Paid Leave law. This is a good reminder that Hope Lutheran Church, though a small nonprofit, must remain up to date with changes in state requirements. Several ELCA synods have offered guidance, and I also attended training provided through the Marshall Chamber of Commerce
- The Deacons have met to organize work lists for the upcoming year. Jeff Van Keulen has worked diligently to compile and update all stored member and group lists into a master Hope Lutheran contact/member directory. The deacons then reviewed the list for accuracy. This work was long overdue and is greatly appreciated.

The Council and various committees are also planning as we approach year-end and prepare for the year ahead. This season is also a meaningful time for reflection. Throughout the year, we have had countless opportunities to treat one another as neighbors—supporting members in times of need, celebrating joys, and offering a listening ear when burdens felt heavy.

My own family experienced deep loss this past month with the passing of my uncle. His wake and service were held at my family's home church, Crow River Lutheran—the church where he, his father, and his grandfather (and some greats) were baptized, confirmed, and married; the church where he watched his children do the same, and where his grandchildren have begun their own journeys. Sitting in those pews and witnessing hundreds of people come to pay their respects to my uncle was a clear demonstration that all those small countless moments of showing up for others he had and treating one another with kindness created a life well-lived and a church community well-served. I couldn't help to compare my uncle's life in Crow River to the many members that have the same connection to the history of Hope Lutheran and the important reminder of how the congregation has preserved through many challenging times.

As we enter this Christmas season, may our hearts be renewed and inspired to embody the spirit of Christ in all we do. Even in our differences, we share far more in common. How we treat one another in those differences sends a powerful message about who we are as a church family. As this year winds down and we work with Reverend Soli, let us remember the rich history so many (current and past) members share with Hope Lutheran, and the meaningful role this church has played in their lives. May we continue to "Hope Together" with grace, unity, and love. Wishing you a joyful Holiday Season.

Amie Aschman
Hope Lutheran Council President

Hope Scholarship Program

Around three million students leave college because of unmet financial needs each year. That means three million dreams deferred; three million degrees unearned; three million steps toward a better career not taken. (According to Dollars for Scholars)

In 1967, Elmer Weltz decided to set up a charitable trust, giving \$400 for two scholarships, plus similar amount to SMSU, to acquire wetlands, and for handicap housing in Marshall. Helping in the process was Rev. John Thorstenson, pastor of Hope Lutheran.

From the mind and heart of a humble bachelor farmer, the Hope Education Scholarship Funds have expanded.

Now known as the Elmer Weltz and Pastor John Thorstenson Hope Education Fund, it recognizes the beginning of something special. From two \$200 scholarships to graduating seniors, we currently give scholarships to all the post-secondary students who apply, are members of Hope Lutheran, maintain a "C" (2.0) average or better, and carry 12 credits or more each semester. Scholarships are larger for freshmen, less to sophomores, and next are juniors though Grad School. Active participation is encouraged.

The other funds are the Robert E. and Alice V. Geiwitz Fund, the Albert and Hazel Borson Fund, the Agnes Rye Fund, the Don and Susan Rye Fund, the Norman and Lillian Larson Fund, the Gary B. Johnson Fund, and the Art and Anne Pennings Fund.

This is a snapshot of the 1997, 2016, and 2023 total funds balance:

Total of All Funds Each Year:

1997	\$161,837.06
2016	\$690,652.83
2023	\$1,492,050.02
(approx. as of this date) 2025	\$2,100,000.00

We have had a goal of giving about 4 ½ - 5% of the total balance to between 12 and 24 students.

12 students received a total of \$70,000 for the past year. The total of scholarships given since 1993 is \$733,608.27.

The students from Hope will continue to benefit for years to come. We hope that these students realize their dreams and remember the gifts that are given, and when able, use their talents to make the world a better place for all.

Hope Lutheran Scholarship Committee

**** Scholarship Distribution is Sunday, January 4th at the 9:00 am service. ****