

# Hope LUTHERAN CHURCH

JANUARY, 2026

## A MESSAGE FROM PASTOR ESALA



Dear Friends in Christ,

Our memory challenge verse for January of 2026 is, “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.” (2 Corinthians 5:17) This seems like an appropriate way to face the New Year. In Baptism, we are created anew, but Baptism is not just a one-shot affair. It’s something we carry with us throughout our lives. Because it’s in our nature, we often slip into pre-baptismal ways. We sin. We mess up. Sometimes we mess up monumentally. Then, as the Holy Spirit convicts us of our sin, we feel guilt and shame, as we should. But that guilt can overwhelm us. It can cause our shoulders to droop, our step to slow, our resolve to weaken.

This is where the regular remembrance of our Baptism becomes extremely helpful. It reminds us daily, even hourly, or moment by moment, that the old has passed away. It’s gone, it’s kaput! God forgets our sins upon our confession and casts them in the deepest part of the sea. (Micah 7:19)

Then the “new” takes its place. The renewed person strives, out of love for God, to walk in newness of life, to work at being righteous, and holy, and virtuous, and pure, because, in Christ, that’s how God sees us.

That’s why Resolutions can be good. They set our minds on doing what’s right in the eyes of God. Will we fail at some Resolutions? Of course! That’s why the daily renewal of our Baptism is so refreshing – we start out each day brand new. The reset button is activated and we’re free to be what we’re called to be.

Are you baptized? Then you’re in Christ, the One through whom all things are possible, all things are new every day. You are a new you. What a way to step into 2026!

Before I close this message, I want to take the opportunity to thank everyone for the many kind greetings and gifts given to our family during this Christmas season. Your thoughtfulness is sincerely appreciated, and we thank God for you. I also want to say, thank you for the privilege of serving as your “Vacancy” pastor.

With a grateful heart, I remain –  
Yours in Christ,

Dan Esala, Vacancy Pastor



**Sunday Services**  
9 AM Adult Bible Study  
10 AM Worship Service  
1st & 3rd Sundays—communion

Connect with us!  
[hlcaurora.org](http://hlcaurora.org)

456 S. Chillicothe Road  
Aurora, OH 44202  
Ph: 330.562.9660

## JANUARY SERVER'S LIST

*If you cannot serve on your assigned date, please find a replacement and let Dawn know. Thank you for serving.*

Date	Music	Worship Assistant	Greeters	Reader	Communion	Sermon/PP	Acolyte
Jan. 04	Lori	Greg	Ruth & Ruth	Greg	Becky/Bev	Dan	Shorter
Jan. 11	Lori	None	Karol	Karol	none	Dawn	none
Jan. 18	Lori	Paul	Larry & Chris	Paul	Becky/Bev	Dawn	Deacon
Jan. 25	SOS	None	Bev	CJ	none	Dawn	none

## THIRD @ 3

Bring yourself, bring a team for Hope's annual Bible Trivia event. This year, we will include Lutheran trivia, too!

Join us January 18, at 3 PM at Hope.

Prizes for the top three teams!

Snacks to keep you going when the questions get hard!



Hope's "3<sup>rd</sup> at 3" social group enjoyed a wonderful afternoon of music that truly captured the holiday spirit in December. Many thanks to the duet of Jessie Barr Jason Burdett for a fantastic performance and for all who attended this seasonal favorite social event!

*Many people look forward to the new year for a new start on old habits. ~Author Unknown*

# January Birthdays

Ava B. 04  
Nancy W. 27  
Ruth K. 30  
John B. 30



## BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION JANUARY 25



## AFTER WORSHIP

Join us after worship that day in the fellowship hall to celebrate with cake, a special song, and time with one another.



Do you have an event you are planning at Hope?

Please be sure to let Dawn know details of your event.

She will add it onto the new master calendar.

The welcome tablecloth and sign are located on top of the filing cabinets in the office and are available for all church events.

## SYMBOLS OF CHRISTMAS

Thank you to the children of our church who brought us a special message in December.

The children told us about the symbols of Christmas reminded us that the greatest gift of the season is the gift of Jesus and the salvation He brings.



## SUNDAY SCHOOL NEWS

### Stuff the Slippers

February 8

Pocket tissues  
Fuzzy socks  
Soap  
Lip balm  
Wash clothes



The Sunday School is collecting pocket size tissues, fuzzy socks, bars of soap, lip balm (chap stick), and new wash clothes to stuff over 50 pairs of hand knitted or crocheted slippers.

Students will stuff the slippers February 8.

The slippers will be distributed to Moms at Redeemer's Babies Care Cupboard as Valentine gifts February, 13.

This is a Thrivent Action Team activity which will augment the "stuffings" with Valentine gifts. If you have questions, see Becky B or email her at [becksbell@roadrunner.com](mailto:becksbell@roadrunner.com)

Sunday School children and a few "adult" helpers will lead worshipers in song on January 25. The children have been learning a new hymn over the course of several months and would like to share it with their faith family. They will also display a visual that helps to visualize the theme of the hymn.



## THANK YOU

- ◆ To Celia E. for organizing sign up list, delivery, and set up of pointsettias. What a beautiful enhancement to the celebration of the birth of Jesus.
- ◆ To the preschool Christmas program cookie servers (Celia E., Pastor E. Cheryl T. and the Bells) a few of whom also tasted the cookies to be sure they were tasty. What fun to watch the program of 3-5 year olds and to interact with the young parents.
- ◆ To Mary O. who continues faithfully to clean up after every communion.
- ◆ To Dan C. who watches the comings and goings at Hope on the outdoor cameras.
- ◆ To Dawn G. who worked tirelessly to organize and print church service bulletins and prayer lists this Christmas season.
- ◆ Larry C. who led us in the Advent hymn.
- ◆ To CJ B. and Hank S. for volunteering to be Sunday morning Scripture readers.
- ◆ Cheryl T. for organizing the Saturday Bible Study Class.

(If you see something or someone who should be thanked, talk to Lori F. Lisa B. or email them to include your appreciation in the newsletter.)

## Church Council Meeting

The next church council meeting will be held on February 12<sup>th</sup> at 3:30 p.m. If you have any agenda items for church council, please see Greg B. or email him at [president@hlcaurora.org](mailto:president@hlcaurora.org).

# Thanks

to all who purchased a poinsettia plant to celebrate  
**Jesus' birthday**

**Becky and Dave Bell** to the glory of God

**Erica Lee Gedeon** in loving memory of Carol A. Gedeon

**Gail & Ken Kohler** in honor of service members who won't be home this Christmas

**Bev Stedman** to the glory of God

**Mary & Chuck Norman** in loving memory of Charles & Millie Norman (Chuck's parents)

**Janet Marz** in honor of Christ our Lord and Savior

**The Binns Family (2 plants)** in loving memory of Jane Colyer and Jeri Binns

**Ruth Kosinar** to the glory of God

**Pastor Dan & Celia Esala (2 plants)** to the glory of God

**Marge Godale (2 plants)** in loving memory of Chuck Godale (husband) and Mark Godale (son)



Hope's unit of the LWML meets the second Sunday of every month in the fellowship hall following worship. All ladies are welcome to help us plan for future ministry outreach opportunities. If you would like more information on LWML please visit [LWML.org](http://LWML.org)

National mission grant amount awarded was \$2,622,270.00 to 33 different ministries for 2025-2027. Thank you to all who use a mite box to contribute your change to make LWML such a "mitey" ministry! You can drop off your mite box in the wooden box on the welcome table or the church office or give to Marge G.



#### 2025-2027 National LWML Mission Grant #6

**Phil's Friends - \$100,000**

**Providing Faith-Based Cancer Support and Care Packages to Those Affected by Cancer**



**phil's friends**

cancer is strong. hope is stronger.

Phil's Friends brings hope and encouragement to those facing cancer by delivering free, customized Care Packages, heartfelt support, and uplifting prayers. With a mission rooted in compassion, we strive to remind patients and their families that they are never alone in their journey. Every Care Package and message of hope is a step toward spreading love and strength during life's toughest battles.

#### **Who is Phil, and how did Phil's Friends get started?**

[Phil Zielke](#), Founder and President of Phil's Friends, is a two-time survivor of stage 4B Hodgkin's Lymphoma. Diagnosed at 22, he underwent rigorous treatment, including chemotherapy, radiation, and a stem cell transplant. During his cancer journey, Phil received a Care Package, encouraging cards, and on-going prayer from people across the country. Inspired by these acts of love,

he founded Phil's Friends. In 2006, the organization delivered its first Care Package to four-year-old Jenna, who was battling brain cancer.

#### **Our Mission**

We provide Christ-centered support and hope to those affected by cancer through Care Packages, cards of hope, encouragement, and prayer.

#### **Our Vision**

We believe in a world where no one faces cancer alone. Where every individual impacted by cancer receives Christ-centered hope, comfort, and support.

#### **Our Values**

We are dedicated to fulfilling our mission within a Christ-centered, caring culture that supports individuals and families impacted by cancer. We respond to the evolving needs of those we serve with responsibility, urgency, and a commitment to excellence. Guided by integrity, our team serves with compassion, respect, and kindness, bringing hope and peace to all. To learn more about Phil's Friends, to request a package, or to volunteer, log on to [philsfriends.org](http://philsfriends.org).

*This is my personal invitation to all you ladies of Hope, and your friends to worship together as we prepare our hearts for Lent. I would love to see the church filled with our women with other Lutheran women from churches in the area. See you there! Celia*



## Lutheran Women *in Mission* PRAYER SERVICE 2026

### **P.R.A.Y.E.R. — Praise, Remember, Ask, Yield, Excitement, Rejoice**

Rev. Henke wrote that the service “prompts the participants to remember that God does not speak to His children in prayer. Rather, His children speak to Him, assured that He readily speaks to them in His Word and in the Sacraments, as the Holy Spirit gives His divine counsel through very clear direction or, sometimes, His ‘nudging.’”

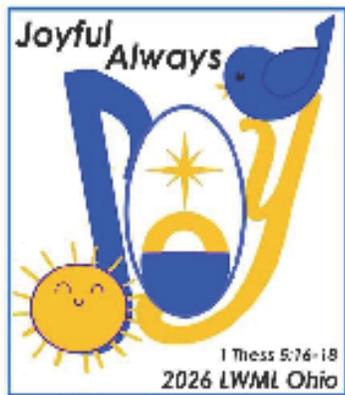
**Hope Lutheran Church**  
**Saturday, February 28, 2026.**  
**9:30 am Coffee and Fellowship**  
**10:00 am Service begins**  
**11:45 lunch**  
**\$6 Registration**

Our lunch menu will be soups and salads and crusty bread. Doesn't that sound like a wonderful meal for a day in February?! **If you have a special salad or soup or dessert you would like to share, please let Celia E. know. There will be a sign-up sheet in January and we need your help in providing a luncheon for approximately 60 women.**





Another great opportunity to gather with other Lutheran women is the Ohio District Convention. If you can't make the entire two days, there is a worship service on Friday night that you won't want to miss! I'll be sharing more in the coming months to give you an idea about our convention.



## Ohio District LWML Convention

### "Joyful Always"

June 26-27, 2026

St. Paul's Lutheran Church, Westlake OH

Musician and Presenter	Hannah Nunnenkamp Engelman
Keynote Speaker	Christina Hergenrader
Proclaimer	Rev. Dr. David Buegler
Bible Study Leader	Steve Schave

**HINT!** Place a mite box in your laundry room and stuff it with the loose change from your dryer.

### FRIDAY NIGHT PROCLAIMER – Rev. Dr. David Buegler

The Rev. Dr. David Buegler has been part of St. Paul Lutheran Church and School for 30 years. Buegler, 72, has been serving as the Interim Principal of Westlake's oldest independent preparatory school since January, following the resignation of former Principal Dale Lehrke. He also has served the St. Paul flock as Associate Pastor for more than 20 years.

Buegler is stepping down as the school's interim principal with the arrival of new Administrator Jeremy Loudon from Houston, Texas July 2. For the fourth time, he's giving retirement a try.

"My five months as Interim Principal have been an honor. I just love these kids. The hugs, the high-fives in the hallways – they've made my days better, and I hope I've made their days as students better."

According to Buegler, "Some congregations in our western suburbs make a difference through aggressive ministries to the inner-city...the hungry and the homeless. Other congregations make a difference through wonderful worship and music ministries. Other congregations make a difference through direct support of foreign mission work and workers through volunteer mission trips. Other congregations offer significant day-care and pre-school ministries. Other congregations do wonderful ministry through small caring groups. Still others focus their ministry on certain age groups with outstanding youth programs or senior citizen ministries. The list goes on and on. But I'm convinced more than ever that St. Paul Westlake makes a difference primarily through our Christian parochial school."

Buegler boasts an impressive resume filled with both national and international synodical work. He admits he's much more comfortable speaking in front of 10,000 people than before a small group of individuals. As the former Executive Director of both Lutheran East and Lutheran West High Schools, Ohio District President and the fifth Vice President of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, his work has taken him all over the world.

He served two terms in that latter role including work as the President's representative on the Ft. Wayne Seminary Board of Regents, chair of the Blue Ribbon Task Force on "Funding the Mission," and on the Blue Ribbon Task Force on Synod Structure and Governance.

But he's most at home at St. Paul Westlake on Detroit Road. "We're changing lives," he said. "The ability to make a difference (for children) is huge. Researcher George Barna says that by the time a child is 13, most of their values have been shaped. Both home and culture are major players in that, but you cannot underestimate the power of six hours a day in the classroom."

Buegler says that being a school principal today is a tough job. "Balancing state paperwork, safety, the faculty, budget and enrollment. You have to be a master juggler. You have all these balls in the air, and you don't want to let any of them fall." Serving students in Pre-Kindergarten through Grade 8, St. Paul Westlake celebrates its 160th anniversary during the 2018-2019 school year. Buegler says that physically and academically those are formative years in the life of a student.

He and his wife, Susan, will celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary on August 25. They both love to travel, and will be taking an August Caribbean cruise to celebrate. It's the one way he really relaxes. "River cruises, ocean cruises or a boat on Lake Erie – I find great relaxation out on the water."

A native of Blue Earth Minnesota, Buegler entered Minnesota State University in Mankato after high school graduation, where he earned an undergraduate with honors in Accounting and Economics. He then went on to Concordia Theological Seminary in Springfield, Illinois, and received the Master of Divinity degree.

He served a year of vicarage at Trinity Lutheran Church in Jackson, Michigan and then accepted his first call to that congregation as Assistant Pastor to Dr. W. Harry Krieger, then Vice President of the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod. Following the death of Dr. Krieger, he was named Administrative Pastor and served in that capacity until 1980 when he accepted a call to St. Paul Lutheran Church in Napoleon, Ohio. As Administrative Pastor there, he was chosen in 1988 to serve as Ohio District President of the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod.

Buegler served on the Board of Trustees of the Fairview/Lutheran Hospital division of the Cleveland Clinic from 1995-2012. He currently serves as a director of the \$100 million Community West Foundation Board in Cleveland, and continues to be a frequent motivational speaker throughout the church.

He holds two Doctor of Laws degrees: one from the faculty and Board of Regents of Concordia College in Ann Arbor, Michigan, and the other from the faculty and Board of Regents of Concordia College in Chicago, Illinois.

Buegler and his wife have two married daughters and six grandchildren. The couple resides in Avon.



Hope Lutheran Church is a congregation

In the

Ohio District

of the

Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod

## VOA THANKS

To the wonderful members and  
Volunteers of Hope Lutheran Church and  
Preschool,

Words cannot fully express our deep  
gratitude for the incredible Thanksgiving  
baskets you provided for families in the  
community. Your generosity was a true  
blessing and brought so much joy and  
relief for families during this holiday  
season. You provided comfort, hope, and  
a reminder that God provides through  
the hands of others. Thank you to  
everyone who donated, packed, and  
delivered these baskets. We are so  
grateful for your compassion and  
generosity.

With heartfelt thanks and blessings,

Jeff Jackson  
Volunteers of America



### Hope's Very Own Charlie Brown Christmas Tree

*"And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night.*

*And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid.*

*And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.*

*For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.*

*And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying,  
Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men."*

***"That's what Christmas is all about,  
Charlie Brown."***

*Glory to God in highest heaven,  
Who unto man His Son hath given:  
While angels sing with tender  
mirth,  
A glad new year to all the earth.  
~Martin Luther*

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*"Well, this is one Christmas shepherd who's going to keep his trusty blanket with him." - Linus van Pelt*

# Thoughts for the New Year

Life isn't fair, but it's still good.

When in doubt, just take the next small step.

Life is too short to waste time hating anyone.

Your job won't take care of you when you are sick. Your friends and parents will. Stay in touch.

You don't have to win every argument. Agree to disagree.

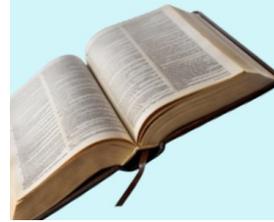
Cry with someone. It's more healing than crying alone.

It's OK to get angry with God. He can take it.

Make peace with your past so it won't screw up the present.

Don't compare your life to others. You have no idea what their journey is all about.

Everything can change in the blink of an eye. But don't worry; God never blinks.



Bible  
Studies

The **In the Word** bi-weekly Saturday study will begin again on January 10<sup>th</sup> with a new study on the Book of Acts by John McArthur. The study takes place at church and new members are welcome at any time. See Cheryl T. for further info Cheryl or email her at [505tomaselli@gmail.com](mailto:505tomaselli@gmail.com)

January meeting dates are 1/10 and 1/24.

- 9:15 coffee and fellowship
- 9:30 small group study
- 10:30 Q&A with the pastor

The **Sunday morning adult Bible Study** meets at 9:00 a.m. in the fellowship hall. Pastor Esala leads the study each Sunday on a variety of topics.



**It's Winter. Feed the birds.**

**Are you following Hope?** Church news, updates, and reminders are posted several times a week on Hope's website as well as on Hope's Facebook, Instagram, and X (Twitter) accounts. Be sure to check these resources often to stay up to date.

**Website:** [hlcaurora.org](http://hlcaurora.org)

**Facebook:** Hope Lutheran Church in Aurora, Ohio

**Instagram:** hopelutheranchurchauroraohio

**Twitter:** @HLCAurora