



# 2024 ANNUAL REPORT

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# Pastoral Staff



**Lead Pastor**  
Rani Abdulmasih



**Lead Pastor**  
Jon-Marc MacLean



**Associate Pastor**  
Bruce Dillman



**Education Pastor**  
John LeCain



**Pastoral Care**  
David Butler



**Pastoral Care**  
Laird Duran



**Intern Vicar**  
Kjell Bakken



## 2024 Annual Report of Pastor Rani Abdulmasih, Lead Pastor

Dear Hope family,

I join today in the words of Paul the Apostle in thanking each and every one of you for your partnership in the ministry of the gospel:

**“<sup>3</sup>I thank my God every time I remember you. <sup>4</sup>In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy <sup>5</sup>because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, <sup>6</sup>being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.” *Philippians 1:3-8***



Paul uses these profound words to remind us that we are all indeed “*partners*” in ministry as we proclaim the gospel and share His love as we continue to “know Christ, and to make Christ known.” Thank you for the privilege and the joy of serving together.

I am so grateful this year for the opportunity to serve as your Lead Pastor along with Pr. Marc. Moving into this collaborative model of leadership has been refreshing and empowering. As we continue to grow at Hope, we are always called to find new, faithful, and innovative ways to serve the Lord through this community. The model of shared ministry creates a way for us to lead by example, placing the need of the ministry first and doing it all for the glory of God!

Working with a dedicated team of staff, leaders and volunteers is no doubt our greatest strength at Hope. I have the joy of overseeing Staff and Administration, and I want to assure you that we have the best team working together to serve the Lord. Our Church Administrator, Bob Franceski, works tirelessly to ensure the daily operations of the church office run as smoothly and as efficiently as possible. Our staff members are passionate about their work and share their expertise and talents in new and creative ways. We would not have the branding, publicity, marketing, and online presence that we have without our Communications Director Marina Ernst. The Hospitality Team was led by Debbie Bennett who has now handed this over to our new Chef, Michael Dibuono. Donations and Membership Specialist, Mary Beth Stoner covers any membership matters and donations as they are received. Karen Barnes, our bookkeeper, serves not only as a staff member but also as a volunteer to help support the ministry launch at Hope South Campus. Sara Lush as the Worship Administrative Assistant keeps everyone connected and informed when it comes to weekly worship matters and special services, including supporting our grieving members as they make plans for burials and memorial services. Lenea Carnes, shares her expertise as a social worker and offers support to address any ministry needs as they arise. The Hope Lake Weir Campus Food Pantry continued to blossom with a dedicated team of volunteers and Debbie Schuettler as the Operations Manager. Pam Caudill, Events Coordinator and Software Specialist, has been behind coordinating many of the events held by and at Hope over this past year. Chris Reed offers a warm welcome at the front desk and staff support.

Building Maintenance Manager Rick Schaaf, together with his team, all make sure that Hope’s buildings and grounds are well maintained and in the best shape. This includes Hope Lake Weir Campus and soon our third south site when construction is completed. When it comes to worship, our Music Director, Ken Wood, along with AV Engineer, Jime Eversole, and several music and AV staff, work on coordinating Hope’s music ministries so that anyone who comes to worship at Hope experiences the presence of the Lord and is engaged in a meaningful spiritual experience. Our Deacons, Pastors, and Pastoral Care Team are always present to serve the congregation in worship,

visitations, education, prayer and support. This year we also had the joy of Vicar Kjell joining the team.

It does take a whole team to do ministry at Hope! And what a team this is with many others who serve as support staff in different areas of ministry. Together, Hope's staff joined with all of our volunteers, who continue to joyfully share their time and talents, God is truly glorified in this place!

Hope is a special place, indeed! Our Church Council Leaders, elected by the congregation, have been so engaged in ministry that their commitment continues to be an inspiration to many. They always make themselves available to the congregation.

The excitement over the South building project ignited a spark that is contagious! We have an awesome mission opportunity to share Christ as we witness the expansion and growth of The Villages. Hope's Building team, led by Dale Fiet and Bob O'Dell, has been providing the effort and direction needed in getting us to this point where a dream is about to become a reality. We are so thankful that they continue to share their gifts and talents as they serve.

The Invigorate Team, led by Len Robertson, has been inviting you as the congregation to be engaged in celebrating what God is doing in the life of the Church. There is always a place for you to take part in this journey.

I have been leading several ministries at Hope on weekly basis and they continue to fill me with joy and thanksgiving. I am including a more detailed report on these ministries under the ministry report section. Briefly, however, these ministries are our weekly Faith & Fellowship where we grow in God's Word and continue to fellowship with one another, Gatherings of Hope: Moving beyond Grief, Hope for The Future Scholarship that now covers five schools in the area, and our Evangelism initiative that is made up of a team that is passionate to share Jesus with our neighbor.

I have been saying over and over that Hope is more than just another "church building" in the area, but I see Hope as a "movement." A movement of the Spirit, a movement of God's people!

May the Lord ignite the fire within us, as we rejoice in His presence, and as we join hands and hearts together to proclaim the Gospel and share the love of Christ in our community and do it all for the Glory of God! Amen!

Reverend Rani Abdulmasih  
Lead Pastor

## **2024 Annual Report of Pastor Jon-Marc MacLean, Lead Pastor**

Family of Hope,

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Throughout scripture, we find the people of God marking significant experiences of grace, mercy, or favor with setting up a memorial. For Jacob's reception of the covenant promise, it was a stone at Bethel. For Jacob and the Hebrews crossing the Jordan into the land of promise, it was a cairn marking the place they forded the river. There was the Temple of Solomon, built to the glory of God and as a place where the people would be reminded of and experience the presence of God in significant ways.



As we marked a significant milestone of 25 years as a congregation throughout the past year, I was brought to remembrance of these markers as we looked back at how God has worked in and through our congregation.

Planting seeds of the gospel in four continents through helping build centers of study and worship with mission support. Helping share the gospel through the printing of the bible in multiple languages in areas difficult to reach due to both geography and persecution. Accompanying the House of Hope through sweat equity, funding, and effusive grace as the men from the program sought freedom from the bondage of addiction and hope for a new path (and eternal life) in Jesus Christ. We built an education and life center at Hope Central Campus so we could expand our ability to both Know Christ and Make Christ Known. When our neighbors at St. John Lutheran wondered about their future and how we might connect, we moved into a future blessed by their strength and faith as a united community in mission. Crafts, food, song, sacrament, worship, and fellowship were shared within our walls and throughout our community as home visits were made and a new worshipping community begun in Recreation Centers to the south as we pursued God's call to minister to the growing edges of The Villages.

All of this was celebrated throughout 2024 even as we continued in our mission. Psalm 133 has come to mind throughout the year as I reflected on the words, "how good and pleasant it is when the people [of God] dwell together in unity!" The truth of this has been borne out in our willingness to embrace new ways of doing ministry both in leadership and in the expansion of our pastoral department to include our first Vicar, Kjell Bakken, and what a tremendous start to what I pray will be a lasting legacy of ministry for both Hope and Vicar Kjell.

There's been many moments over the last 25 years. I've been akin to what Jacob or Joshua did. Moments of celebration and remembrance marking the acts of God within our congregation and within our ministry to the broader community. I've been fortunate enough to celebrate many of these moments with you over the last almost 15 years.

In this past year, there are some monument events that are particularly important to me personally that I would like to reflect on.

At our annual picnic, we had a litany of celebration for 25 years in ministry as an organized congregation. It was a lovely moment that served as a preamble to our reformation celebration in a broader sense on our actual anniversary. We are blessed to have Rev. Nicole Eastwood with us for

our Bishop's office celebrating not only what God is accomplished in and through Hope, but what we've done in collaboration with our sister parishes throughout our synod over a quarter century.

It was a monumental day for me, not only for celebrations, but also because just an hour before that celebration, our daughter Lila was diagnosed with type one diabetes and rushed to Shand's in an emergency situation. As we stood outside for the picnic in a downpour, many of us "remembering our baptism" as we were doused by the rain, I shared with just a few people what was happening and was showered with prayer and compassion even as I was soaked by the water. A reminder of both my physical baptism and what it means for us to share together in the life of Christ and one another (1 Cor. 12:26).

In the days that followed, we received, on a regular basis, words of support, compassion, prayer, and the offer to share in her journey from many members of this congregation, some of which deal with the same diagnosis. It's humbling and an overwhelming blessing when the pastor was called to lead and care for a flock is in turn upheld by the congregation. It is a moment, and this is a season that I will never forget. Not for the reasons of a difficult diagnosis, but because of the generous outpouring of God's grace that I and my family have experienced through all of you. It is one thing to be part of the ministry of this family but to receive God's grace at your giving brought forth a deep and abiding spirit of thanksgiving, admiration, and affirmation.

The most recent moment was our Church Gala. It was marvelous to experience, brothers and sisters in Christ who do not regularly worship alongside one another but share in the same mission and call to community reconnect or connect for the first time at this event. Someone say that "the spirits were high" in a party atmosphere, but I found that the Holy Spirit was moving and I'm so very grateful to those who gave their time, talent, and prayerful work to all our anniversary celebrations, and in particular for this event and all that went into it. Though not everyone could attend, it was a reminder that we are united in mission, in life, and in the celebration of God's grace each and every day.

For all of you who make Christ Known at Hope, and in particular for how you've made his grace known to me and to my family in this celebratory year, I give thanks to God, recognizing that if there's anything better than worshipping together, it's serving together.

As we conclude a year of looking back in thanksgiving, let us boldly look ahead to where God is calling us into ministry with the least, the lost, and the longing. May we share help, hope, and home with the poor and the poor in spirit in ways that turns ashes to beauty, mourning to joy, and despair into praise (Isaiah 61:3) as we embrace anew what it is to be the people of God and the family of Hope.

May His peace enfold you,

Pr. Jon-Marc MacLean  
Lead Pastor

# Pastoral Acts Report

## Average Weekly Attendance at Worship Services Per Year

2000	279	2013	1,250
2001	339	2014	1,309
2002	419	2015	1,367
2003	570	2016	1,361
2004	667	2017	1,312
2005	739	2018	1,347
2006	900	2019	1,374
2007	951	2020	Inconclusive (COVID Year)
2008	1,025	2021	760 (COVID Year)
2009	1,033	2022	1,010
2010	1,038	2023	1,113
2011	1,131	2024	1,140
2012	1,183		

<b>Membership at end of 2023</b>		<b>2251</b>
<b>Members received during 2024</b>		
<i>Members (Includes Charter Members)</i>	<b>114</b>	
<i>Seasonal Members</i>	<b>19</b>	
<i>Associate Members</i>	<b>13</b>	
<i>Total Members Received This Year</i>	<b>+</b>	<b>146</b>
<b>Members removed during 2024</b>		
<i>By death</i>	<b>55</b>	
<i>By transfer</i>	<b>9</b>	
<i>Relocation</i>	<b>46</b>	
<i>Other (not attending/inactive)</i>	<b>28</b>	
<i>Statistical adjustment</i>	<b>17</b>	
	<b>-</b>	<b>155</b>
<b>Membership at end of 2024</b>		<b>2242</b>

Charter Members – 54

Members – 1,872

Associate Charter Members – 5

Associate Members – 227

Seasonal Members – 84

\*Statistical adjustment is members who we have been notified or found to have passed away prior to 2024. We mark their date inactive on the date of death, not the day we learned of their passing.

Baptisms: 4 infants, 1 adult

Total Deaths: 61

Members: 42

Charter Members: 7

Associate Members: 7

Seasonal Members: 2

Non-Members: 6

Member Funerals/Memorial Services: 39

Non-Member Funerals/Memorial Services: 10

Interments: 20

## **2024 Annual Report of Bob Franceski, Church Administrator**

Dear family of Hope,

Looking back through our year of ministry together, I feel there has never been a better time to be part of the Hope family! Our church is active, alive, growing and excited to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ and fellowship together as a loving community. Thank YOU for being part of this awesome church.



This year was rewarding as we made several progressions. In conjunction with the Disaster Preparedness and Response Committee, we made some valuable emergency management updates. We moved all important files to a cloud-based storage site and installed a new VOIP (voice over internet phone) system. These additions, along with our church management software system being cloud based allowed us to conduct business as usual during the times the office was closed due to hurricanes. You can be sure that as Hope grows and expands, we will continue to implement strategies to keep our congregation safe along with being good stewards of our resources.

In the hospitality area, Debbie Bennett retired after several years as a faithful employee. We were blessed to be able to find a replacement, Michael DiBuono to fill the position. Michael and Debbie worked together for a successful transition period before Michael began full-time in January. Ann Bergandi joined the staff as Hospitality Assistant and works alongside Michael to ensure all hospitality tasks are covered. Late in the year, Chris Reed joined our office staff as Administrative Assistant covering duties at the front desk and working with ministry teams. Remember – everything we enjoy at church, from our weekend worship to our special events and activities throughout the week, is a result of the hard work of our staff and volunteers.

As we look ahead to 2025, I'm excited to discover how God will use our staff and our church to advance His kingdom. We are in the process of looking at several updates/enhancements and will keep you informed as they are released. No matter the obstacles we may face, I know we have the right team for the job. There is nothing we can't accomplish when we work together for the glory of God!

Thank you for your support and continued prayers for the staff and pastors. I look forward to another great year working alongside you all.

Yours in Christ,  
Bob Franceski, Church Administrator

## **Current Staff as of February 2, 2025**

Called Pastors: Pastor Rani Abdulmasih, Lead Pastor  
Pastor Jon-Marc MacLean, Lead Pastor

Commissioned Pastors: Pastor David Butler, Pastoral Care  
Pastor Bruce Dillman, Associate Pastor  
Pastor Laird Duran, Pastoral Care  
Pastor John LeCain, Education Pastor  
  
Vicar Kjell Bakken, Pastoral Intern

Parish Deacons: Suzanne Kuebler  
Linda Murphy  
Kathy Smith  
Peg Winters

Administration:  
Karen Barnes, Bookkeeper  
Ann Bergandi, Hospitality Assistant  
Lenea Carnes, Social Services Advocate  
Michael DiBuono, Head Cook (F/T)  
Marina Ernst, Communications Director (F/T)  
Bob Franceski, Church Administrator (F/T)  
Sara Lush, Administrative Assistant Worship (F/T)  
Chris Reed, Administrative Assistant  
Debbie Schuettler, Operations Manager - Hope Lake Weir Campus Food Pantry  
Mary Beth Stoner – Donations and Membership Specialist

Music Ministry:  
Ann Blake, Choral Accompanist - Hope Central Campus  
Bruce Davis, Assistant Director; SOS – Hope Central Campus  
Jime Eversole, Technical Director (F/T)  
Shade Eversole, Audio Visual Engineer  
Jeen Harper, Director; Spirit Ringers – Hope Central Campus  
Paul Hoffman, Service Accompanist – Hope Central Campus (Saturday) and Hope Lake Weir Campus (Sunday)  
Mary Jo Vitale MacLean, Director; SOS – Hope South Campus  
Michael McConnell, Audio Visual Engineer  
Eric Mielke, Audio Visual Engineer  
Jane Miller, Volunteer Service Accompanist – Hope South Campus  
Marcia Spear, Service Accompanist – Hope Central Campus (Sunday)  
Kathryn Stevens, Audio Visual Engineer and Worship Publications Specialist  
Howie Wood, Presentation Specialist  
Ken Wood, Director of Music Ministries (F/T)

Building and Maintenance:

Russell Kreager

Susan Mitchell, Custodian (F/T)

Denny Reed

Rick Schaaf, Building Maintenance Manager (F/T)

John Schuettler

**Total Staff:**

Pastors: Called – 2, Commissioned – 5

Parish Deacons: 4

Lay Staff: Full Time – 8, Part Time – 21, Volunteer – 1

# Congregational Council



**Kristina Giffin**  
President



**Raybon Gilbert**  
Vice President



**Gary Hill**  
Treasurer



**Pam Fenn**  
Secretary



**Patrick Sawler**  
Council Member-at-Large



**Pam Bixler**  
Council Member-at-Large



**Jim Castanien**  
Council Member-at-Large



**Kathy Beekman**  
Council Member-at-Large



**Kent Hamdorf**  
Council Member-at-Large

## **2024 President's Report from Kristina Giffin**

During 2024, members of Hope Lutheran Church continued to demonstrate Hope's stated mission of *Knowing Christ and Making Christ Known* throughout The Villages and surrounding communities.

Actively living out Hope's "Three Campuses, One Church" philosophy, members volunteered at all sites without regard to where they most often worshipped. This commitment to live and minister as one church is bearing fruit for the surrounding communities. Examples include the award-winning Food Pantry at Hope Lake Weir Campus, The Rock, Grief Support, Stephen Ministry, My Time Caregiver Respite, and Angel Tree. Learn more in this Annual Report.



The two called pastors - along with five part-time pastors - conducted seven services each weekend in addition to regularly scheduled Wednesday evening Vespers or Compline services. Among other duties, they engaged in pastoral care visits, teaching classes at H.O.P.E. University, and managing the daily affairs of the church.

Early in June 2024, Pastors Jon-Marc MacLean and Rani Abdulmasih embarked on a Collaborative Leadership Model which enabled Hope's two talented pastors to better address the growing opportunities for ministry and mission at Hope. While each pastor retains defined roles and responsibilities, they will be collaborating on matters to jointly lead the church into the future as Co-Lead Pastors.

Also in June, Hope welcomed Vicar Kjell Bakken. Kjell is a seminary student at Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary and is serving a one-year internship with Hope under the guidance of Pastor Jon-Marc and the pastoral team. Kjell also has the support of an outstanding member-mentorship team. Upon completion of internship at Hope, Kjell will have one final semester of seminary before seeking a call in the Florida-Bahamas Synod. Kjell's wife, Macy, is also in ministry serving her call as an ordained Deacon at Luther Springs Camp and Conference Center.

The Council met more than 15 times during 2024. This included the regularly scheduled monthly meetings as well as special council meetings required to move forward around work on Hope's third site, updates to the Constitution of Hope Lutheran Church, and the 2025 Budget.

Additionally, the nine lay members of your Church Council are active in many of Hope's Ministries participating as volunteers at the Food Pantry, serving as readers, worship assistants, communion servers, leading Men of Hope, spearheading social gatherings, and other volunteer opportunities.

Hope Lutheran Church members, pastors and council look forward to 2025 and bringing the dream of Hope South Campus to fruition so that the Gospel can be spread even further.

Kristina Giffin, President, Hope Lutheran Church

# **2024 Annual Meeting Minutes**

**February 4, 2024**

A light lunch was served prior to the meeting. Ken Wood led the congregation in the Doxology and the hymn "Praise to the Lord Almighty."

President Kristina Giffin welcomed the congregation.

**Ministry Moments:** Three ministry teams reviewed how their ministry serves Hope, how people get involved and thanked the volunteers:

- Don Maronde, Worship Ministries
- Ginny Wilson, On Our Own
- Chuck Walter, Disaster Preparedness

**Meeting was called to order by President Kristina Giffin at 12:03 p.m.**

## **Determination of a Quorum:**

Pam Fenn, Council Secretary, confirmed that we had a quorum. The constitution states that a quorum for all Congregational meetings shall be five (5%) percent of the voting members based on the church roll at the end of the prior fiscal year, but not less than fifty (50) voting members. For 2024, a minimum of 101 voting members constitutes a quorum. There were 229 voting members attending the meeting.

## **Agenda:**

Congregants had a hard copy of the agenda before the meeting. Kristina asked if there were any objections to adopting the agenda? There were no objections, the agenda was adopted.

## **Review of the 2023 Annual Meeting Minutes:**

Minutes of Congregational meetings are approved by the congregation. Draft minutes are printed in the Annual Reports and presented in the digital News in the Pews newsletter; the approved/official copies reside on file in the Church office.

Kristina asked the congregants if there were any corrections to the minutes of the February 5, 2023 Annual Congregational Meeting. There were no corrections, the minutes stand approved.

Kristina asked the congregants if there were any corrections to the minutes to the December 17, 2023 Special Congregational Meeting minutes. There being no corrections, the minutes stand approved.

## **Nomination Committee:**

Kristina thanked the members of the nominating committee for their work. The committee spent many hours and meetings to ensure the nomination process was followed in accordance with our constitution. The committee members were Patrick Sawler (chair), Bev Castanien, Jim Morrill.

The open positions for Council are as follows: Council Secretary, 2 members at large (3-year term) and one council at-large member (1 year term to fill a vacancy).

The candidates were given the opportunity to give their remarks to the congregation.

**Pastor David Butler offered a prayer for the candidates.**

**Election of Congregation and Council Officer and Members-at-Large:**

**The following members were nominated by the Nominating Committee and affirmed by Council to serve as officer and member-at-large of Hope Lutheran Church for the following terms** (According to our bylaws, no further nominations could be made) :

**Pam Fenn, Council Secretary (3-year term)**

**Raybon Gilbert, Member-at-Large (3-year term)**

**Jim Castanien, Member-at-Large (3-year term)**

**Pam Bixler, Member-at-Large (1 year term)**

Kristina announced that there is only one nominee for each position. Therefore, in accordance with C12.02.02.g of Hope's Constitution, **the nominees for council are unopposed and elected by acclamation.**

**Election of four (4) voting members to 2024 Synod Assembly**

The following members have been nominated to serve as voting members to the 2024 Synod Assembly: Raybon Gilbert, Susan Blomenberg, Joe Guilfoil, Linda Murphy. **The nominees for 2024 Synod Assembly were approved.**

**Installation of 2024 Church Council Members and Synod Assembly delegates:**

Pastor Jon-Marc MacLean congratulated the newly elected council members and the approved 2024 Synod Assembly delegates. He prayed for guidance for the new council as they conduct the business of Hope Lutheran Church. He charged them with the oath of office and offered God's blessing.

**Recognitions and Reports:**

Pastor Rani Abdulmasih thanked the outgoing Council members Dave Withers and Rolf Moulton.

Kent Hamdorf, past president, thanked Pastor Bruce Dillman who has given up his call but is no way leaving Hope! We will see him teaching and preaching. He has just reduced his hours.

Pastor Rani Abdulmasih spoke to the congregation about the Evangelism team. He explained what their goals are and how the congregation can be involved.

Pastor Jon-Marc MacLean spoke to the congregation about exciting plans for 2024. This includes the groundbreaking on Hope South and celebrating our 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

Bob Franceski, Business Administrator, gave thanks to our wonderful staff and explained what each team member was responsible for. He reviewed membership statistics and asked us to read the 2023 Annual Report online or request a copy from the office.

Kristina Giffin gave the President's Report on 2023 Council accomplishments and laid the groundwork for the 2024 goals.

**Kristina Giffin declared there was no further business. Motion to Adjourn:**

- **At 1:45 p.m. a Motion was made and seconded to adjourn the meeting. Motion Passed**

Respectfully submitted,

Pam Fenn

Congregation Council Secretary

Offered for Approval to the Congregation February 2, 2025

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*Following the meeting the floor was open for questions – there were none.*

# **2024 Special Congregational Meeting Minutes**

November 17, 2024

## **Meeting Called to Order at 11:38 pm by Kristina Giffin, President**

- Welcomed congregation at all three campuses. Lake Weir campus and Everglades were via zoom
- Kristina made introductions.
- The Congregation Council Secretary Pam Fenn announced that we had a quorum. (In the year 2024 101 establishes a quorum.) There were **236 members in attendance**. 42 attended Lake Weir, 60 at Everglades, 134 at Central

## **Opening Prayer: Pastor Rani Abdulmasih**

### **Agenda:**

- To approve the 2025 Operating Budget
- To approve changes to the Constitution.
- Announcement of Hope Gala

## **2025 Budget Presentation – Congregation Council Treasurer – Gary Hill**

Gary gave a brief overview of the proposed 2025 Operating Budget.

- A motion was made and seconded to approve the 2025 Operating Budget as presented. There was discussion and questions answered. **MOTION APPROVED.** (Vote was by show of hands at all three sites.)

## **Changes to the constitution of Hope Lutheran Church- Kristina Giffin**

- Thanked the Constitution Review Committee: Claudia Oaksmith, Gene Oaksmith, Kris Pfister, and Roger Bell.
- Proposed changes were reviewed.
- A motion was made and seconded to approve changes to the constitution as presented. There were no questions. **MOTION APPROVED.** (Vote was by show of hands at all three sites.)

## **Announcement of Hope Gala “Step into the Future at Hope” – Len Robertson**

- Len announced the Gala. It will be held on January 17, 2025. Tickets will go on sale next week.

## **Closing Prayer by Pastor Jon-Marc MacLean**

The meeting adjourned at 12:18 pm

Respectfully Submitted:  
Pam Fenn  
Council Secretary

Approved By:  
Congregation Council  
February 2, 2025

## **2024 Financial Highlights**

The Current and Benevolence offerings increased by \$40,000 from 2023 but we were \$260,000 short of the amount we budgeted for 2024. An increase in Loose plate and other General Fund income brought the amount of total General Fund income shortfall from budget down to \$195,000. The total General Fund expenses were held at 89% of the budgeted amount or \$295,000 under budget, resulting in a surplus to the General Fund of \$101,000 for the year. This amount almost offsets the \$125,000 deficit we incurred in 2023 due to unanticipated expenses.

The donations to the Donor Restricted Funds (Food Pantry, The Rock, Scholarships, etc) were up \$11,000 from 2023, enabling these funds to contribute over \$230,000 to the needs of the community.

The Building Fund received approximately \$1,070,000 in donations this year with \$830,000 being for the building project on the South Site. Interest in the amount of \$100,000 was earned on the cash balance in the Building Fund. There were over \$237,000 in capital expenditures from the Building Fund including architectural fees, permits, surveys, consulting fees, etc. The balance of the Building Fund donations were for Debt Service with \$98,000 paid in interest on the Mortgage Loan and \$160,000 paid on the principal balance. The current Loan balance is now down to \$1,410,000.

With the activity on the South Site, we are looking forward to an exciting year in 2025.

	Mortgage Loan 2024	Debt Service Fund 2024	South Site Fund 2024	South Site - Life of the Fund
Beginning Balance				\$0
Balance January 1, 2024	\$1,569,734	\$121,773	\$1,623,742	
Interest Income			\$100,387	\$150,436
Contributions		\$240,009	\$830,390	\$2,617,532
Transfer from Undesignated Memorials		\$50,000		
Principal Payments	-\$159,736	-\$159,736		
Capital Expenditures			-\$206,407	-\$419,856
Interest Payments		-\$97,998		
Balance December 31, 2024	\$1,409,998	\$154,048	\$2,348,112	\$2,348,112

HOPE LUTHERAN CHURCH — BALANCE SHEET	Balance Sheet as of December 31	Balance Sheet as of December 31
	2023	2024
ASSETS		
Cash and Cash Equivalents	\$2,555,454.98	\$1,188,582.64
Investments	\$710,091.91	\$2,971,725.34
Total Current Assets	\$3,265,546.89	\$4,160,307.98
Land Buildings and Equipment	\$8,722,697.84	\$8,960,168.53
TOTAL ASSETS	\$11,988,244.73	\$13,120,476.51
LIABILITIES		
Prepaid Pledges	\$18,300.00	\$58,825.00
Accounts Payable	\$131,123.10	\$43,032.78
Total Current Liabilities	\$149,423.10	\$101,857.78
Mortgage Loan Payable	\$1,569,733.71	\$1,409,998.35
TOTAL LIABILITIES	\$1,719,156.81	\$1,511,856.13
FUND BALANCES		
GENERAL FUND		
Operating Fund	\$200,015.37	\$277,430.17
Undesignated Memorials	\$127,300.26	\$97,242.68
Total Undesignated Funds	\$327,315.63	\$374,672.85
Designated Special Gifts	\$11,721.95	\$11,950.49
Memorial Garden	\$97,398.07	\$67,236.36
My Time	\$12,189.40	\$18,032.77
Equipment Replacement	\$100,000.00	\$93,311.50
Women Of Hope	\$3,011.69	\$6,851.72
Total Designated Funds	\$224,321.11	\$197,382.84
TOTAL GENERAL FUND	\$551,636.74	\$572,055.69
DONOR RESTRICTED FUNDS		
Lake Weir Food Pantry	\$214,649.92	\$263,523.59
The Rock at Lake Weir Middle School	\$57,804.54	\$78,886.58
Scholarship	\$53,950.13	\$47,568.13
Pastors Discretionary	\$32,061.77	\$30,676.89
Pennies from Heaven	\$7,762.23	\$10,431.34
ELCA World Hunger, Disaster Response, World Relief	\$167.00	\$1,632.00
TOTAL DONOR RESTRICTED FUNDS	\$366,395.59	\$432,718.53
BUILDING FUND		
Building Third Site	\$1,623,742.08	\$2,348,111.58
Debt Service	\$121,772.81	\$154,048.50
Net Fixed Assets	\$7,152,964.13	\$7,550,170.18
TOTAL BUILDING FUND	\$8,898,479.02	\$10,052,330.26
ENDOWMENT FUNDS		
St Johns/Hope Fund	\$391,288.04	\$429,064.44
Theological Education Fund	\$61,288.53	\$122,451.46
TOTAL ENDOWMENT FUNDS	\$452,576.57	\$551,515.90
TOTAL ALL FUNDS	\$10,269,087.92	\$11,608,620.38
TOTAL LIABILITIES AND FUND BALANCES	\$11,988,244.73	\$13,120,476.51

HOPE LUTHERAN TREASURER'S REPORT 2024			
	2023	2024	Budget 2024
GENERAL FUND			
INCOME			
Current & Benevolence	\$2,046,582.23	\$2,087,030.92	\$2,350,000.00
Loose Plate	\$67,608.87	\$101,641.26	\$80,000.00
Hospitality Income	\$80,781.14	\$82,827.20	\$90,000.00
Other Income	\$148,016.93	\$166,388.78	\$112,450.00
TOTAL GENERAL FUND INCOME	\$2,342,989.17	\$2,437,888.16	\$2,632,450.00
EXPENSES			
Pastors Salary/Benefits	\$543,483.86	\$534,600.09	\$629,108.00
Worship and Music	\$429,457.09	\$482,367.88	\$586,130.00
Maintenance	\$419,870.97	\$294,660.54	\$347,800.00
Other Ministries	\$193,367.90	\$187,325.15	\$143,770.00
Mission & Outreach	\$23,533.96	\$23,536.49	\$34,000.00
Office Expense	\$481,690.98	\$448,659.71	\$479,926.00
Hospitality	\$175,554.51	\$156,302.63	\$173,500.00
Utility Expense	\$81,796.62	\$85,070.70	\$95,600.00
Benevolence	\$119,744.87	\$123,993.34	\$142,200.00
TOTAL GENERAL FUND EXPENSES	\$2,468,500.76	\$2,336,516.53	\$2,632,034.00
General Fund Income less Expense	-\$125,511.59	\$101,371.63	\$416.00
DONOR RESTRICTED FUNDS			
INCOME			
Food Pantry	\$142,665.01	\$161,218.28	\$140,000.00
The Rock at Lake Weir Middle School	\$44,203.12	\$49,854.77	\$20,000.00
Scholarships	\$30,127.00	\$6,618.00	\$17,000.00
Pennies from Heaven	\$1,083.72	\$4,739.95	\$1,000.00
Pastors Discretionary	\$8,438.02	\$6,310.23	\$10,000.00
ELCA World Relief, World Hunger, Disaster Response	\$59,100.42	\$68,064.70	\$68,000.00
TOTAL DONOR RESTRICTED INCOME	\$285,617.29	\$296,805.93	\$256,000.00
EXPENSE			
Food Pantry	\$124,260.48	\$112,344.61	\$140,000.00
The Rock at Lake Weir Middle School	\$36,080.33	\$28,772.73	\$20,000.00
Scholarships	\$12,520.00	\$13,000.00	\$17,000.00
Pennies from Heaven	\$0.00	\$2,070.84	\$1,000.00
Pastors Discretionary	\$3,252.68	\$7,695.11	\$10,000.00
ELCA World Relief, World Hunger, Disaster Response	\$58,933.42	\$66,599.70	\$68,000.00
TOTAL DONOR RESTRICTED EXPENSE	\$235,046.91	\$230,482.99	\$256,000.00
Donor Restricted Income less Expense	\$50,570.38	\$66,322.94	\$0.00
BUILDING FUND	2023	2024	Budget 2024
INCOME			
Debt Reduction	\$265,429.93	\$240,008.61	\$300,000.00
Third Site	\$1,532,744.92	\$930,777.51	\$500,000.00
Loan Proceeds			\$3,000,000.00
TOTAL BUILDING FUND INCOME	\$1,798,174.85	\$1,170,786.12	\$3,800,000.00
EXPENSE			
Mortgage Interest	\$81,669.83	\$97,977.56	\$180,000.00
Principal Loan Payment allocation	\$186,140.22	\$159,735.36	\$120,000.00
Third Site Capital Expenditures	\$167,073.84	\$237,470.69	\$4,500,000.00
TOTAL BUILDING FUND EXPENDITURE	\$434,883.89	\$495,183.61	\$4,800,000.00
Building Fund Income Less Expenditures	\$1,363,290.96	\$675,602.51	-\$1,000,000.00
ENDOWMENT FUNDS			
Contributions	\$191,682.00	\$51,089.00	\$5,000.00
Earnings	\$11,848.87	\$48,460.33	\$8,000.00
TOTAL ENDOWMENT FUND INCOME	\$203,530.87	\$99,549.33	\$13,000.00
Endowment Committee Grants	\$0.00	\$500.00	\$8,000.00
Endowment Fund Income Less Expense	\$203,530.87	\$99,049.33	\$5,000.00

# Hope Ministries

## **WORSHIP & OPERATIONS**

- Altar Angels
- Archives Team
- Assisting Ministers
- Audio Visual
- Clerical Volunteers
- Communion Servers
- Disaster Preparedness Committee
- Endowment Fund Team
- First Time Guest Calling
- Funeral/Memorial Service Reception
- Greeters
- Handyman Ministry
- Hospitality Team
- Inactive Caller Team
- Lay Communion Visitation
- Narthex Servers
- New Member Orientation Class
- Newcomer Worship Welcome Team
- Parking Team
- Pew Rack Replenishment
- Prayer Team
- Stewardship
- Usher Teams
- Worship Assistants

## **MUSIC**

- Brotherhood of Harmony
- Combined Choirs (Special Occasions)
- Hope Lake Weir Campus Chimes
- Hope Lake Weir Campus Choir
- Sisters in Song
- Solo & Small Music Group Opportunities
- Other Special Choirs
- SonShine Celebration Band
- Spirit Ringers (Handbells)
- Summer Session Singers
- Voices of Hope - Central
- Voices of Hope - Lake Weir
- Voices of Hope - South

## **CRAFTS**

- Baby Quilt Ministry
- Crafters (Women of Hope)
- Prayer Shawl (Women of Hope)
- Quilters

## **FELLOWSHIP**

- Book Groups
- Bridge - Ladies Group
- CIA (Christians in Action)
- Dining Out
- Monthly Golf Scramble
- Men of Hope
- Hope South Nine and Dine
- On Our Own
- Strong Bones
- Walk Away the Pounds
- Wednesday Social Suppers
- Women of Hope (WELCA)

## **SPECIAL EVENTS**

- Annual Picnic
- Blessing of the Animals
- Fish Fry
- 90+ Birthday Party

## **SEASONAL**

- Angel Tree
- Seasonal Decor

## **EDUCATION & BIBLE STUDY**

- Circles - Women's Bible Study
- Faith & Fellowship
- Gatherings of Hope
- H.O.P.E. University
- Vacation Bible School
- Walk to Emmaus
- Bible Studies

## **OUTREACH**

- Blessing Bags
- Hope for the Future Student Scholarship
- Mission Outreach
- The Rock - Lake Weir Middle School
- Love INC (partnership)
- Journey INC (partnership)

## **SUPPORT**

- Diabetes Support Group
- Grief Support Group
- Hands of Hope
- Hope Lake Weir Campus Food Pantry
- My Time Caregiver Respite
- Respite Care
- Stephen Ministry

# **Staff Ministry Reports**

## **Audio/Visual**

### Overview

The AV Department at Hope Lutheran Church has had a year marked by significant accomplishments, including maintenance, upgrades, and new initiatives to enhance our worship experience and connectivity across all campuses. Here are the key highlights from the past year.

### Campus Maintenance and Upgrades

Our team carried out routine maintenance and repairs across all three campuses to ensure the reliability of our AV systems. Additionally, we made slight upgrades to improve the overall functionality and quality of the audiovisual experience for both in-person and online audiences.

### Lake Weir Campus Enhancements

A major highlight of the year was the installation of a new video system at our Lake Weir campus. This upgrade enabled us to begin live streaming services from this location, extending our reach and providing greater access for those unable to attend in person.

### Online Audience Growth

We are excited to report a 10% growth in our online audience this year. This expansion underscores the importance of our digital ministry in reaching a wider community with the message of hope and faith.

### Churchwide Connection Across Campuses

One of our most significant achievements this year was successfully connecting all three campuses for a churchwide meeting. This milestone showcased our ability to use technology to foster unity and collaboration within our church community.

### Looking Ahead

As we reflect on this year's successes, we remain committed to maintaining and improving our AV systems, expanding our online reach, and strengthening connections across our campuses. These efforts will continue to support our mission of sharing God's message with both local and global audiences.

### Conclusion

We are grateful for the opportunity to serve our congregation through technology and look forward to another year of innovation, growth, and service in God's name. Thank you for your ongoing support and trust in our work.

## **Communications & Marketing**

It is a blessing to continue to serve Hope Lutheran Church and the kingdom of God through communication, marketing, and media.

2024 was an active year for our Communications department. As our church continues to grow and expand, so too must our Communications strategy. We are committed to reaching both in and out—connecting the community and our church body to the messages of hope and the Gospel of Jesus Christ, as shared through our services, events, and outreach initiatives.

In 2024, Hope Lutheran Church...

- Developed and published the first-ever Hope cookbook.
- Appeared on the front page of the Daily Sun newspaper more than a dozen times, with three of those instances occurring in the same month.
- Expanded our direct mailing zone to include new neighborhoods in both Summerfield and the Southern Villages.
- Partnered with Subsplash, a Christian web design company, to begin the preliminary design of our upcoming Hope Lutheran Church app and revamped website. Stay tuned for more information on this!
- Expanded our Awesome God Squad Children's newsletter to make it accessible online.
- Connected with worshipping groups around the world, understanding that our online community are a unique campus with unique needs and opportunities.
- Enacted improved policies and procedures to ensure the public image of Hope remains positive, encouraging, and true to the Gospel message.

The Communications department is responsible for all print and digital content produced by the church, as well as all marketing and branding. The department manages the church website, social media, News in the Pews newsletter, brochures, signs, mailings, newspaper and digital ads, press releases, welcome gifts, and so much more! The Communications department also works closely with all pastors and staff to craft messaging to keep our congregation informed and encouraged.

Because this is a one-person department, the Communication department is indebted to the staff of Hope, especially to Bob Franceski, and to talented volunteers like Bonnie Irving and Chris Reed for their ongoing support and assistance. Their skills are greatly appreciated!

In Christ,  
Marina Ernst, Communications Director

### **H.O.P.E. University**

2024 closes with many blessings. Our Education Team lost some valuable members this year: Linda Foley, Dave Withers, Carole Rasmussen, and Al Christensen. We thank them for their service to our growth. We have added two new members: Louise MacFarlan and Jana Rahrig.

We continued to enhance equipment in the Education Room at Hope Central Campus. A measurement of our activity includes 25 VBS participants (up from 18), increased classroom, devotion and Bible reading activity to over 13,000 participants (up from 9,250), social media presence and activity with over 32,000 views for Pastor Keiths weekly 'Looking Ahead', my weekly Mustard Seeds, and the Advent Poems that appeared daily during the season.

All our activities have been because of the active members of our congregation as our daily devotion readers, teachers, and instructors of our courses, and in support as volunteers at programs like VBS. Our team is preparing for some new things in 2025 with the addition of a one-day VBS during Lent in conjunction with The Villages Recreation Department and 2 local churches, rolling out of a churchwide small group effort, and a May celebration of Labyrinth Day.

Thank you members, Council, and ministry partners for all your help as we "know Christ and make Christ known."

Yours in Christ,  
Pastor John LeCain

## **Hospitality**

The Hope Lutheran Church Hospitality Team plans, coordinates and prepares all food related events at Hope Lutheran church to include Hope Central Campus as well as Hope Lake Weir Campus and certain hospitality supplies for the Hope South Campus meeting at Everglades. Hope Lake Weir Campus has a regular Sunday refreshment time after service with the first Sunday of the month being Ice Cream Sundae Sunday. Everglades has regular refreshments after each service on Sunday. Hospitality does weekly baking for Everglades (cookies) and Lake Weir (muffins).

In addition to weekly social suppers, MOH and WOH monthly breakfasts, churchwide meeting lunches, we added a lovely picnic under the new pavilion at Hope Lake Weir Campus along with a very successful "Low Country Boil." In 2025, we will offer fish fry events at Hope Lake Weir Campus under the pavilion.

Other events include simple coffee and Danish for certain bible study groups up to and including feeding over 500 folks at the yearly picnic in October. The weekly social suppers average 110 to 175 fed with approximately 20 to 25 volunteers assisting with preparation, cooking, serving, and cleanup. Thanksgiving and Christmas social suppers are 175 to 225 attending the meals. This team also is responsible for preparation of sandwiches for all funerals, pastor installation receptions, group ministry retreats, choir lunch events for many of their weekend special performances, and quarterly STS breakfast meetings, plus Newcomer nights in which our new members can come to our social supper prior to their New Member orientation each quarter. Hospitality also provides cookies and either cider or hot cocoa after each Cantata performance in December.

We joined the CIA team in hosting meals for fundraising for several of our ministry teams' projects such as On Our Own Snack Packs and the Women of Hope support of E Nini Hassee camp.

We have added 10 new volunteers over the year for regular meals and other events.

On December 18<sup>th</sup>, we offered the first Hope Lutheran Church cookbook! This was a wonderful work of love by so many hospitality members and church members. Kudos to Hope's Marina Ernst for putting it all together in such a beautiful way!

We served approximately 15,000 folks directly at Hope Central Campus and over 9,000 supported at Everglades and Hope Lake Weir Campus during 2024.

As I have always said in the nearly 7 years with the Hope Hospitality Team, the strength of the hospitality team lies in the many dedicated and hard-working volunteers who weekly come in to cook, prep, clean, clear tables, decorate, serve, wash dishes and do whatever is necessary to make the food events successful. We are truly blessed in the talents of those who have owned their own restaurants in the past and have had other extensive cooking experiences. No words can ever thank them properly for what they do in a very hectic and hot environment in the kitchen.

Debbie Bennett retired on December 20<sup>th</sup> after 6  $\frac{3}{4}$  years in the kitchen. Hope is blessed to have Michael DiBuono take over the responsibilities and offer his expertise of many years of training and food service experiences.

We are always ready to welcome new members to the team as we continue to grow this ministry.

## **Department of Music Ministries**

The Department of Music Ministries continues to be one of the most vibrant and visible ministries within Hope Lutheran Church. With ensembles rooted in all three campuses, well over 100 individuals are regularly making their joyful noise, raising their voices in song as a part of weekly services.

The Voices of Hope, Brotherhood of Harmony, Sisters in Song, Spirit Ringers, SOS Band, as well as individual instrumentalists, song leaders, and anthem soloists all serve to enliven worship gatherings. Twice annually, the Combined Choirs of Hope comes together for special events. CCH is comprised of singers from all campus ensembles, congregants who join up during these particular bi-annual events, as well as a handful of friends from the community who enjoy presenting at Hope for these large occasions. CCH has proven itself an excellent on-boarding tool for bringing new people into Hope, as well as providing a deeper level of volunteer involvement for previously peripheral members.

2024 proved to be uniquely special for the two big events of CCH. The Tenebrae service got a boost from the addition of painter and ordained ELCA pastor, Paul Oman. Paul was commissioned to join us for two consecutive nights of worship and solemnity during the “service of darkness.” With such a special opportunity, we presented the service on Maundy Thursday and Good Friday. Paul created two pieces, both different, that are now displayed in the central and Lake Weir campus buildings. It was truly a “two of a kind” multisensory worship experience.

CCH reconvened in early December to present the Cantata “Messiah—Heaven’s Glory.” In celebration of Hope’s 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, the seasonal choral pieces were woven together for the first time by an original, four-scene narrative play. The addition of live drama to the already festive sing-alongs, featured solos, and high-energy holiday favorites was a true delight for all who attended.

One final notable event came toward the end of summer. At that time, a group of several volunteer musicians comprised of Hope members, area school children, the VHS Marching Band, Mary Jo MacLean and Dawn Dinome banded together to present a fundraiser concert for Ariana Sankar. Ariana had been a VHS freshman when she was mysteriously struck with a condition that left her paralyzed from the neck down. Through the efforts of the community, we were able to raise enough that she could afford to receive an additional day of physical therapy each week, assisting with her long-term recovery. The nature of and response to this particular need within the surrounding community served to be deeply impactful for all those involved, as well as a first-time opportunity of its kind for several ministry departments within Hope.

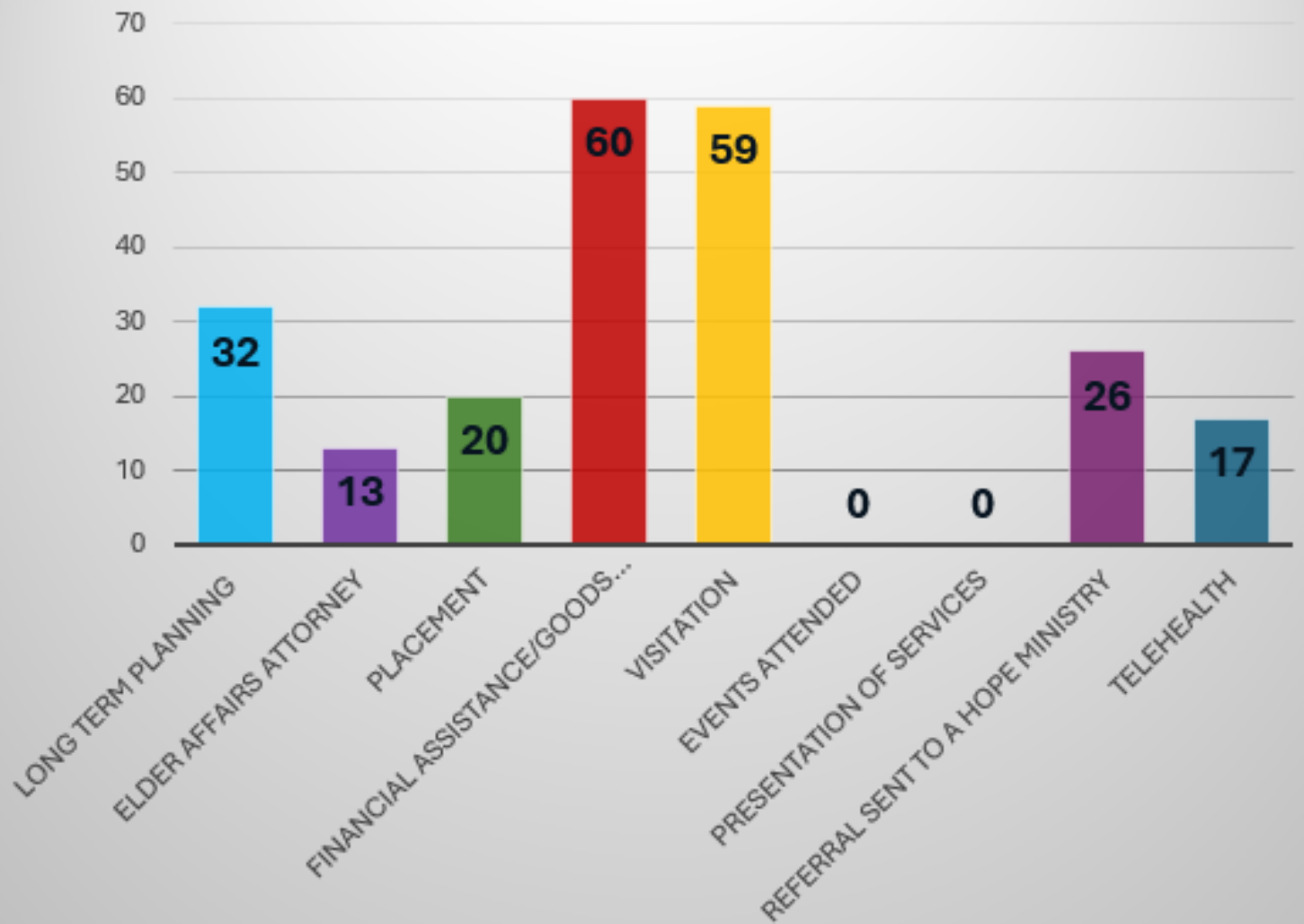
As we look forward to another eventful ministry year, we aim to hire additional staff to fulfill campus director positions at both Hope Lake Weir Campus and Hope South Campus. In the meantime, anyone considering being a part of the music ministry need only contact Director Ken Wood at [Ken@hope4all.church](mailto:Ken@hope4all.church). Our door is always open!

## **Prayers for Hope**

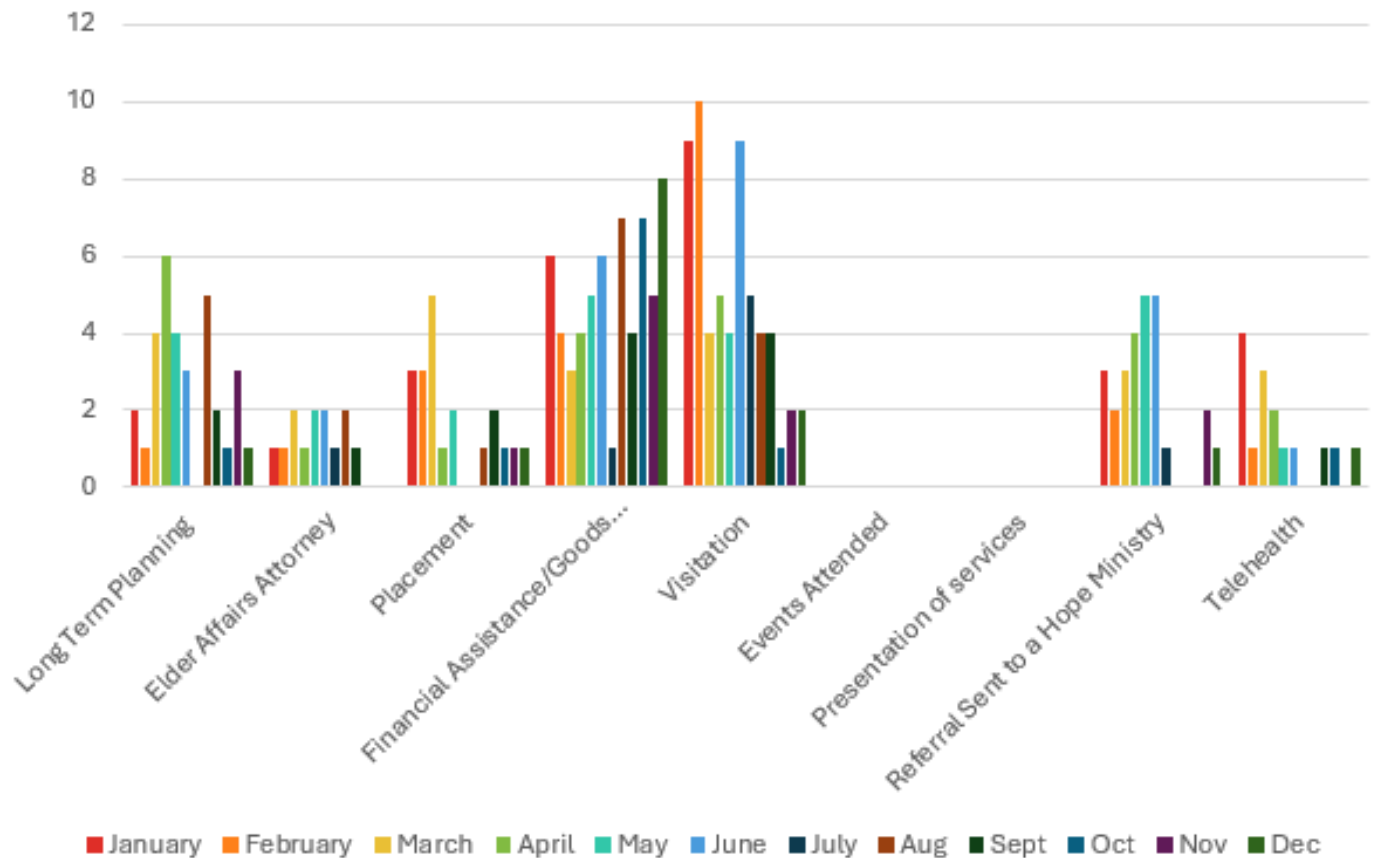
This ministry was begun in 2021 as a natural outgrowth of the Prayer Chain maintained by the church. The Prayer Team was being furnished with an email to update current need for prayers. Each member prayed individually for the needs. Prayers for Hope began in order to have members of the Prayer team join together in person and by Zoom to pray over the joys and concerns of Hope, to study prayer, and to have a time of meditative silence. If you are interested in joining Prayers for Hope, contact [pastorjohn@hope4all.church](mailto:pastorjohn@hope4all.church)

Respectfully submitted, Pastor John LeCain

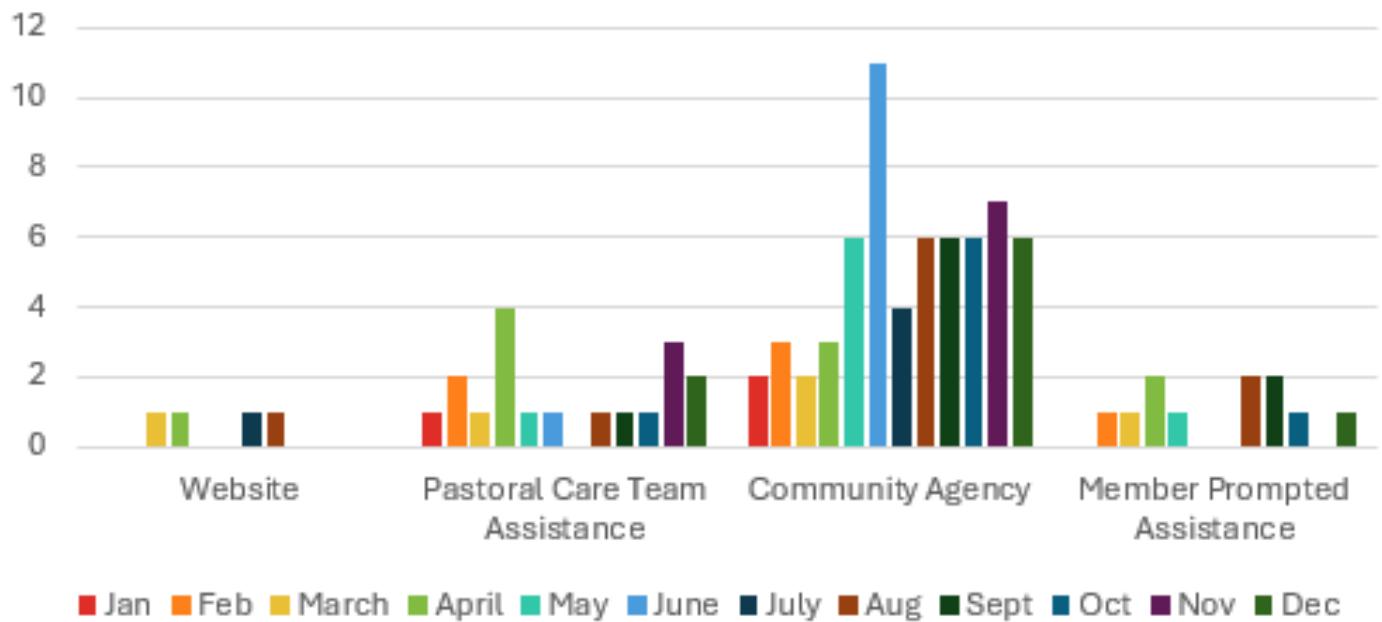
## Referral Outcomes for the Year

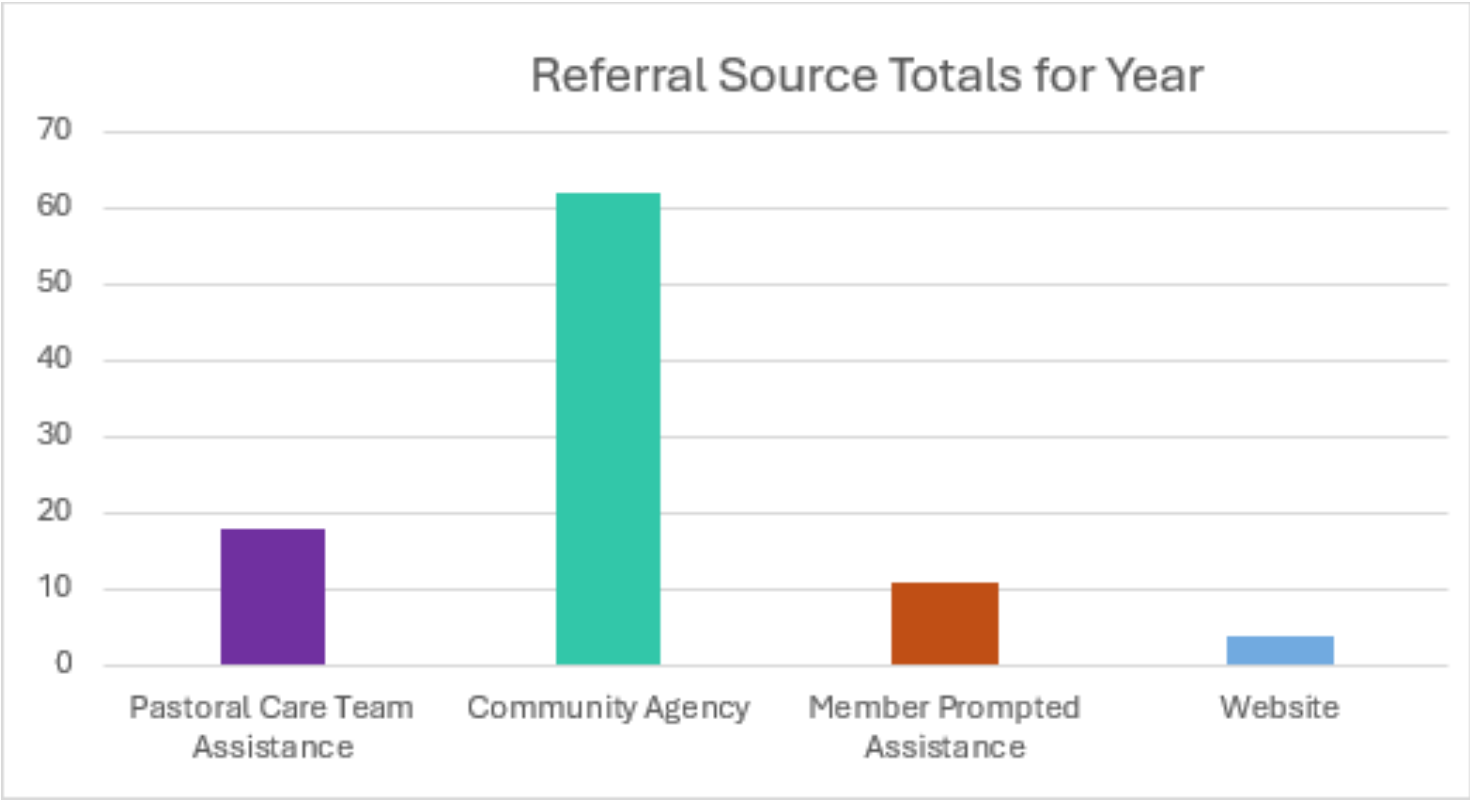


## Monthly Referral Outcomes



## Monthly Referral Sources





Lenea Carnes, BA  
Social Services Advocate

## Ministry Team Reports

### 90+ Birthday Party

In 2014 we had our first 90+ Birthday Party at church. This is a once-a-year event that is planned for Hope Members that are 90+ years old. This year we had over 100 members that were 90+ years old in 2024 that receive an invitation to the yearly party.

Some members live out of town. They receive a card telling them we know they won't be able to attend but we are thinking of them on their birthday.



The party was held on October 13 after the 10:30am service. We had 31 members and their families come to enjoy the festivities. We also have a number of Hope members that attend to share the excitement with them. We continued with the chicken salad sandwiches and fruit cups for lunch before we celebrate with cake & ice cream. This year Dottie Wayne, who is a member of the 90+ Birthday Team, got to blow out the candle!

This year we started a new tradition by taking a group picture. This picture was a big hit with the participants.

All the guests go home with a smile on their faces and a balloon to commemorate the day. They have their picture taken during the event and a print is mailed to them, along with the group picture, with a thank you card for attending the party.

We thank God for these wonderful people and their willingness to share their stories with us. Hope Lutheran Church is blessed to have 16 members of the 90+ Birthday Party Team that volunteer to plan for this event and spread the cheer!

If you would like to join the 90+ Birthday Party Team email Karen O'Brien at [fredandkaren@mpinet.net](mailto:fredandkaren@mpinet.net).

### Archive Team

Kathryn Clement (Team Leader) and Carole Rasmussen

During 2024 the Archive Team continued its work of chronicling the life of Hope Lutheran Church in word and picture. Yearly archives are printed and collected in 3-inch binders and stored at Hope Central Campus. Each year's archive (from 1995 to the current year) is also stored in pdf format on the P drive of the Hope server.

Since in 2018 St. John Lutheran merged with Hope, we have been working on digitizing the six 12" x 12" scrapbooks the memory-keepers of St. John prepared for their 95<sup>th</sup> anniversary, as well as church directories and other memorabilia. This process is now complete. We have also created a ***St John Timeline.pdf*** file, covering the years from the founding of St. John in 1922 to their merger with Hope in 2018.



Adobe Acrobat makes it easy to search for a key word or phrase across all the archives in a matter of minutes. Simple instructions for conducting such a global search can be found at the beginning of the 2024 archives: briefly, using the advanced search function, type in a word or phrase; choose **All pdf documents in**; select either the **Archive** or **Archive St John** folder from the drop-down list; and hit the **Search** button.

In celebration of Hope's 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary, the Archivists created a Hall of Memories in the church narthex on October 4, 2024. On display were:

- two picture boards containing photos of St. John and Hope, their merger into one congregation, and the beginning of the establishment of a third campus in the southern end of The Villages, as well as photos of the nearly 70 missions of Hope;
- Five 6'-8' leatherette scrolls, one displaying the timeline of St. John (1922-1918), and the others detailing the history of Hope from 1975-2024;
- One annual archive each for St. John and Hope;
- Handouts of copies of:
  - newspaper clippings on loan from a parishoner;
  - playbills advertising some of the videoclips in the archives;
  - Warped Theological Comics;
  - instructions for searching the digital archives across multiple files.



## Angel Tree Project

### Team Mission:

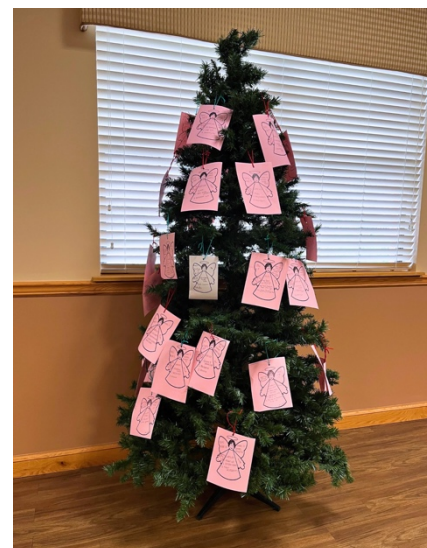
Work with designated local organizations to provide Christmas gifts for needy Children and Seniors in our community. The program is completely dependent upon the generosity of the Hope congregation to provide the gifts and gift cards distributed.

### Recent Accomplishments:

Through the overwhelming support of the Hope congregation, the Angel Tree Project provided significant gift packages for over 500 Children and Seniors. That represents a consistent number of those Hope served with Christmas blessings through the Angel Tree project for the last two years.

### Organizations with counts served included:

Hope Lake Weir Campus Food Pantry Children - 162  
 Stanton Weirsdale Elementary School -100  
 Fruitland Park Elementary School - 49  
 Lady Lake Specialty Care – 133  
 Buffalo Crossings Assisted Care – 57



Additionally the congregation provided over \$5,000 in gift cards (not assigned to specific individuals) that were utilized to augment gifts if needed and to provide for gifts not returned by the date to be distributed to the Organizations. Some of these gift cards and cash donations were also used to purchase bikes and helmets for children at the Food Pantry. The balance was turned over to the Pastors to be used where needs arise in the future.

The Team of Gloria Johnson, Jenny Dunn, Nancy Forrest, and Elayne Gooding lead the project. The Team worked with designated leads from the Organizations, coordinated volunteer meetings, scheduled coverage for Angels distribution and returns at all three campuses, worked with Hope Staff for communications to Hope members and to schedule facility needs, and tracked all Angels to assure complete coverage of all commitments Hope had made to the groups served.

A special acknowledgment also is due to the team of nearly 50 volunteers from all campuses who assisted throughout the project. The Team Leaders are already working on recommendations for 2025 and are looking forward to serving as Angel Tree Project Leaders again.

### **Blessing of the Animals**

The team's mission is to provide a pleasant and meaningful experience for members of the community that wish to have their pets (no snakes) blessed. The event is in recognition of the feast day of St. Francis of Assisi, the Roman Catholic Church's patron saint of animals.

The 2024 Blessing of the Animals was held on Saturday, October 5, 2024. Pastor Marc presided over the event. More than 111 pet owners and 89 registered pets were in attendance. The Registration Team mentioned that quite a few attendees had not registered. In addition, four vendors and their teams provided merchandise for purchase along with several bringing pets that represented their organizations.



Over 30 volunteers worked at the event greeting attendees, registering the pets, handing out pet scarves and blessing collar tags, taking pet photos, providing cookies donated by Hope members along with water and soft drinks donated by the Hospitality Department. About 12 volunteers helped set up the chairs and tables and pop-up tents for the event following the annual church picnic. Music was provided by the Music Department, and the sound system was set up by the AV Department. All advertising, event flyer design, and donation wheel prizes were provided by the Hope Communications Department. Shortly after the event, pet photos were sent to the pet owners.

Our prize wheel collected \$279 in donations for pet supplies for Hope's Food Pantry.

Many positive comments were received from attendees, vendors, and staff members about the volunteers, the blessing ceremony and the fun fair-like atmosphere. The Blessing of The Animals event is definitely a very positive ministry.

### **CIA (Christian In Action)**

Mission Statement:

We are a group known as CIA, "Christians in Action". Men and women whose goals and objectives are to encourage, motivate and increase the action and activity of all three Hope Lutheran Church campuses.

Hope will be a place where faith and community come together to reach beyond the walls of the church and into the community.

*Let us not give up meeting together as some are in the habit of*



*doing, but let us encourage one another. Hebrews 1:25*

Throughout this year Christians in Action Ministry has gone the distance to support many of the outreach ministries of Hope Lutheran Church and the community. Thank you to the Hospitality Team and the many volunteers who have made this possible. Through your participation and generosity, the following ministries listed at these events can further their outreach and extend their mission to help those in need.

\*On Wednesday, April 10<sup>th</sup> there was a dedication of the Hope Lake Weir Campus Pavilion. This was a special evening which entailed the social supper, dedication, newcomers attendance and meeting and vespers.

\*Al Ernst, an international touring comic was the highlight on April 18<sup>th</sup> at Hope Central Campus and April 19<sup>th</sup> at Hope South Campus. This event benefitted Hope Lake Weir Campus Food Pantry.

\*The Rock – Lake Weir Middle School was the recipient on Friday, May 10<sup>th</sup> when the Low Country Boil was held at Hope Lake Weir Campus.

\*Social Suppers were held on June 12<sup>th</sup> benefiting Camp E-Nini-Hassee and August 14<sup>th</sup> benefiting On Our Own Ministry.

\*The Wildwood Wildcats Booster Club was sponsored and was the recipient at Trivia Night on September 13<sup>th</sup> at Hope Central Campus.

Throughout all of these events it was the intention to share fellowship, enjoy a wonderful meal together and most importantly bring folks from all three campuses and the community together for a great time.

Respectfully submitted, Len Robertson

### **Crafters**

Hope Crafters has the mission “to give hope and love to others on life’s journey”. We meet every Tuesday from 9 to 11 in room 205 at Hope Central Campus. All women are welcome. You do not need to be a member of Hope to participate. Bring your friends. Even if you have no sewing experience, we can use your talents. We accept donations of yarn, cotton material and money all year long. You may leave these items in the information hallway or at the reception desk at Hope Central Campus.



In 2024 we spent 12,825 hours making and distributing the following items:

- 1033 Sojourn bears
- 347 baby bears
- 443 hats
- 116 children’s sweaters donated to “Knit For Kids”
- 11 blankets
- 89 scarves
- 168 dishcloth/Dawn sets

- 413 cotton rolled bandages
- 75 Christmas cards to “Operation Quiet Comfort” for hospitalized military who are overseas at Christmas
- 20 pairs of knitted knockers to “Angel Wigs of Hope”

June 11 we were honored to have lunch served by Thrivent to recognize our contributions to our community.

For more information you may contact Donna Walker at 352-743-8518 or Eileen Hintzen at 352-753-0777.

## **Disaster Preparedness and Response Committee**

### **Disaster Preparedness Committee**

The Committee meets regularly and records the following accomplishments for 2024.

1. Updated the Hope Lutheran Church Disaster Preparedness and Response Plan to include recommendations from Marion and Sumter County officials.
2. Quarterly checks of all facilities have been initiated to confirm emergency exits are clear, protective systems follow inspection requirements, emergency equipment is available, etc. AEDs and First Responder Bags are checked monthly.
3. Provided security officer from Marion County for the Hope Lake Weir Campus Food Pantry. The total cost for security officer coverage at Hope Central Campus services, Hope Lake Weir Campus services, and Hope Lake Weir Campus Food Pantry is approximately \$50,000.
4. Established a prioritized budget and managed to approved budget.

A key objective of this committee is to make sure Hope Lutheran Church is fully compliant with safety and security guides and regulations. The following agencies guide our decisions:

- National Fire Protection Agency
- Federal Emergency Management
- Occupational Health and Safety Administration
- American Heart Association
- Marion County Emergency Management
- Sumter County Emergency Management



Agency

The Disaster Preparedness Response Committee will meet quarterly in 2025 and continue reviews and after-action reports of incidents, make updates to the Disaster Preparedness and Response Plan, and prioritize needs of the church in the event of emergencies (generators, additional security cameras, etc.).

## **Endowment**

The Constitution of Hope Lutheran Church mandates an Endowment Committee. Its purpose is to administer the *earnings* of the funds entrusted in perpetuity to the Hope/St. John Endowment Funds. The work of this committee is accomplished by making grants awarded for religious, charitable, benevolent, and educational purposes of Hope Lutheran Church including capital improvements. As of November 30, 2024, the Endowment Fund balances were \$548,398.62. This includes \$121,803.98 for the Theological Education Fund established in 2022 for grants to individuals seeking theological training. This year a \$50,000 contribution was made to this fund. The fund is now fully funded, and the earnings are available for granting.

The Committee received very few grant requests this year. In 2024, only one grant was awarded to Zion Eversole for \$500 to participate in a mission trip.

The educational endeavors of the Committee cannot be measured until bequests are received. Members of the Committee pray that congregation members will continue to consider the on-going mission of Hope through their legacy gifts.

The Committee members are Gary Hill (congregation Treasurer), Pastor Marc MacLean, Pat O'Dell, Ron Durian, Gary Forrester, Peg Piper Winters, and Steve German. Please contact any one of us for answers to questions you may have.

Peg Piper Winters

### **Evangelism**

This past year, an Evangelism Team was formed at Hope to work together to develop a strategic direction to guide us in being more intentional in sharing Christ with others. Our mission statement at Hope has always been simple and clear: "To know Christ, and to make Christ known." Our ministries at Hope should reflect on our mission. Although the intent is to share Christ and make Him known, at times this may not be as clear to someone who is joining for the very first time.

At the conception of this team, our Bishop had joined us in prayer sharing his own experiences when he first became a Mission Developer. This team gathers regularly to find new ways to share Christ with others. Called to proclaim the gospel, the Good News of Jesus Christ, as a church we live out our mission and calling when we share Jesus with our neighbor in a loving and caring way. I love the words of the Apostle Paul in Romans 1:16

"<sup>16</sup> For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes."

The Gospel is what brings hope, and Hope is called .to share the gospel of our Lord Jesus. It has been said that "Evangelism is not what we do. Evangelism is who we are." As children of God, we are called to bring hope to the hopeless, to be a voice for the voiceless, to bring healing to the wounded, and lift the name of Jesus as Lord and Savior of all. We do this together as a community, as the assembly of believers, as the Church.

If you are interested in joining our Evangelism Team and serving the Lord and witnessing to His glory, contact Pastor Rani at [pastorrani@hope4all.church](mailto:pastorrani@hope4all.church)

Pastor Rani

### **Faith & Fellowship**

*Faith & Fellowship* is a weekly gathering with a closer look at the scripture and a deeper connection and fellowship with one another. Karl Barth, a theologian of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, had put it this way: "Take your Bible and take your newspaper, and read both. But interpret newspapers from your Bible." Looking at faith matters and scripture as it relates to daily life is the focus of this gathering.

There is so much that is shared in a group like this. As we go around the table, everyone gets a chance to share their faith story as it is experienced in that week. No one is put on the spot or has to say anything if they do not wish to do so. The conversations have been amazing, inspiring, and

uplifting. Whether people sharing their joys, or sorrows, God is at work in their lives and that is evident.

This past year we have focused on the lectionary, looking at the scripture from the weekend prior and discussing further what was heard during worship services at all three campuses. God speaks in and through the community. Through our experiences in daily life, we see the scripture come to life, we experience God's mercy and love, and we continue to encounter His grace.

Faith & Fellowship meets also at the LW campus, creating a safe space for such conversations. At other scheduled times, Faith & Fellowship gathers at Publix right across from Everglades where our community worships on Sundays. I truly enjoy the fact that this group meets in the community, sharing their faith, and truly being a public witness to what they believe in. When we conclude each gathering with the Lord's Prayer, it truly becomes a moment where we are the visible church in the wider community.

The dynamics of the group at each campus are different, but the opportunity to explore the scripture and be surrounded by caring and loving community members remains the same. There is always more room around the table, so join us! For more information, please contact Pastor Rani at [pastorrani@hope4all.church](mailto:pastorrani@hope4all.church)

Pastor Rani

### **Hope Lake Weir Campus Food Pantry**

Hope Lake Weir Campus Food Pantry is a thriving ministry serving Marion County residents. On January 4, 2024, we were the first Marion County pantry to become computerized. The Pantry served 6,917 households, 23,377 individuals, giving out 18,364 bags of food, meat and produce.

The ages of the neighbors are: 0-5 8%; 6-17 23%; 18-49 37%; 50-59 11%; 60-64 6%; 65+ 15%.

Without the generous support of the congregation, clubs, organizations and neighbor gatherings, the Pantry could not help so many people. The Pantry is extremely grateful for all the volunteers who work selflessly, logging 8,009 hours in 2024.

Debbie Schuettler, the Pantry's Operation Manager is dedicated on watching food costs and has worked with Second Harvest in obtaining discounted prices on groceries, meats and donated produce. This alone has saved the Pantry a significant amount of money. She has implemented a "choice" area where neighbors can choose items instead of just adding it to their bags. This has saved over \$9,500. We also provide hot dogs, pet food, diapers, incontinence underwear, and hygiene products. Panera Bread in Sumter Landing and the Southern Trace Publix donate breads and pastries. Shared Harvest, a local farm, now operated by VHA, donates freshly picked items.

The Pantry also provided special meals for the holidays. During the Shoe & Backpack Drive, we gave away 133 pairs of shoes and backpacks along with donated school supplies. For Christmas, 194 food pantry children received gifts from the Angel Tree Program and individual donations made directly to the pantry.

The Pantry is grateful for your continued support.



### **First Visit & Inactive Calling**

This year, I placed 175 calls to inactive members. I left messages for 154, and was unable to reach 41. To visitors, I placed 61 calls and left messages for 18.

I have enjoyed being responsible for this the last several years. Many who had not been in church for a while really appreciated the call of concern. I do hope that this continues to be done, typically I have called individuals if they had not attended for 6 weeks.

Dawn Deinert, Team Leader

### **Funeral Reception Team**

The Funeral Reception Team provides food and beverages for a luncheon after a funeral/memorial service. We provide this service at the church. Our goal is to relieve the family during a memorial service of the worry of serving their guests a lunch following a service.

This year we serve 18 luncheons for members in the Fellowship Hall. Debbie Bennett and her Team prepare the sandwiches and the Funeral Reception Team members provided salads, Veggie trays, Cheese trays and cookies. There is a special team that provides the workers to setup, serve the food and cleanup.

We are a group of 100+ members with 5 team coordinators, 4 for food and 1 for Setup. Each member is asked to bring in food for a luncheon or help with setup 4-5 times a year. Please call the church office if you would like to join this team. If you have questions about the team, you may phone Karen at 352-250-3809.

Karen O'Brien

### **Gatherings of Hope: Moving Beyond Grief**

When members of our Hope community are faced with the loss of a loved one, there is always a support group to turn to. *Gatherings of Hope* continues to offer support to those whose lives have been changed due to loss, transition, or being faced with a new challenge in life. This group is caring, loving, and offers support to anyone who walks in, no matter what they are going through.

The Book of Psalms has been centering our conversations around faith and prayer. Each time we gather we look at God's Word and seek His mercy and grace. Reflecting on the prayers, sighs, and supplications of David, we are reminded that God is our refuge in time of trouble.

When each member of the group shares their experiences and how they have found God at work in their lives at a time such as this, faith comes to life. The assurance that God is with us is so evident for no one can do this alone.

Anyone can join this group at any time, and the invitation is always open to share as one feels comfortable. It is reassuring to have such a supportive group who knows the meaning of loss and transition and now they can also comfort others with that same comfort that they have received from God, as the Apostle Paul reminds us.

This ministry is coupled with the Grief Support Group that is currently led by Barabra Moseley on alternate weeks. Grief Support offers an opportunity for healing and reflections in a more structured manner. This ministry is so vital to those who are looking for ways to deal with grief, especially at the very early stages of loss and transition.

If you, or someone you know, have lost a loved one and are looking for a ministry to be of support along this journey, join the Gathering of Hope and our Grief Support Group. For more information, please contact Pastor Rani at [pastorrani@hope4all.church](mailto:pastorrani@hope4all.church)

Pastor Rani

### **Hope for the Future Scholarship**

This exciting new ministry reaches out to the community by connecting with our surrounding schools offering a scholarship to high school graduates. Over the past four years, we have given out a total of 45 scholarships to students who were selected by the review committee. The joy of seeing young students celebrate their accomplishments with the family of Hope creates a true sense of community. The unique aspect of this ministry is that it still offers the opportunity for young graduates to receive a mentor from Hope if they so desire. A mentor is someone who commits to the journey with the young graduates, offering spiritual support as well as practical advice in their field when available. We have such an amazing gift at Hope with so many who are willing to share their experiences and gifts with others.



Below are some of the criteria set to qualify for Hope's scholarship:

- GPA of 2.5 or greater verified by your high school
- Plan to attend an accredited college, university or a trade school
- Must be a full-time student if in college or taking the prescribed course of study if in a technical school.
- Must reside in the Florida counties of Lake, Marion or Sumter and must be graduating from one of the following high schools:
  - The Villages Charter High School
  - Lake Weir High School
  - Belleview High School
  - Leesburg High School
  - Wildwood High School

Five schools in total are now part of this list. This is enabling us to reach out to various parts of the community.

We currently have an amazing, dedicated team of former educators and volunteers from Hope who form the Scholarship committee and work on the selection process. If you are interested in this ministry or in becoming a mentor, please contact Pastor Rani at [pastorrani@hope4all.church](mailto:pastorrani@hope4all.church)

Thank you.  
Pastor Rani

## **Men of Hope**

Our first meeting was held on September 12, 2024 and was attended by 37 people. This was a men and women's meeting, as the breakfast topic highlighted a presentation by our two Co-Lead Pastors. The presentation by the pastors explained the New Collaborative Leadership Model adopted by the Church Council. Pastor Jon-Marc MacLean and Pastor Rani Abdulmasih co-manage the staff and congregation of Hope Lutheran Church with Council oversight.

The Men of Hope have established their primary tenets to be service which establishes a bible study from time to time, fellowship, and group discussion. This is accomplished via a guest speaker program, involving member life experiences, growing participant faith, and seeking wisdom and encouragement from one another.

One of the group's new activities was to use Men of Hope funds to support a small school in Haiti over and above Synod support to assist a small school remain viable and safe for children that was subject to the ravages of gang activity and disruption. Men of Hope donated \$2000 with a Hope Lutheran Church match of \$2000 to the Haiti Scholars School in Mariana. This was a one-time donation to meet our global ministry project. Men of Hope will next consider a local ministry to support. Research is ongoing for that project.

The group continues to have joint meetings with the Women of HOPE and will participate in the annual Christmas Music Program as well on or about December 12, 2024.

Men of Hope have 40 men on the e-mail roster. Participation runs about 28 on any given meeting. Our last meeting this cycle will be May 8, 2025. We meet the 2nd Thursday of the month at 8:00 AM for one hour. Breakfast is currently \$7.00. The meeting is adjourned promptly at 9AM. Church membership is NOT required. Bringing a guest is encouraged. All participants are required to register for these breakfast meetings on the Hope web site and pay their fee by credit card.

Respectfully submitted,

Raybon Gilbert, Group Leader, Men of Hope

## **Mission Outreach**

The main function of the mission outreach team is to support projects that enhance Hope's mission statement which is "to know Christ and to make Christ known" globally, nationally and locally.

*You may give without loving but you cannot love without giving.*

The projects this team supported through our congregation in 2024 are:

**The ELCA Florida-Bahama Synod** which provides information, support and financial assistance to companion synod programs in Guyana, Haiti, Cuba, Suriname and Jamaica. Pastors that are serving in Haiti and Suriname have developed a close relationship with Hope. In 2024 team member Marlene Waller went to Cuba with a team from the ELCA Global Mission Table. They delivered medical supplies, and other needed items to Lutheran Congregations in Santiago Cuba.

**ELCA World Hunger and Disaster Response** are to agencies that are effective in aiding during a period of need for others around the globe. The team distributes, sorts, and counts the Lenten boxes

**Global Health Ministries (GHM)** Which is an agent to provide financial assistance in materials to Lutheran health care programs throughout the world.

**Love INC (Love In the Name of Christ)** is a partnership between many local churches. This organization is a clearing house for those in need and will assist to find the correct service agencies. Love INC provides a faith-based environment for all those that are helped. Hope Lutheran has volunteers working in many areas of their ministry to the local community.

**Journey INC (Journey In the Name of Christ)** In partnership with Love INC, we provide space and volunteers for a Tuesday night weekly event that provides a meal, mentoring, adult, and children's classes designed to break the cycle of generational poverty and bring the unchurched to Christ.

**The Rock at Lake Weir Middle School.** The rock is a Hope Lutheran Church / School partnership that provides a food, clothing, hygiene products and school supply pantry in the school to share the Love of Christ with needy children in the school and their families.

**World Mission Prayer League (WMPL)** which provides financial and spiritual support for missionaries.

**Christians in Action (CIA)** We Liaison with the CIA group to support and promote social and outreach activities.

Fred O'Brien  
Mission Outreach Team

### **Monthly Golf Scramble**

There are 51 People on the List. Each Month there are less players playing. I think that the Church group is getting older and playing Golf less. The mission and Purpose is to Socialize since we have multiple services. We play October thru May each Year. Les Broeker. Email: [broeker.les@gmail.com](mailto:broeker.les@gmail.com)

### **My Time for Free Time**

Caring for a loved one with Alzheimer's or another cognitive impairment is a demanding, 24/7 responsibility. **My Time for Free Time**, a ministry of Hope Lutheran Church, offers a much-needed respite for caregivers through a lively, engaging, and free weekly program.

### **A Growing Need**

Globally, over 55 million people live with dementia, with nearly 10 million new cases annually. Projections estimate this number will rise to 139 million by 2050. In the U.S., 6.9 million individuals are living with Alzheimer's, a number expected to exceed 16 million by mid-century. Alarming, deaths from Alzheimer's have tripled since 2000. In The Villages, approximately 10% of residents are affected by Alzheimer's or related disorders, underscoring the critical need for caregiver support.

### **Our Mission and Program**

My Time for Free Time supports caregivers by providing a space where their loved ones, affectionately called "My Timers," can participate in enriching



activities. Meeting every Thursday from 1:00 to 4:00 p.m., the program includes exercise, arts and crafts, games, singing, snacks, and entertainment. With one-on-one care and a nurse on-site, participants receive personalized attention in a safe, welcoming environment.

Monthly educational sessions for caregivers provide additional support and resources.

### **2024 Highlights**

**Community Engagement:** The program is promoted by the local Alzheimer's Association, area neurologists, and the Sumter County Sheriffs Office's Dementia Tracking Initiative.

**Enrichment Activities:** Custom music programs, sing-alongs, and dancing promote joy and physical well-being.

**Growing Impact:** Serving 54 caregivers and their loved ones, the program thrives with the help of 64 dedicated volunteers.

**Active Mind Emporium:** A free store offers games, art supplies, and more, donated by the community.

**Celebrations:** A festive Christmas party for 140 attendees caps the year with music, prizes, and entertainment.

My Time for Free Time continues to make a difference, offering caregivers a lifeline while enriching the lives of those with cognitive challenges. If you are interested in participating or volunteering, we welcome you to join our community.

For more information, or to receive our weekly newsletter, contact: Cindy Hanauer. E-mail: [Cindy@grandcentralfloral.com](mailto:Cindy@grandcentralfloral.com)

### **Newcomer Worship Welcome Team (NWWT)**

The Newcomer Worship Welcome Team (NWWT) has been functioning at our Central Campus this past year, 2024 under the leadership of Ingrid Severson, leader of the team. We continue to conduct our team with the intent to know Christ and to make Christ known while serving at the Welcome Center at Hope Lutheran Church. We will continue to function regularly for all services on Saturdays and Sundays throughout the year 2025. Our main goal is to welcome newcomers to our church family as they enter our doors of Hope Lutheran Church for the worship service.

Handcrafted crosses in various colors are offered to newcomers, as well as Hope Lutheran Church pens as welcome gifts. These gifts are meant as a token of love and friendship to make each person feel welcome and a part of the church family. Through generous donations, NWWT has been able to offer small books, coloring book/crayons and Hope Lutheran Church bears to visiting children. We hope to continue this tradition for many years to come.

We had a total of 10 members in the NWWT who volunteered in 2024 and hope to expand our volunteer list for each service in 2025.

Ingrid Severson - Team Leader, Newcomer Worship Welcome Team (NWWT)

### **On Our Own**

On Our Own's mission is to provide fun, friendship and fellowship to anyone who is single, widowed, divorced or a caregiver whose spouse is not able to be socially active. We meet on the second Wednesday of the month in the fellowship hall at Hope Central campus from 10:30 to noon. We have a short business meeting, plan future activities, have a speaker or entertainer, or play a fun game. We try to get together as well for outside events, concerts and bus trips, and currently have a Caribbean cruise planned for 2025.

Our major service project is to provide 100 to 120 "snack packs" each month to a local elementary school, currently Stanton-Weirsdale Elementary School. We pack 11-12 individual items into a gallon size storage bag (e.g, peanut butter, jelly, drink, pudding, applesauce, etc.) which the school distributes to needy children so that they have food to hold them over for the weekend. We do this packing at 9:00 a.m., prior to our business meeting, in the narthex at Hope Central. There is a bin in the information hallway if you would like to donate to this project. We can use most items, as long as they are individual portions and nothing in glass containers.

We also prepare 30 gift bags each year which are distributed by our pastors to shut-ins from our congregation at Christmas.

If you have any questions, or would like to join our group, please feel free to contact me:  
Ginny Wilson - [randy572@msn.com](mailto:randy572@msn.com) or 352-430-3326

We'd love to see you.

### **Prayer Shawl Ministry**

The mission of the Prayer Shawl Ministry is to provide comfort and encouragement through the gift of Prayer Shawls and Lap Robes. The hope is that these gifts are a reminder that no matter what the journey, the recipient is not alone; that they are loved and cherished, and that God is with them through the hard times.

Prayer shawls and lap robes are lovingly made and prayed over by a number of Hope's members and are made available at all three campuses for parishioners to take to give to a family member, friend, or acquaintance who is suffering in any way.

During 2024, approximately 100 prayer shawls and 40 lap robes were produced and donated.

Merle Peterson  
[Mamp854@gmail.com](mailto:Mamp854@gmail.com)

### **The Rock**

*Who will go?  
Here I am Lord, send me.*

The Rock at Lake Weir Middle School is sponsored and staffed by Hope Lutheran Church with the support of Love INC. The Rock is a school-church partnership where the school provides space on its campus for Hope to operate our Rock Room. See The Rock at [https://youtu.be/YD\\_5Lw46lBE](https://youtu.be/YD_5Lw46lBE)

The Rock provides shoes, food, clothing, school supplies, hygiene products, emotional support and most important, the love of Christ to children in need. Some students come from broken homes. Some are dealing with family drug problems. Some live in the forest. Many do not know Christ. Hope Lutheran Church Volunteers operate The Rock at Lake Weir Middle School from 11 am until 1:30 pm on Mondays, Wednesdays. and Fridays. School staff open The Rock for the children whenever there is a need.

The Rock provides so much more than food, clothing, shoes, hygiene products, and school supplies. Hope volunteers are positive role models that encourage and share the love of Christ with children in need. Every day one of the volunteers shares a Love Story with the other volunteers. Below is a report that will give you an idea of a day at The Rock.

*We helped 42 learners today. One girl wanted to give her mother a present for her birthday. She said, "Mom could not get me anything for my birthday, but that is ok because we have no money. I really want to give her something."*

*Another girl said she lives in a tiny camper with her mom, her mom's boyfriend, and 5 children. One boy that comes to get three pair of socks each week. (He lives in a tent and there is no place to wash clothing.)*

*There is another boy who lives in a 3-bedroom home with 7 adults and 13 children. They are keeping relatives from being homeless. Many of these students are third and fourth generation poverty. They have no positive role models. They do not know that things can be better.*

*Our Love Story today is about a young lady. It was her first time visiting the Rock. She showed up wearing a pair of torn jeans and a thin silk camisole. She wanted a jacket to cover herself so she would not get in trouble for wearing inappropriate clothing to school. We picked out a hoodie and a jacket. She tried them on and wanted to take the jacket. When we told her that she should take both, her whole face lit up. When we asked her if she would like some sweatpants, she said her jeans were fine. We assured her that she could have the sweatpants as well. She was so thankful and left the Rock with a beautiful smile!*

*I do not know how some of the children can carry heavy grocery bags home. We had a first-time visitor sent to us before we opened. Desiree was sent by the social worker for clothing. We helped her find sweatpants, a shirt, and a hoodie. She came back during her lunch period and picked up additional items. Now that she has experienced the love from our volunteers, I am sure she will be back often.*

Thank you all! We are leaving a legacy of Hope that will be remembered long after we are gone. You are truly people of Hope! You give hope, support, and encouragement to over 100 children every week!

Fred O'Brien, Mission Outreach team member, 352-250-3814.

### **Seasonal Decorating**

The Seasonal Decorating team is responsible for decorating the churches for the Easter and Christmas Seasons. I am blessed with a wonderful group on this team and have help from volunteers when asked.

This year, we have added a beautiful tree skirt to Hope Lake Weir Campus, which was made by the talented ladies of Hope. Flocked trees were also purchased for Hope Lake Weir Campus to enhance the new choir area.

New lilies were purchased for the baptismal font area at Hope Central Campus. Each year palms are purchased for all three sites for Palm Sunday and then they are used to decorate the chancel on Easter Sunday.

The team continues to maintain and repair the decorations.

Submitted by Nancy Shephard, team leader.

### **Hope Stephen Ministers**

“Christ Caring for People through People”

Stephen Ministers are trained members of our congregation that help hurting individuals deal with difficult feelings and work through complicated situations. The hurt can be anything -- a terminal diagnosis, grief, upcoming surgery, financial difficulties, family challenges, loneliness, or questions of faith. A Stephen Minister offers a listening ear, a caring heart, and creates a safe, confidential, and non-judgmental space to provide one-to-one emotional and spiritual support.



Initial training for new Stephen Ministers was again hosted by Hope Lutheran for the local network of eight churches. The required 50 hours was conducted by the network Stephen Leaders every Saturday for 10 weeks. Thirteen Stephen Ministers were trained and two from Hope were formally commissioned. The new ministers brought our total active to 17. Throughout the year, 31 individuals benefitted formally from our distinctively Christian care and many others informally received the attention and love of Christ from a Stephen Minister during a time of need.

The series of four booklets, Journeying through Grief, is a wonderful resource sent on a specific cycle to assist the grieving process. In the past year, 107 booklets were mailed to members and friends who lost a loved one.

Additionally, the Stephen Ministers supplied more than 60 Cancer, Now What? books to the congregation. The cancer book is an outstanding resource that contains practical, down-to-earth information to help deal with the diagnosis of cancer or another life-altering medical situation. Cancer books are available at all three campuses for a suggested \$10 donation placed in the church offering.



Providing Christian Care is a unique and rewarding ministry. Christ cares for people through us. What a wonderful way “To Make Christ Known.” Please contact me if you feel called to learn more about our Stephen Ministry.

Submitted by: Kathy Smith, Parish Deacon - Stephen Leader and Coordinator  
deaconkathy@hope4all.church

### **Sweet Dream Quilters**

Sweet Dream quilters provides quilts for infant baptism. We have several quilters who contribute quilts to this ministry in anticipation of infant baptisms. A small ministry, no play on words, since Hope does not have many infant baptisms. We never the less are thrilled to welcome and honor the new Children of God with a quilt.

Betty Streich

### **Walk Away the Pounds**

Walk Away the Pounds meets Monday, Wednesday and Friday from 8 am to 9 am in the Fellowship Hall at Hope Central Campus. We use various exercise videos to improve our health and strengthen our bodies! We have a mix of church members and non members, men and women, and ages ranging from mid-50's to late 80's. The benefits are different for each person, and you can do one mile, two miles, or three miles...it's entirely up to you. If you have trouble standing, you're welcome to try the exercises sitting on a chair.. We sometimes use bands or weights, but they are optional. But don't forget to bring your water.

Are you ready to make a commitment to a healthier New Year? We'd love to have you come and try us out. We have plenty of room, and ALL ARE WELCOME! If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me.

Ginny Wilson, Team Leader - [randy572@msn.com](mailto:randy572@msn.com) or 352-430-3326

### **Women of Hope**

Every woman member of Hope Lutheran Church is a member of Women of Hope and a WELCA member. The purpose of the Women of Hope organization is to spread God's Word and Love in the following ways:

- G Grow in Faith
- R Reaching out with love
- A Aiding the Congregation
- C Caring in the Community and World
- E Encouraging each other

The year 2024 marked the 25th Anniversary when Women of Hope informally met for the first time in February of 1999. Five ladies stepped forward to volunteer as leader (1), secretaries (2) and treasurers (2). Their theme was "We care, we contribute, we collect." On February 17, 2001, Women of Hope became an official Unit of WELCA.



Women of Hope held 9 regular monthly breakfast meetings on the third Thursday of the months of January-May and September-December. We have continued to host spiritually enlightening programs, as well as fun and fellowship types of programs. Our Summer luncheons, which we call Out To Lunch Bunch were held in June, July and August.

In April we traveled to Luther Springs for our annual 3-day retreat. This was a time where we relaxed in the beautiful lake front forested camp. The theme was "It's All Under Control" with Kathy Uffleman, our speaker. One day commuters also participated in this retreat.

Pineland's Conference WELCA Spring Gathering was held at St. Timothy's Lutheran Church, Crystal River on May 4, 2024. The theme was "Be Not Anxious My Sheep". Area Lutheran churches in the Pineland Conference attended.

The second annual Retreat held at the Hope Lake Weir Campus was held on October 26<sup>th</sup>. The speaker was Gaye Martin, the theme was "A Leap for the Lame."

Florida-Bahamas Synodical Women's Organization (SWO) Fall Gathering was held November 8-10 at Warren Willis Camp & Conference Center. "He's Got the Whole World in His Hands" was the theme. The election of new board members, outstanding speakers, worship services each day and fellowship of the many folks who attended this conference was exceptional.

Thank you goes out to everyone at Hope Lutheran Church who have supported our mission projects, the breakfast and out to lunch meetings, retreats, mission service projects (some of which are crafters, prayer shawls and lap robes), Lutheran World Relief (school kits and quilts).

Information regarding Women of Hope activities is available in News In The Pews on a regular basis.  
Respectfully,

Virginia Robertson, President, Women of Hope 2024.



# Three Campuses... One HOPE

Hope Central Campus  
250 Avenida Los Angeles  
The Villages, FL 32162

.....

Hope Lake Weir Campus  
10495 SE Sunset Harbor Road  
Summerfield, FL 34491

.....

Hope at the Everglades Rec Center  
5497 Marsh Bend Trail  
The Villages, FL 32163



**Evangelical Lutheran  
Church in America**  
God's work. Our hands.