

We are a community empowered by the Holy Spirit, called to bring God's comfort, to work for God's justice, and to share the hope and love of Jesus with all.

# DECEMBER 2023

## NEWSLETTER



### Our Core Values



*faith  
acceptance  
compassion  
gratitude  
love*

Hope's  
Christmas  
Services  
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Women's  
Christmas  
Party  
~ page 9 ~



Happy Advent and Merry Christmas!

In this time of Advent, the majority of us are waiting and looking for peace. We are a world beset by violence. Violence in our streets, violence perpetrated one nation against another. Think mass shootings and gun violence, think Russia and Ukraine, Israel and Palestine. Lest we forget, Jesus too was born into a world of violence. In all the hoopla of the holidays and the wishes for joy and good cheer, we forget that this little baby was born into a world that was set against him from the time of his birth. An empire would stand against him as would his fellow Jews. Yet into the harshness of this world was born this innocent babe, the son of Mary and Joseph, the son of God. "And in this babe was the hope of the World." Hope for a world of peace, of love for one's neighbor, for one's community. Rome had ushered in the PAX Romana. Two hundred years of peace would reign in the Roman Empire under Caesar, a peace maintained by violent suppression and fear strategically instilled in the masses. But God enters the world through this innocent babe to show us a different way to be at peace. It is a peace that the world does not yet know. It is a peace based on love of one's neighbor as oneself, and the building of a community where none are excluded. As we once again celebrate the birth of Christ Jesus into our midst, we place our hope and faith in the promise made flesh through the birth of Christ into our world. Advent becomes a time when we prepare our hearts to receive and be a part of this peace. We are the vessels God uses to continue the work that began with Jesus' birth. Advent is a time where we reorient our hearts and minds to the peace that is possible through our faith in Christ. Over and over, we see change enacted in the world by those who believe in peace when everything around them denounces such thinking. Yet the power of such faith has changed states and nations; it has changed the hearts of so many. May you this Advent season find your hearts filled with the Spirit of Christ's peace.

May your Christmas be joyful and merry!

In his peace,

Pastor Pamela



(518) 434-2910  
P.O. Box 589  
Rensselaer, NY 12144

Pastor Pamela Hoh  
Hope Lutheran Church  
470 Winter St Ext  
Troy 12180.

Dear Pastor Pamela Hoh and Friends at Hope Lutheran Church,

On behalf of all the mothers and children we serve here at St. Paul's Center, I would like to thank you for the amazing amount of donations that were delivered to our shelter. Staff and I were truly in awe of the amount of donations that came through our doors. We continuously find ourselves to be low on certain items due to the number of families we serve. Thankfully to generous friends like you who go above and beyond for our programs, we are in great shape!

In what is a worrisome and difficult time for these families, and to have to not worry about buying certain items takes a huge weight off our mother's shoulders. As our shelter staff work hard to help moms find housing and build the skills necessary to be successful, please know that caring friends in the community like you are the reason we can accomplish that goal.

With Warm Regards,

Tracy J. Pitcher, MSW

Executive Director



St. Paul's Center is a community that strives to awaken hope and rekindle dignity in families who seek comfort, support and assistance in moving from homelessness to a sustainable future.

# LIVING YOUR STRENGTHS

*Discover Your God-Given Talents*

## *Living Our Strengths*

When Hope Lutheran offered the opportunity to complete an assessment titled Living Our Strengths, I took one of the books home and responded to a series of challenging questions. The purpose of this exercise was to determine my talents, feelings, and behaviors, those which occur most naturally, based on my responses to the questionnaire.

Many years ago, I had taken the Myers Briggs Type Indicator, a similar personality assessment. Myers Briggs claimed that through the questionnaire, I would discover “who I really am.” There were 16 different personality types; one of which described my strengths and my core personality. The purpose of the test, presumably, was to gain greater insight into one’s behaviors in order to understand how those preferences may cause conflict or misunderstanding with other personality types. I remember thinking that I might prefer to work with and be in relationship with my own personality type, as it would be so easy to get along with someone who is just like me!

In contrast, the feedback I received from Living Our Strengths was a prioritized list of 34 strengths. All of the qualities are of equal value, even though I might draw on them less frequently. In other words, there are circumstances in which each of the strengths could be vital. When I received the results of my Strengths Questionnaire, I was delighted at the list of themes given to describe me: Learner, Empathy, Achiever, Input, and Intellection. These were my strongest qualities. I liked the sound of them, and as I read the description of each item, it sure felt like a portrait of me.

*(continued on next page)*

Since all of the descriptors are neither negative nor positive, anyone looking at their self-portrait might have felt as positive, or proud, looking at their portrait as I did. After all, who doesn't want to be interpreted as a Learner: one who is drawn to the process of learning, one who likes to master a skill, one who takes on new projects. Yup, that sure sounds like me. I went on to read the descriptions of my other "talents" and was equally as invested in my developing portrait. Maybe I will be stronger in expressing these strengths in the future, as I have validation that these are positive personality qualities. After all, I don't want to hide my light under a bushel. As it says in the Bible, "Light is to be revealed, not concealed."

One last idea I wish to share. It was helpful to look at the themes that are low in my behavioral choices. For example, number 31 of the 34 descriptors is Futuristic. Okay, so I don't go to Sci-Fi films or read Science Fiction. And, I don't have a vision of the future that raises the sights of others. But I was passionate and zealous about the story and characters in the Star Wars epic, and my least favorite character remains to be Darth Vader.

Respectfully submitted by Cynthia Winter



# Thank You



## Thank You, Assisting Ministers!

Our assisting ministers are those folks who like to challenge themselves a little. They are the ones who read the lessons and responsive psalms, making their way through those tongue-twisting Old Testament names. (It's always a good idea to do a read-through in advance - Pastor Pamela is happy to help with pronunciations!) Assisting ministers also lead the congregation in the Apostles Creed and the Prayers of the People. And they light and extinguish the candles on the altar. (If you'd rather not do that, a substitute can be found for that part of the job.)

Our current Assisting Ministers are:

Athena Batsios  
Luis Clemente  
Mike Daus  
Pam Dodson  
Marilyn Dyer  
Sandra Governor  
Catherine Jura  
Bonny Munteer  
Chris Nash  
Susan Radzyminski  
Cindy Winter

*Grateful  
Thankful  
Blessed*

If you'd like to add Assisting Minister to your resume, please see Pam Dodson.



### Thank You, Ushers!

Some of us remember the days when church ushers, who were all men in suits and ties and who usually worked in pairs, very formally collected the offering and directed people to the communion rail. These days, we are not so formal. As a smaller congregation we need only one usher, and ladies are welcome to take on the job. The usher collects the offering and brings the plate to the altar, and later in the service plays traffic cop during communion, helping the worship service to progress smoothly.

Our current Usher list includes:

- Athena Batsios
- Lois Batsios
- Marion Daus
- Mike Daus
- Dickie Dodson
- Pam Dodson
- Marilyn Dyer
- Peggy Farrell
- Debbie Favro
- Charlie Huff
- Donna Littlejohn
- Susan Radzaminski
- Cindy Winter



If you'd like to add your name to the list, please see Pam Dodson.



# Civic Life and Faith Study

ELCA is exploring the question:

How does one live out their faith while at the same time honoring their civic responsibilities?

The ELCA ruling body has voted to further explore what this entails. This is expected to be a six-year process whereby research is done, guidelines are developed to guide local conversations, comments from the local congregations are used to help prepare a proposed statement which will then go back out for comment before a final draft is proposed for a vote by elected representatives from across the nation. ELCA uses a democratic participatory process to arrive at its social statements.

The Task Force recognizes the diversity that exists within the totality of ELCA Lutheran congregations and uses this process to ensure adequate representation in the development of an ELCA sanctioned social statement on the relationship between faith and civic life. The task force has developed 6 videos to guide discussions and disseminate the information thus far developed.

Because of the diversity among ELCA constituents, strong disagreements may arise. Respect for opposing opinions and keeping an open and gracious mind is suggested as we share our thoughts with the intent to clarify our point of view and refrain from arm-twisting others to agree with us. The first video stresses that our unity in Christ is not rooted in our ability for full agreement, but in our universal need for God's Grace in all we do, say, and think. It encourages us to see God's world – and each other – through God's eyes.

The remaining videos speak to specific aspects of civic life and faith. Five of the six videos have already been available for viewing and discussion after worship. The sixth (and last video) will be available after worship on January 14<sup>th</sup>. All are invited.

If you wish to watch any of the videos on your home computer, they may be accessed at the following location:

<https://www.elca.org/civicsandfaithstudy> In His Grace, WDM



**HOPE** Lutheran Church

470 Winter Street Ext., Troy, NY 12180

[www.HOPELC.ORG](http://www.HOPELC.ORG)

*Christmas Services*

Join us for the Children's Christmas Story  
Sunday, December 17<sup>th</sup> at 10:00 AM



CHRISTMAS EVE  
*Candlelight*  
SERVICE  
7:00 PM

There will not be a morning service.



*Celebrating*  
THE BIRTH OF  
*Christ*

Wishing You All  
a Blessed & Merry  
Christmas this  
December 25<sup>th</sup>, 2023

~ no service today ~



**YOU'RE INVITED to the  
WOMEN'S CHRISTMAS  
PARTY**

**Sunday, December 17th — 2:30 to 5:00**

**Invite your girlfriends, daughters, and granddaughters!**

**Bring a dessert or appetizer to share**

**Bring a RE-GIFT grab bag present**

**(just because you don't want it, doesn't mean someone else won't love it!)**

**If you haven't experienced our gift exchange—you are in for a treat!**

**Bring your good cheer and get ready to share some holiday spirit!**

**GREAT WAY TO MAKE NEW FRIENDS AND CELEBRATE THE OLD FRIENDS!**

**SIGN UP at church or RSVP to Marilyn Dyer at 518 505 6434**

# Christmas Food Baskets

## Your help is needed!

Advent is here and Christmas is coming soon! Once again, we at Hope LC will be preparing Christmas food baskets for 15 families who have recently moved out of the St. Paul's Center. We need your help!

There is a poster in the narthex listing the items needed. Please sign-up for whatever you can provide, and take a Post-It note for each item to remind you when you're shopping.

We will pack the food on Tuesday morning, Dec. 19<sup>th</sup>, at 10 AM in the large classroom. If you are available to help out for about an hour, please let Pam Dodson know at (518) 701-4628.

Each family will also receive a grocery store gift card, purchased with church funds, so they'll be able to buy turkeys, fresh produce and whatever else they need for a nice Christmas dinner. Please help us make Christmas special for these families who have recently moved from the homeless shelter into new homes.

*"Thank you all so much for providing meals for the families once again this year. I can't tell you how much it means to the families, and to us here at St. Paul's Center. It is such an enormous help." – Jason, St. Paul's Center*

# Worship Volunteer Duties for December of 2023

Please find your own replacement if you cannot be available on date of assignment.

	3-Dec	10-Dec	17-Dec	24-Dec	31-Dec
	<b>Worship 10:00am</b>	<b>Worship 10:00am</b>	<b>Worship 10:00am</b>	<b>Xmas Eve 7:00pm</b>	<b>Worship 10:00am</b>
<b>Altar Guild/ Comm. Asst. 2</b>	Bonny M	Debbie F	Bonny M	Marilyn D	Maureen H
<b>Greeter</b>	Pam D	Nancy D	Marlies P	Elaine B	Ja'net M
<b>Usher</b>	Marion D	Athena B	Dickie D	Marion D	Marilyn D
<b>Assisting Minister</b>	Mike D	Chris N	Pam D	Catherine J	Bonny M
<b>Communion Assistant</b>	Pam D	Chris N	Pam D	Chris N	Debbie F
<b>Snack Set-Up / Clean-Up</b>	Charlie H	Donna L	Marilyn D	(no snack)	Marilyn D
<b>Offering Counters</b>	Marion D & Pam D	Donna L & Charlie H	Pam D & Marilyn D	(to be counted on 12/31)	Bonny M & Marilyn D



# Upcoming Events for December of 2023

We will have 'In-Person' Sunday Worship Services at 10:00 AM. We will also continue to live-stream our services on our website, YouTube page, Facebook page and through Zoom. The Zoom link for Worship Services will continue to be posted in the bulletins.

*Sharing the hope and love of Jesus with all*

<p><u>2<sup>nd</sup></u></p> <p><b>Red Cross Blood Drive</b></p> <p><b>8 AM – 1 PM</b></p>	<p><u>2<sup>nd</sup></u></p> <p><b>Regional Food Bank Packing</b></p> <p><b>10:30 AM – Noon</b> Meet at RFB</p>	<p><u>3<sup>rd</sup></u></p> <p><b>Poinsettia Order Forms Due</b></p>	<p><u>7<sup>th</sup></u></p> <p>Hope's Kitchen Free Community Dinner at Cornerstone Church in Lansingburgh * Serving from 3 – 5:30 PM* (for those who RSVP'd)</p>
<p><u>12<sup>th</sup></u></p> <p><b>Book Club</b></p> <p><b>@ 7 PM</b> (at Marilyn's home)</p>	<p><u>14<sup>th</sup></u></p> <p><b>Grief Support Group</b></p> <p><b>@ 6 PM</b> (in large classroom)</p>	<p><u>17<sup>th</sup></u></p> <p><b>Children's Christmas Story</b></p> <p><b>@ 10 AM</b> During Worship Service</p>	<p><u>17<sup>th</sup></u></p> <p><b>Women's Christmas Party</b></p> <p><b>@ 2:30 PM</b> (in the sanctuary)</p>
<p><u>19<sup>th</sup></u></p> <p><b>Christmas Food Basket Packing</b></p> <p><b>@ 9:30 AM</b> (in large classroom)</p>	<p><u>20<sup>th</sup></u></p> <p><b>Council Meeting</b></p> <p><b>@ 6:30 PM</b> (in large classroom)</p>	<p><u>25<sup>th</sup></u></p> <p><b>Merry Christmas</b></p> <p>***** <b>Jesus Christ is Born</b></p>	<p><b>Wednesday Bible Study at Noon</b> will meet on: Dec. 13<sup>th</sup>, 20<sup>th</sup>, &amp; 27<sup>th</sup> (in large classroom &amp; via Zoom)</p>

