

A photograph of a church interior during a service. The view is from the back of the sanctuary, looking towards the front. People are seated in wooden pews, facing a pulpit where a pastor is speaking. The church has a modern design with large, arched stained-glass windows and pendant lights hanging from the ceiling. The entire image is overlaid with a semi-transparent blue filter.

ANNUAL REPORT 2025

Hope Lutheran Church

8070 Rowan Road
Cranberry Township, PA 16066
724-776-3141
www.hlc.church

2025 IN PICTURES



PRESIDENT'S LETTER

Dear Hope Members,

What an extraordinary year it has been at Hope Lutheran Church. As a board, we begin every meeting by grounding ourselves in Hope's mission—knowing God, inspiring people, and transforming lives—and our vision of growing community through service, learning, and worship. These guiding commitments continue to shape everything we do, and in 2025, they came to life in remarkable ways.

Hope has been overflowing with devotion, fellowship, and vibrant community spirit. Week after week, I am moved by the ways our congregation shows up for one another and for the world around us. The impact of this church is unmistakable—felt in our worship, our ministries, our relationships, and our service to the community.

This year also brought exciting new beginnings. We joyfully welcomed Jessica Freeman as our Youth and Family Coordinator, Dr. Bryan Hessel as our Music Director, and Deacon Beth Caywood as our Interim Christian Education Coordinator. With deep gratitude for the work of the call committee and many others, we celebrated the arrival of our new Associate Pastor, Halle Kluever. Each of these leaders has already begun enriching our ministries with energy, creativity, and heartfelt dedication.

Our stewardship and mortgage appeal was another bright spot. With 214 pledge commitments—an increase from last year—and \$71,400 in total donations, we saw a powerful expression of generosity and shared purpose. Even more inspiring was the surge in connect cards, rising from just three last year to 51 this year. This renewed engagement speaks volumes about the passion and commitment of our congregation.

A heartfelt thank-you goes to Pastor Ron, whose steady leadership continues to anchor our ministry. We are also blessed by Pastor Bob Zimmerman, who remains with us as a teaching pastor and enriches our programming in meaningful ways. And to our entire staff—thank you for your resilience, teamwork, and unwavering support during a year of growth and transition. Your dedication makes everything possible.

2025 was truly a year of momentum—filled with growth, impact, and inspiring acts of faith by the people of Hope. None of this would be possible without the tireless efforts of our staff, lay leaders, and volunteers. You are the heartbeat of this church.

As we look ahead to 2026, we are excited to continue building on this strong foundation. We plan to continue the hiring process for a new Communications and Office Administrator, and the staff and board will continue working together to develop programs that reflect and strengthen Hope's mission and vision. Under the leadership of our new board president, John Blough, we look forward to another year of growth, connection, and Spirit-led possibility.

Elizabeth Bauer – President, Church Council 2025



FROM THE PASTORS

Dear Hope Family,

As I reflect on the past year and look ahead, one word stands out: blessed. We are truly blessed by God's grace, blessed by the love we share as a church family, and blessed with the opportunity to serve God's kingdom. Throughout this past year, we have seen God's hand at work in our ministries, our community, and our daily lives. As we look ahead, we can rejoice in the many ways God continues to pour out blessings upon us, not just for our own sake, but so that we can be a blessing to others.

Looking through the reports submitted, attending committee meetings, serving alongside many of you in ministry, I am so proud to be called here as your pastor and servant in Christ. The good work that we do for the sake of others amazes me. This year, we have been blessed to be a blessing, serving our community through acts of love, generosity, and compassion. Whether feeding the hungry, comforting the grieving, showing hospitality to everyone who walks through our doors, or extending kindness to those in need, we have sought to live out Jesus' words proclaimed at our baptisms: 'Let your light shine before others, that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven' (Matt 5:16). Through our social outreach programs such as Gods Work, our Hands, Summer Lunches, Hosanna Projects, Food Bank collections, and so much more we have been vessels of God's love, reflecting God's grace to those around us. As Proverbs 11:25 reminds us, 'A generous person will prosper; whoever refreshes others will be refreshed.' In giving ourselves, we, too, have been renewed and strengthened and reminded that every blessing we share multiplies in the lives of others.

As we move forward, I would invite each of you to take part in the joy of serving and being a blessing to others. God calls us to share God's love in both big and small ways, reminding us in 1 Peter 4:10, 'Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace.' Volunteer in our ministries, reach out to those in need, offer a kind word, or simply be present for someone who is hurting. There are countless opportunities to make a difference—through prayer, acts of kindness, and sharing the hope we have in Christ.

Again, thank you for allowing me to be your called pastor! It is, as I said, a blessing to be a part of this community of faith we call HOPE!

Pastor Ronald A. Brown 



FROM THE PASTORS

Dear friends in Christ,

As I reflect upon this past year of ministry, this verse from Matthew's retelling of the Transfiguration comes to the forefront of my mind: "Peter said to Jesus, 'Lord, it is good for us to be here.'" (Matt. 17:4)

This verse, though simple, summarizes so many of my feelings since arriving at Hope last August. For countless reasons, I find myself saying, "Lord, it's good for Josh and I to be here!" It's good to be near Pittsburgh, a city we love. It's good to be closer to our family in the Midwest. It's good to be at Hope, with a faithful community that seeks to serve others. It's good to walk alongside parishioners, who have a passion for living like Christ. It's truly good to be here!

Like this congregation, my family and I, too, have went through many changes in the past year. We've said goodbye to loved ones and adjusted to a new way of being. Traditions we hoped would endure have changed, and we continue to wait for the fullness of God's way to be made known. Not all of these things have been easy, yet all of them have led me to this time and place. All of them have led me to be called as your pastor and to serve alongside you with faith, humility, and trust.

As the Strategic Planning Team prepares to begin our strategic initiative this spring, I hope and pray that we—like the disciples—have our own mountaintop experience (Matt. 17:1-9). I hope and pray that through intentional discernment and careful listening, we hear the voice of God and recognize Christ among us. I hope and pray this initiative reveals the new things God may be doing, which will surely stretch our imaginations and move us outside our comfort zones.

The story of the Transfiguration concludes with the disciples descending the mountain with Jesus to carry out his ministry: to love God with all their hearts, souls, and minds, and to love their neighbors as themselves (Matt. 17:9; Matt. 22:37-39). And this, dear friends, is the very power of this Gospel. When the disciples encountered the glory of Christ, when they recognized Jesus for who he is, their faith didn't keep them in one place. Their faith called them down the mountain to love and serve the world. May this time of discernment and holy listening lead our congregation to do the same. May we encounter Jesus and, with renewed insight and energy, live as his people here in Cranberry.

I can't wait to see where this next year leads, for it's truly good to be here!

Yours in Christ,

Pastor Halle Kluever +

Pastor Halle Kluever +



FROM THE PASTORS

Dear Hope Church Family,

A favorite scripture passage, that is also a line in a popular rock song (the Byrds, Turn, Turn, Turn) is Ecclesiastes 3:1: “For everything there is a season and a time for every matter under heaven.”

This past year was a time of transition, for Hope and for me, as I served the first three quarters of the year as your Interim Associate Pastor, and then as we welcomed Pastor Halle Kluever, I moved to the role of part time Visitation and Teaching Pastor.

For the first part of 2025 I enjoyed providing pastoral care, leading the Wednesday Bible Studies and a couple of evening studies. I led worship and preached a few weeks a month, and presided at a couple of funerals. From January to July, I made over 70 home or hospital visits.

In August I stepped down from the associate pastor position and joined the congregation in welcoming Pastor Halle. I transitioned into a new season, a background role as the Visitation & Teaching Pastor. This new position is very part time, serving only about ten hours a week, where I visited over 40 of our homebound and hospitalized in the final quarter of the year, and offered a stewardship book study in the fall, while helping in other ways as needed. I look forward to remaining in this role in 2026 as I continue to build relationships with our homebound while bringing them the Sacrament. I also enjoy opportunities to teach and will continue to offer quarterly book studies/ discussions during the program year and regularly participate in Coffee and Conversation during our Sunday faith formation hour.

Blessings to you in all the seasons of your life and faith.



Pastor Bob Zimmerman



Hope Lutheran Church
Annual Finance Report - 2025

	2025		2024	2023
	Actual	Budget	Actual	Actual
General and Youth Funds:				
Income				
Congregational Giving	\$ 1,038,186	\$ 961,763	\$ 957,017	\$ 904,598
Designated Giving-Gifts and Operations	\$ 37,874	\$ 14,364	\$ 33,727	\$ 18,681
Other (Interest, Grants, VBS, misc.)	\$ 30,687	\$ 24,157	\$ 34,740	\$ 16,540
Youth Donations and Fundraising	\$ 12,628	\$ 17,233	\$ 16,163	\$ 8,110
Total Income	\$ 1,119,375	\$ 1,017,517	\$ 1,041,647	\$ 947,928
Expenses				
Benevolence	\$ 30,636	\$ 29,700	\$ 29,259	\$ 29,245
Pastoral Staff Expenses	\$ 260,724	\$ 306,098	\$ 207,282	\$ 235,806
<i>Operating Expenses</i>				
Non-pastoral Staff & Taxes	\$ 276,674	\$ 304,117	\$ 286,034	\$ 255,109
Office (Supplies, Equipment, Software, Postage)	\$ 30,856	\$ 31,750	\$ 26,815	\$ 27,067
Church Exp. (Flowers, Candles, Coffee)	\$ 8,270	\$ 6,585	\$ 6,845	\$ 4,872
Music Expenses	\$ 2,494	\$ 4,450	\$ 2,477	\$ 3,844
Christian Education/Adult Ed/Bible School	\$ 9,400	\$ 13,550	\$ 8,316	\$ 8,172
Small Group and Social Ministries	\$ 1,917	\$ 3,240	\$ 1,580	\$ 1,387
Fellowship/Hospitality	\$ 6,119	\$ 8,000	\$ 6,601	\$ 4,929
Evangelism & Outreach	\$ 988	\$ 2,500	\$ 1,551	\$ 1,442
Worship	\$ 6,231	\$ 6,750	\$ 5,184	\$ 4,858
Stewardship & Finance and Consulting Fees	\$ 17,443	\$ 17,190	\$ 16,771	\$ 11,591
Public Relations & Advertising	\$ 5,729	\$ 8,059	\$ 4,262	\$ 5,510
Training & Seminars and Synod Assembly	\$ 6,087	\$ 5,650	\$ 1,443	\$ 1,759
<i>Sub-total Operating Expenses</i>	<i>\$ 372,208</i>	<i>\$ 411,841</i>	<i>\$ 367,879</i>	<i>\$ 330,540</i>
<i>Property & Bldg Maintenance</i>				
Utilities	\$ 36,328	\$ 32,839	\$ 29,896	\$ 34,294
Insurance	\$ 10,275	\$ 11,862	\$ 10,170	\$ 8,190
Property Expenses	\$ 34,334	\$ 59,365	\$ 75,058	\$ 44,997
Monthly Mortgage Payments	\$ 145,302	\$ 145,302	\$ 145,302	\$ 145,302
Furnishing/Computer Expense	\$ 7,623	\$ 5,850	\$ 5,177	\$ 2,825
<i>Sub-Total Property Expense</i>	<i>\$ 233,862</i>	<i>\$ 255,218</i>	<i>\$ 265,602</i>	<i>\$ 235,607</i>
Payments made from Gifted Funds	\$ 31,459	\$ 13,819	\$ 30,391	\$ 17,005
Youth Expenses	\$ 16,167	\$ 25,840	\$ 26,945	\$ 20,087
Gifted funds transferred to Building Fund	\$ 2,270	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Gifted funds transferred to Investment in Ministry Fund	\$ 9,600	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Total Expenses	\$ 956,927	\$ 1,042,516	\$ 927,357	\$ 868,290
Net Income (Loss) General/Youth Funds	\$ 162,449	\$ (24,999)	\$ 114,290	\$ 79,638
Building Fund:				
Income: Donations/Grants/Fundraising/Interest	\$ 168,222	\$ 139,696	\$ 142,433	\$ 107,790
Funds Transferred from General Fund*	\$ 2,270			
Net Income (Loss) Building Fund	\$ 170,492	\$ 139,696	\$ 142,433	\$ 107,790
Columbarium Fund:				
Income: Sales	\$ 5,255	\$ 8,000	\$ 6,708	\$ 5,013
Expenses: Maint. & Landscaping	\$ (2,298)	\$ (2,000)	\$ -	\$ (20)
Net Income (Loss) Columbarium Fund	\$ 2,957	\$ 6,000	\$ 6,708	\$ 4,993
TOTAL--GENERAL, YOUTH, BLDG. & COLUMBARIUM				
Income	\$ 1,292,852	\$ 1,165,213	\$ 1,190,787	\$ 1,060,731
Expenses	\$ 956,954	\$ 1,044,516	\$ 927,357	\$ 868,310
INCOME/(LOSS) ALL FUNDS BEFORE DEPRECIATION	\$ 335,898	\$ 120,697	\$ 263,431	\$ 192,421
Depreciation Expense	\$ (186,065)	\$ -	\$ (186,065)	\$ (186,065)
NET (LOSS) ALL FUNDS AFTER DEPRECIATION	\$ 149,832	\$ 120,697	\$ 77,365	\$ 6,356

CASH BALANCES AT YEAR-END			
	2025	2024	2023
General Operating Funds	\$ 648,415	\$ 490,277	\$ 376,588
Designated - Youth, Memorials, Operations, etc.	\$ 169,507	\$ 172,721	\$ 154,077
Capital Appeals Building Fund	\$ 553,699	\$ 383,207	\$ 240,774
Total Cash Balance	\$ 1,371,621	\$ 1,046,206	\$ 771,438

MORTGAGE - PRINCIPAL BALANCE AT YEAR-END			
	2025	2024	2023
Principal Balance	\$ 1,392,470	\$ 1,481,923	\$ 1,567,823

INVESTMENT FUND

Hope's Investment in Ministry Fund continues to grow, thanks to generous donations from members of the congregation and investment returns.

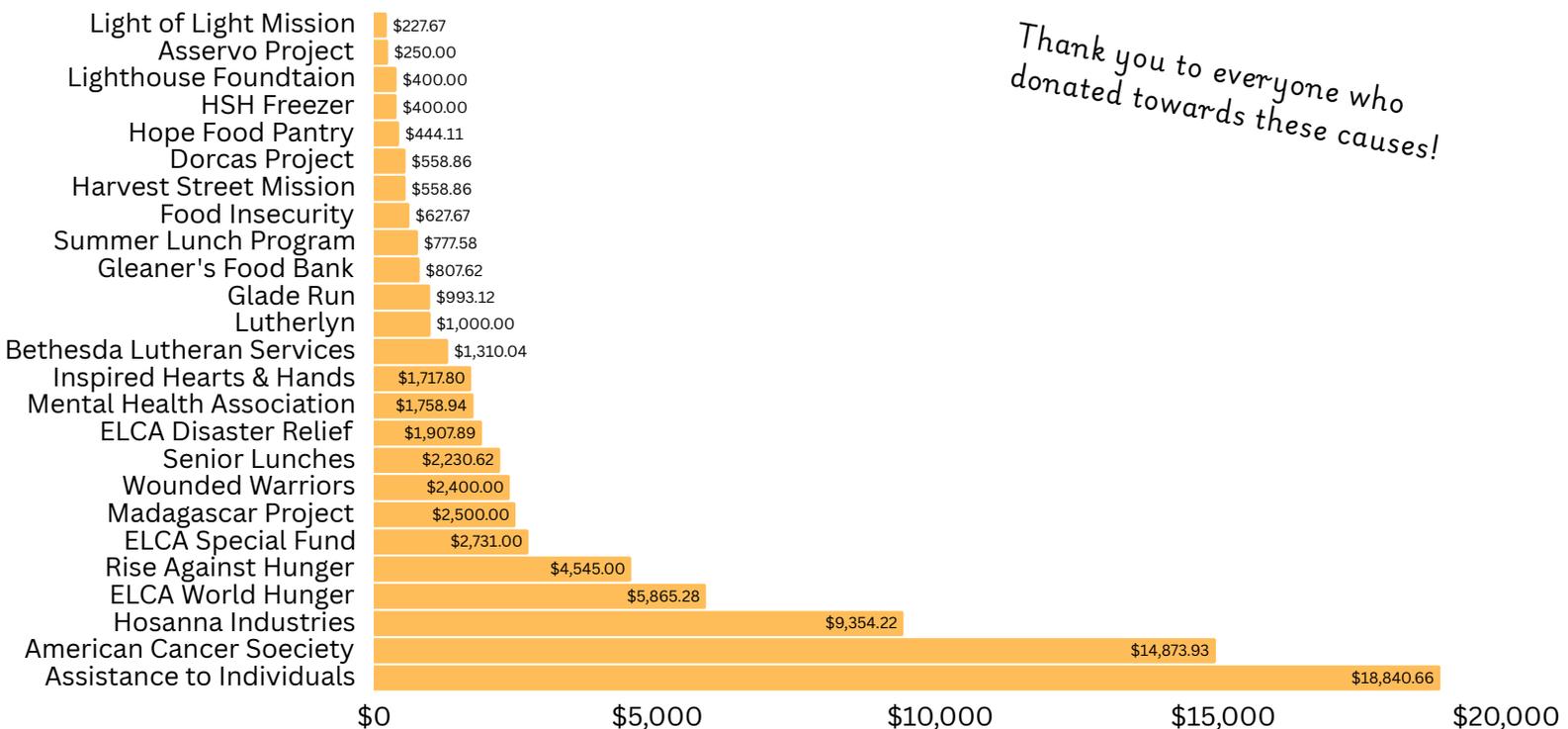
The Fund is invested in a mix of equity and fixed-income investments with a medium-risk portfolio. The Fund now at a point where the accumulated investment income has reached a level where it can begin distributing donations to support various missions. The Fund can distribute an amount up to 4% of the account balance as of the end of the prior year, but no more than the accumulated investment income. This means that the Fund will be able to distribute up to \$9,793 during 2026.

Hope's Investment in Ministry Committee is very grateful for the congregation's support of this Fund as a way to extend our ability to fulfill our mission and to help others in need.

Investment in Ministry Fund:

	2025	2024
Balance as of January 1	\$207,090	\$92,682
Income:		
Donations/ Grants	\$6,201	\$109,724
Investment income	23,906	1,589
Transfer from gifted funds	9,600	3,200
Total income	\$39,707	\$114,513
Expenses: professional fees	(1,968)	(106)
Net income (loss)	\$37,739	\$114,407
Balance as of December 31	\$244,829	\$207,090
Accumulated income as of December 31	\$25,868	\$3,930

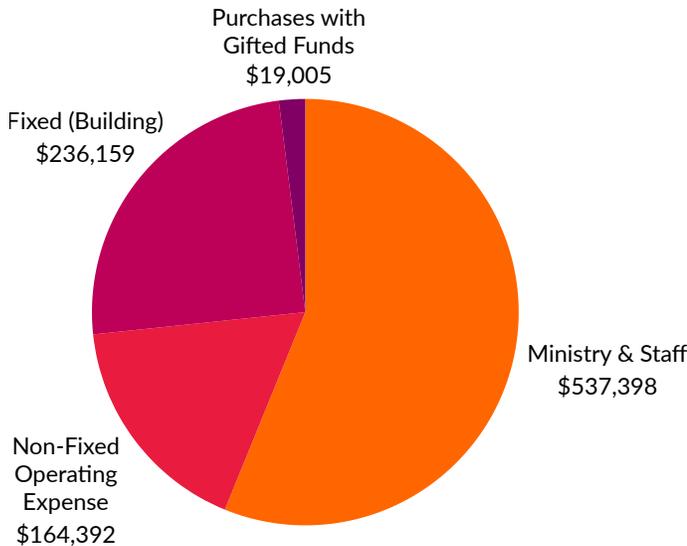
RADICAL GENEROSITY



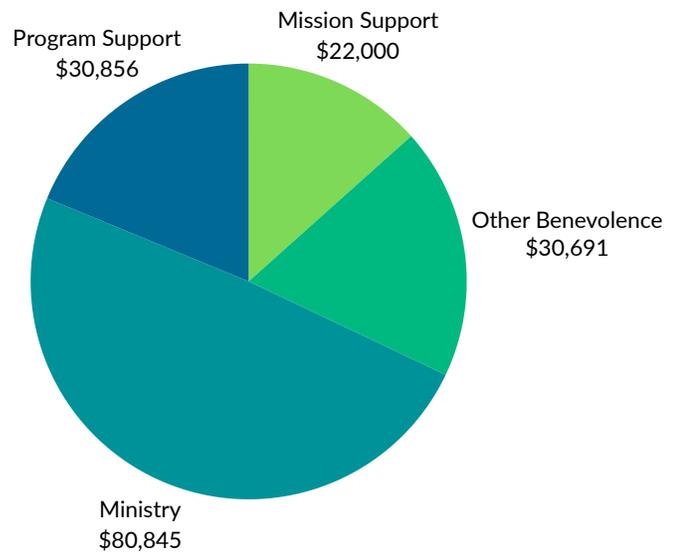
Thank you to everyone who donated towards these causes!

EXPENSE REPORT

Total 2025 Expenses:
\$956,954



Breakdown of Non-Fixed Operating Expenses: \$164,392



Stewardship & Finance Updates

Case Sabatini completed a procedural review of the year 2024. They identified no adverse findings and that the church has a strong checks and balances system. They provided a single suggestion, opening a line of credit. The Finance team felt that the cost of doing so would outweigh the benefit and will not persue. Please contact Carol Zimmerman for any questions.

Thank You for Pledging!



During 2025, the Stewardship Committee focused on several primary activities:

- Led the Congregation through our annual pledge appeal during the fall season with a focus on raising additional funds to pay down the mortgage prior to refinancing in 2026.
- Pledges provided for our Annual Appeal increased again over the prior year indicating not just monetary commitment but growth in faith and spirituality.
- Total numbers of pledges were 215 versus 210 last year.
- Total dollars pledged was \$ \$818,157 versus \$797,000 last year.
- An additional \$78,120 was pledged as a special gift to pay down our mortgage balance.
- We are moving along with the digital age communicating much more over video and with more people sending in pledges and giving through online methods.
- Many thanks to those who completed Connect Cards indicating where they are interested in learning more about our in ministry and mission at Hope.
- Our Stewardship team continued to post profiles of people who are active in our Church, called Gracious Givers, so all in our Congregation can get to know them and inspire others around ways they might get involved in Congregational activities.
- Our team meets approximately eight times each year; we pray, enjoy some time together and look for ways to inspire ourselves and others to be better stewards of all that God has provided to us. We welcome others to join us and bring some fresh ideas about what we do.

LIFE OF THE CHURCH

Worship Highlights

- Welcomed Pastor Halle and Brian Helsel to the worship team!
- Participation in the Adult Choir continues to increase
- Lay participation is holding steady, but we are always looking for folks to help with assistant ministers, lectors, and altar guild duties.
- New baptismal font installed and running smoothly.
- Funds for new altar brass were generously donated and have been replaced.
- If you have questions or comments concerning the service you attend, please direct them to David Best, 724-752-1816, 724-747-8598 (cell) or dbester4@zoominternet.net

2025 Confirmation Class



Hope's Milestones

- Baptisms performed: 13
- Funerals performed: 11
- Weddings performed: 10
- Confirmed Youth: 16
- First Communion: 25
- New Members: 49
- Sunday School Participants: 185

2025 First Communion



SOCIAL OUTREACH ACCOMPLISHMENTS

The Social Ministry Outreach Committee is responsible for giving leadership to the Social Outreach program of Hope Lutheran Church as it strives to extend Christian compassion and helpfulness to those in need, in our local communities and around the world.

This year, Social Outreach was divided into 3 groups; GWOH, Feed our Neighbors, and Community Outreach.



- Card Ministry: 19 members sent approximately 150-200 cards, 20 shut-ins receive a cards monthly - Carol Flynn
- Blood drives - Vitalant hosted 2 drives this year with a total of 37 donations, helping 111 patients - Carol Flynn
- Quilting Hope delivered a beautiful 64" square quilt to Inspired Hearts & Hands that will be raffled off to support their ministry - Patti Black
- Angel tree delivered 132 gifts to Glade Run Foundation and Inspired Hearts and Hands - Patti Black
- Hosanna Industries partnered with Hope Church September 20th aided a family in need: 11 volunteers, adults & teens sealed a roof, replaced a kitchen floor and fixed a ceiling. \$3,215 was raised by our ministry, \$1768 was donated by council - Elizabeth Deal
- Relay for Life and Hope Golf Tournament combined raised \$20,356 for 2025 - Karen Johanknecht
- MHA, (Mental Health Assoc. of Beaver County) in its 4th year, serves their members with activities, lunch and dessert each monthly - Jean Adams
- Dorcas Project makes Alzheimer's lap blankets and adult bibs for residents at Passavant - Ruth Pastula
- Play It Forward successfully collected gently used toys in December - Alex Kastner
- Helping Hands - collection of monetary gifts & gift cards used to support our families in need - Pastors

2025 Feed Our Neighbors:

- Summer Lunch program fed students 2 days a week, averaging 16 students per day June-August - Angie Wentz
- Rolling Road Senior Lunch - lunch is prepared and delivered on Tuesday to 25-36 seniors each week - Angie Wentz
- Cranberry Twp. Senior Lunch - Hope served 14 meals, 18-25 seniors are served the first Friday of the month. Food is prepared by volunteers. Sandi Kuritzky along with 3 volunteers prepare and serve
- Gleaners Food Pantry in Cranberry collects donations of food items and cleaning products that are distributed to local families each month - Barb Pezze
- Hope's Food Pantry quietly feeds our families in need. If your family is experiencing food insecurities, please contact one of the Pastors - Angela Romza
- Pleasant Valley Men's Shelter - a long time outreach program that serves men every other month with a home cooked meal prepared and served by volunteers: Alicia and Jason Demchack

GOD'S WORK OUR HANDS

God's Work, Our Hands are services projects that are provided for Hope attendees on the second Sunday of each month in the Community Hall. These projects serve those in need in a variety of ways and with various projects.

- Over 429 volunteer hours were generated through Hope's God's Work, Our Hands Program in 2025.
- These second Sunday of the month service events in Hope's Community Hall provided adults & youth with a variety of service projects to help those in need while offering a time of fellowship & relationship building. Projects included: bagged lunch packing, lasagna making, card making, donation sorting, quilt square coloring, senior activity booklet making & table tent coloring, and chocolate covered pretzel dipping.
- Over \$6,000 was raised for Hope's Rise Against Hunger Food Packing Event, 10,000+ meals were packed people in the Philippines
- Generous donations of Non-perishable Food, Household Goods, Hygiene Products, Youth Clothing, & sneakers, and more were collected and distributed.
- Canned Goods & Monetary donations were collected for the Souper Bowl of Caring Event to benefit local food pantries.
- Many volunteers participated in off-site service projects throughout the year to help other non-profit organizations with a variety of work projects and feeding the hungry/homeless in Pittsburgh.
- All thanks and praise to God for the time, generosity and support of our Hope Family as we work together to be the hands & feet of Jesus in our world!



BEHIND THE SCENES

Property Team

- No extensive improvements to the church this year, which is a great thing!
- Worked on increasing budgeted funds for a garage update, if able to complete in 2026.
- Continuously monitoring any updates around the church.
- Many thanks to the Pack 406 scouts for their help keeping our grounds beautiful each year.
- We are always looking more help! Reach out to Scott Milk, if interested.



Safety Team

- The team has monitored most Sunday services and Saturday service this year.
- Upgrades were accomplished this year. There was a new computer installed in the volunteer room to replace the current one since the speed had degraded to become near unusable. The new computer has increased the speed of the cameras and helped the resolution.
- We are continually making improvements to our security at Hope and plan on more improvements in the coming year. All for the continued safety of our members, and community who use our building.

Columbarium Updates

- To date, 34 niches have been sold along with 4 plaques
- In 2025, 2 niches were sold
- After Rome shared liability, \$2,627.50 in sales were collected
- A memorial bench was placed outside the columbarium
- Niches and plaques are still available for purchase! Contact Brittany in the office for more information

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you." Matthew 28:19-20

Dear HLC Family,

Christian education aims to educate individuals in the Word of God, enable persons to continue to grow in their faith throughout their life, and share with others that Good News.

It has been a privilege to be invited into being an integral part of this important ministry! As we continue together to live out this work, we have been taking the opportunity to take a step back and look at how, when, and even why we offer our educational programs.

I was happy to have all the Sunday School teachers from last year readily volunteer to again teach age 3 through high school this year. We also added a qualified group of substitutes/helpers! After using lectionary-based curriculum it was decided to move back to basic Bible stories. We have also moved the three different start/end times for Sunday School to all classes beginning at 10am and have had a good response to this adjustment. In an ongoing effort to provide faith formation opportunities for all ages, we have added adult Coffee and Conversation with the pastors on the 3rd and 4th Sundays of the month. Plans are also being developed as to best ways to add intentional basic faith formation for our littlest members and their families with a revised Little Lambs program. Our Sunday School offerings this year are being donated to ELCA Good Gifts. More information about that giving opportunity can be found on our website or elca.org.

It was simply a delight to work with our children and youth, as well as our talented music director, on this year's Christmas Program! We hope to build on what we learned this year for future programs. I also truly enjoy teaming up with our youth and family ministry coordinator. Our work naturally overlaps and we continue to find ways to support your faith formation at Hope and at home, such as with the take-home Advent wreath & devotions kits offered this past Advent season. It is wonderful to have Hope's staff be a team effort in all things!

Plans are in the works for First Communion instruction to be an interactive learning opportunity for both children and their parents/ families. And last, but not least, coordination of another wonderful Vacation Bible School is now in process!

Thank you again to our Christian Ed Committee, to each of our teachers, volunteers, and all staff, especially Pastor Ron and Pastor Halle as they faithfully lead us on our collective faith journey!

Respectfully submitted,

Deacon Elizabeth Caywood, ACC

Deacon Elizabeth Caywood, ACC



YOUTH & FAMILY MINISTRY

Hello HLC Family,

It is my pleasure to be writing to you during my first year as Youth and Family Ministry Coordinator. This has been a wonderful opportunity for me to continue my faith journey by helping others along their own faith journey. This year has been filled with faith building, serving with a servant's heart, fellowship and relationship building.

This year the youth have participated in two mission trips. One in the Appalachia community of West Virginia serving with Praying Pelican Missions and the second serving with Hosanna Industries in several different communities in Western PA. They continued to serve others with Harvest Street Mission in the city of Pittsburgh, and through small service projects during Youth Nights.

We added programming by focusing on each age group. Youth Nights are currently happening on the first (grades 6-12) and third (grades K-5) Sundays of each month. The monthly High School Bible study is slowly growing, and a dinner component was added to encourage learning cooking skills and relationship building while preparing a meal together. In hopes to strengthen relationships, we have added a monthly Middle School Bible study with desserts to enjoy while growing in faith and fellowship.

The youth program is growing past just the school ages. This year we added a new family activity: Kennywood Holiday Lights. Where 8 families joined together for an affordable night under the lights. We also stretched the Operation Christmas Child across the whole program by having a shopping challenge for the Middle School and High School Youth followed by the Elementary Youth and Families packing party, where everyone enjoyed a pizza party with duck pin bowling before working together to pack 34 shoeboxes! Our boxes were sent to children in Tanzania. More activities and events geared towards the whole family are in the works for the Youth and Family Ministry program.

2025 was a continued year of change. We continue to adjust to the two coordinator roles between Youth and Family Ministry and Christian Education. However, the two roles still work in tandem to better focus on details of each program. I enjoy working closely with Deacon Beth to continue to provide quality programming to our youth and families as everyone continues to learn and grow in faith.

Not everything changed, we still had favorite activities planned like the spring lock-in, trunk-or-treat, fall outings, and Christmas parties. And we will continue to do what we love and enjoy at Hope Lutheran Church as we allow the Holy Spirit to work through us to share the good news of Jesus and his love and compassion for all. I am excited to see where the next year takes us in the Youth and Family Ministry Program.

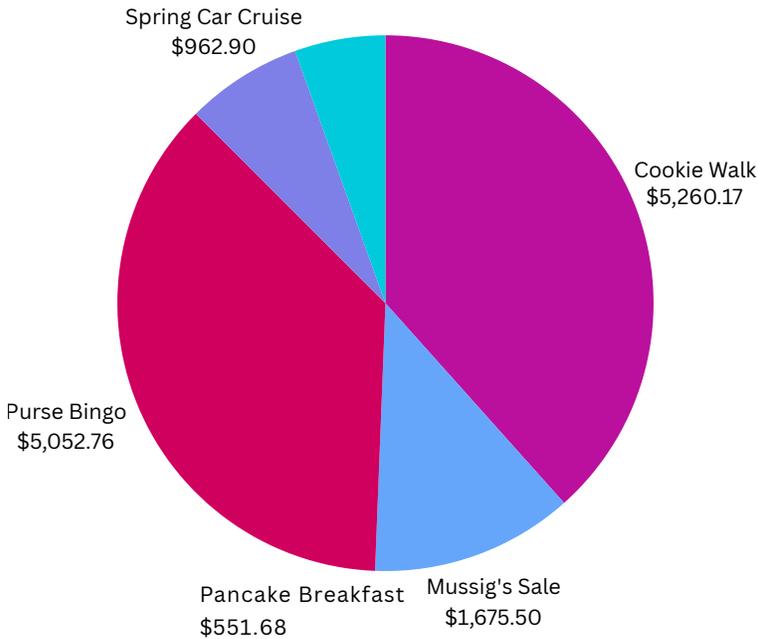
Peace and Love,



Jessica (Jess) Freeman



YOUTH/CE HIGHLIGHTS



Top Service Projects of 2025:

- Harvest Street Mission
- Play it Forward Fundraiser - led by Alex Kastner
- Mission Trip to the Appalachia with Praying Pelicans
- Mission Trip to Johnstown, PA
- Operation Christmas Child box packing



Kids Programs & Events 2025:

- Trunk or Tr'Easter
- Car Cruise
- VBS
- Trunk or Treat
- Yeck's Farm Outing
- Cookie Walk
- Family Christmas Program
- Holiday Lights at Kennywood Trip



Thank you for supporting our mission trips!

MUSIC MINISTRY

Dear HLC Family,

What a privilege it has been to share in worship and music making with all of you this past year. I joined the staff as music director in August, and everyone was quick to offer so many welcomes, introductions, and to make me feel at home. I'm extremely proud of the work the choir has done this past year, and it has been a blessing to work with them each Wednesday evening. The choir sang a great deal of unaccompanied music, and they grew in their abilities throughout the process. As I reflect upon this past year at Hope, I am overwhelmed by how talented our congregation is, and how willing they are to share their gifts! Working with Joyful Noise has been a great joy of mine, as our instrumental musicians in the congregation are talented and passionate. We played for All Saints Day and for Christmas Eve, and you know how special the addition of instruments is to the worship experience! The children's choir got underway this fall, having presented some excellent singing as part of their Christmas pageant. We have some talented young singers in our congregation, and I look forward to working with them again in the new year! We had a wonderful series of recitals from guest artists, and many talented musicians who shared special music with us. Special thanks to Beth Wehr for her excellent work on the organ, piano, and accompanying the choir. Thanks to Rob Lynch, who served as our Saturday musician, and welcome to Jonathan Taylor, who will fill that role in 2026. Hope Lutheran is truly a special place, and I'm looking forward to all the good things in store for the new year!



Bryan Helsel
Music Director



CONGREGATIONAL MEETING MINUTES

Saturday - December 6, 2025

The congregational meeting was called to order by Board President Elizabeth Bauer at 5:51 PM. Elizabeth explained that the congregation would vote on the March 2025 congregational meeting minutes, the 2026 budget, and the election of the 2026 Board members. She also explained the slight changes that were made to how motions are presented and seconded.

The first item to approve was the March 2025 congregational meeting minutes. The minutes were included in the Annual Budget & Election Meeting packet. Elizabeth Bauer made a motion to approve the March 2025 congregation meeting minutes. It has been moved and seconded by Chris McVay. Votes were then cast on the paper ballots regarding the March 2025 congregational meeting minutes.

The second item to vote on was the 2026 budget. Elizabeth Bauer made a motion to approve the 2026 budget. It has been moved and seconded by Bri Buccini. Elizabeth invited Bill Feathers to present the budget to the congregation. Bill explained that Hope is on solid financial footing, thanks to the continued generosity of our members. So far this year, giving is on track to meet or exceed our budgeted income. Hope is in good shape going into 2026. Finance has noticed a decline in regular weekly giving, as families are dealing with inflation and other economic challenges. For the 2026 budget, finance is budgeting an increase of 2.2% of income, 3% for giving. Salary budget is based on an overall increase of 3.5%, matching assumed inflation, plus benefits and medical, assumed to increase by 10%. One of the larger year-over-year changes is consulting fees of \$20K. For Building and Property, they are budgeted to increase by 14%, which includes timely repair and maintenance, garage Eagle Scout project, and utilities, specifically electric, assuming a 15% increase. Regarding youth expenses, the increase reflects a Board request to shift the focus a bit more toward programming and mission-directed activities instead of fundraising in an effort to rebuild the youth program, especially for younger students. The final topic mentioned was the mortgage. Originally \$2.4MM in 2017, it is currently \$1.4MM and expected to be around \$1.3MM at the time of the interest-rate reset. The interest rate resets every 5 years, with the next reset occurring in October 2026. Finance expects the interest rate to increase significantly from our current rate of 3.875% which is why Hope is planning to pay down a significant portion before that rate change to avoid a large increase in the monthly payment.

Bill then asked if there were any questions. There was a question noting that the mortgage amount had not changed from the 2025 budget to the 2026 budget, and why the number remained the same. Bill pointed out that the paydown's goal is to keep our mortgage amount at or below what we are currently paying, and Finance wanted to budget the higher amount. Another question was asked about what is done with excess funds in the building fund. Bill explained that Finance has been putting excess funds into CDs or the money market account. Another question was asked about what the \$20k in consulting fees includes. Pastor Ron Brown explained that we are looking at our mission as a congregation and looking at outside groups to help us. These funds also include a website overhaul, noting that if our website were to go down in any way, we would not have the ability to get it fixed. There were no further questions, and votes were made regarding the 2026 budget.

Elizabeth then provided an update on pledge totals. 214 pledge cards were filled out, which is an increase of 4 from last year. They have raised \$700,000 towards the operating budget, with an increase of \$15,000 from last year. The building fund is up \$6,000 from last year. Overall, we raised \$21,000 over last year's pledge. They also received \$78,000 in one-time pledges for the mortgage paydown.

The last item to vote on was Board elections. Elizabeth Bauer made a motion to elect the 2026 Board Members. It has been moved and seconded by Carol Flynn. There are three candidates for three open positions on the 2026 Board. The bios are available in the meeting packet. Elizabeth opened the floor for additional nominations. No additional nominations were presented at the 5:00 PM service. Votes were made on the paper ballots regarding the 2026 board elections. Votes will be tallied upon completion of the Sunday, December 7, 2025, 11:00 AM congregation meeting.

Elizabeth Bauer made a motion to recess the meeting until the 9:00 AM service congregational meeting. It has been moved and seconded by Chris McVay. The meeting recessed at 6:20 PM until the 9:00 AM service on December 7th.

CONGREGATIONAL MEETING MINUTES

Sunday - December 7, 2025, 9:00 AM Service

The congregational meeting was called to order by Board President Elizabeth Bauer at 10:05 AM. Elizabeth explained that the congregation would vote on the March 2025 congregational meeting minutes, the 2026 budget, and the election of the 2026 Board members. She also explained the slight changes that were made to how motions are presented and seconded.

The first item to approve was the March 2025 congregational meeting minutes. The minutes were included in the Annual Budget & Election Meeting packet. Elizabeth Bauer made a motion to approve the March 2025 congregation meeting minutes. It has been moved and seconded by Adam Smith. Votes were then cast on the paper ballots regarding the March 2025 congregational meeting minutes.

The second item to vote on was the 2026 budget. Elizabeth Bauer made a motion to approve the 2026 budget. It has been moved and seconded by Tom Bell. Elizabeth invited Bill Feathers to present the budget to the congregation. Bill explained that Hope is on solid financial footing, thanks to the continued generosity of our members. So far this year, giving is on track to meet or exceed our budgeted income. Hope is in good shape going into 2026. Finance has noticed a decline in regular weekly giving, as families are dealing with inflation and other economic challenges. For the 2026 budget, finance is budgeting an increase of 2.2% of income, 3% for giving. Salary budget is based on an overall increase of 3.5%, matching assumed inflation, plus benefits and medical, assumed to increase by 10%. One of the larger year-over-year changes is consulting fees of \$20K. For Building and Property, they are budgeted to increase by 14%, which includes timely repair and maintenance, garage Eagle Scout project, and utilities, specifically electric, assuming a 15% increase. Regarding youth expenses, the increase reflects a Board request to shift the focus a bit more toward programming and mission-directed activities instead of fundraising in an effort to rebuild the youth program, especially for younger students. The final topic mentioned was the mortgage. Originally \$2.4MM in 2017, it is currently \$1.4MM and expected to be around \$1.3MM at the time of the interest-rate reset. The interest rate resets every 5 years, with the next reset occurring in October 2026. Finance expects the interest rate to increase significantly from our current rate of 3.875% which is why Hope is planning to pay down a significant portion before that rate change to avoid a large increase in the monthly payment.

Bill then asked if there were any questions. There was a question asking what Finance is going to do with any excess income for the 2025 budget. Bill explained we could add it to the mortgage paydown, or the board will work with Finance to allocate those funds appropriately. Another question was asked regarding what part of the budget goes towards the synod. Bill explained that this item can be found in the benevolence section of the 2026 budget. There were no further questions, and votes were made regarding the 2026 budget.

Elizabeth then provided an update on pledge totals. 214 pledge cards were filled out, which is an increase of 4 from last year. They have raised \$700,000 towards the operating budget, with an increase of \$15,000 from last year. The building fund is up \$6,000 from last year. Overall, we raised \$21,000 over last year's pledge. They also received \$78,000 in one-time pledges for the mortgage paydown.

The last item to vote on was Board elections. Elizabeth Bauer made a motion to elect the 2026 Board Members. It has been moved and seconded by Paul Wonderland. There are three candidates for three open positions on the 2026 Board. The bios are available in the meeting packet. Elizabeth opened the floor for additional nominations. No additional nominations were presented at the 9:00 AM service. Votes were made on the paper ballots regarding the 2026 board elections. Votes will be tallied upon completion of the Sunday, December 7, 2025, 11:00 AM congregation meeting.

Elizabeth Bauer made a motion to recess the meeting until the 11:00 AM service congregational meeting. It has been moved and seconded by Adam Smith. The meeting recessed at 10:29 AM until the 11:00 AM service on December 7th.

CONGREGATIONAL MEETING MINUTES

Sunday - December 7, 2025, 11:00 AM Service

The congregational meeting was called to order by Board President Elizabeth Bauer at 12:05 AM. Elizabeth explained that the congregation would vote on the March 2025 congregational meeting minutes, the 2026 budget, and the election of the 2026 Board members. She also explained the slight changes that were made to how motions are presented and seconded.

The first item to approve was the March 2025 congregational meeting minutes. The minutes were included in the Annual Budget & Election Meeting packet. Elizabeth Bauer made a motion to approve the March 2025 congregation meeting minutes. It has been moved and seconded by Jeanne O'Brien. Votes were then cast on the paper ballots regarding the March 2025 congregational meeting minutes.

The second item to vote on was the 2026 budget. Elizabeth Bauer made a motion to approve the 2026 budget. It has been moved and seconded by Bob Zimmerman. Elizabeth invited Bill Feathers to present the budget to the congregation. Bill explained that Hope is on solid financial footing, thanks to the continued generosity of our members. So far this year, giving is on track to meet or exceed our budgeted income. Hope is in good shape going into 2026. Finance has noticed a decline in regular weekly giving, as families are dealing with inflation and other economic challenges. For the 2026 budget, finance is budgeting an increase of 2.2% of income, 3% for giving. Salary budget is based on an overall increase of 3.5%, matching assumed inflation, plus benefits and medical, assumed to increase by 10%. One of the larger year-over-year changes is consulting fees of \$20K. For Building and Property, they are budgeted to increase by 14%, which includes timely repair and maintenance, garage Eagle Scout project, and utilities, specifically electric, assuming a 15% increase. Regarding youth expenses, the increase reflects a Board request to shift the focus a bit more toward programming and mission-directed activities instead of fundraising in an effort to rebuild the youth program, especially for younger students. The final topic mentioned was the mortgage. Originally \$2.4MM in 2017, it is currently \$1.4MM and expected to be around \$1.3MM at the time of the interest-rate reset. The interest rate resets every 5 years, with the next reset occurring in October 2026. Finance expects the interest rate to increase significantly from our current rate of 3.875% which is why Hope is planning to pay down a significant portion before that rate change to avoid a large increase in the monthly payment.

Bill then asked if there were any questions. There was a question asking about what happened with the website. Pastor Ron explained that nothing has happened with the website; rather, if anything were to happen, such as it going down, we would not have a way to resolve the issue. There were no further questions, and votes were made regarding the 2026 budget.

Elizabeth then provided an update on pledge totals. 214 pledge cards were filled out, which is an increase of 4 from last year. They have raised \$700,000 towards the operating budget, with an increase of \$15,000 from last year. The building fund is up \$6,000 from last year. Overall, we raised \$21,000 over last year's pledge. They also received \$78,000 in one-time pledges for the mortgage paydown.

The last item to vote on was Board elections. Elizabeth Bauer made a motion to elect the 2026 Board Members. It has been moved and seconded by Rose Martin. There are three candidates for three open positions on the 2026 Board. The bios are available in the meeting packet. Elizabeth opened the floor for additional nominations. No additional nominations were presented at the 9:00 AM service. Votes were made on the paper ballots regarding the 2026 board elections. Votes will be tallied upon completion of the Sunday, December 7, 2025, 11:00 AM congregation meeting. Elizabeth Bauer made a motion to adjourn the meeting. It has been moved and seconded by Jason Demchak. The meeting adjourned at 12:28 PM.

CONGREGATIONAL MEETING MINUTES

RESULTS OF VOTING

PAPER BALLOTS AND ELECTRONIC BALLOTS WERE TALLIED FOLLOWING THE MEETING. ALL ITEMS ON THE BALLOT WERE APPROVED.

MARCH 2025 MEETING MINUTES WERE APPROVED WITH 100% OF THE VOTE:

- APPROVE: 185
- NOT APPROVE: 0
- ABSTAIN: 3

2026 BUDGET APPROVAL WAS APPROVED WITH 99.4% OF THE VOTE:

- APPROVE: 181
- NOT APPROVE: 4
- ABSTAIN: 3

2025 BOARD BALLOT – ALL 4 CANDIDATES WERE APPROVED WITH THE FOLLOWING NUMBER OF VOTES:

JOHN BLOUGH:

- APPROVE: 185
- NOT APPROVE: 0
- ABSTAIN: 3

JEFF KARCHER:

- APPROVE: 184
- NOT APPROVE: 0
- ABSTAIN: 4

BARB PEZZE:

- APPROVE: 182
- NOT APPROVE: 0
- ABSTAIN: 6

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED,
MICHAEL DERRICO
HOPE BOARD SECRETARY

THANK YOU TO OUR CHAIR LEADERS AND BOARD MEMBERS!

2025 Committee Chairs

David Best - Worship

Jessica Randall & Troy Kroll - Youth

Sam Hurst - Christian Education

Angie Wentz - Social Outreach

Tom Majeski - Stewardship

Scott Milk - Property

Darrell Miller - Security

Tim Detisch - Hope Investment in
Ministry Fund



Hope's 2025 Board

Elizabeth Bauer - President

Todd Kane - Vice President

Michael Derrico - Secretary

Carol Zimmerman - Treasurer

John Blough

Judy Buccini

Chriss Dishong

Jeff Karcher

Barb Pezze

Bryan Sandmann

Jon Vogel



HOPE

EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

Growing Together with Hope

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