



**PRESBYTERIAN
WOMEN**

Presbyterian Women

By Iris Hymel,
Moderator

Your Presbyterian Women continue to meet on the first Wednesday of the month to study the *Sacred Encounters* Horizon Bible Study Series. We participated in the Seafarer's Box Mission Project by packing and wrapping the gift boxes.

We would love to have you meet with us. We meet in person in the Parlor and by Zoom if you are unable to join us in person. Please let me know and I will send you an invitation. All you have to do is click the invitation link I send. If I can do it, believe me, so can you.

Merry Christmas to all.

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PASTOR'S CORNER

Happy New Year friends! I pray that your holiday season has been joyful and filled with all the good things in life including but not limited to family gatherings, great food, and lots of laughs. I also pray that this new year is filled with promise, hope, and many, many opportunities to share the love of Christ with everyone and to feel the peace of Christ in your hearts.

As you know, this is my last newsletter offering for New Hope Presbyterian Church. I will be preaching my final sermon here on January 14th, and then moving on to a new call in a new place.

I was called and began serving New Hope on August 11th, 2014. Since then, I have had the blessing and privilege of sharing in the life of this congregation. This time has been filled with laughter, and tears. There have been stories to share, times to remember, and opportunities to grow over these many years. All of these I do and will treasure wherever I go and whatever I do.

Along the way, there have also been many lessons. I would like to share two of these lessons here, and I pray they are read and heard in the way I have taken them.

The first lesson I am taking away is the real value of relationships. This may seem obvious, but I'm not sure it is understood as deeply as it should be.

By nature, I am an introvert. I am very comfortable being alone with my books, my hobbies, my dogs, and my family. For a large portion of my life, I faced the world during the day, and then ran home for safety. I was not terribly concerned about making friends or attending social functions. As a matter of fact, I often sat near the exit so that I could escape at the soonest opportunity.

Any friends I made were usually made at work. The upside is that I had the advantage of working with people every day that I, mostly, enjoyed being around. On the other hand, whenever my job moved me, I lost friends. These were not lifelong connections.

During my time at New Hope, I have observed, and even become part of, some very strong relationships filled with grace. I have come to understand the need to have friends to laugh with, to cry with, to share burdens with, and to just share life with. There have been weekly lunch gatherings, talks around my desk, and just simple passing moments to reflect on for years. I have observed the need, a need fulfilled here, for the sharing of thoughts in a safe place. Friends have been able to have discussions, disagreements, and problems worked out in grace filled gatherings. I have seen friendships survive hurricanes, a pandemic, and even moves to different cities and states. It has been truly amazing. Relationships, I believe, are at the very heart of what Christ's church/gathering is all about.

There is another lesson I am taking away based on New Hope's relationships. I have observed a challenging phenomenon. The wonderful relationships that fill the pews of New Hope are very comfortable. Many of them are so comfortable that folks have forgotten or neglected to seek out and build new relationships.

As a construction manager, or in any job I had prior to serving at New Hope, whenever I left one position, I found myself in an uncomfortable situation of having to meet new people, learn how to trust strangers, and to carefully find the new boundaries. During those times, there were times when I was, or at least I felt, very alone. I had to bear my bad days and my good days in silence. When I faced challenges, they were on my shoulders alone.

In our lives, we all need other people. None of us lives in a vacuum. From our birth and our reliance on our parents, to our need for teachers and school yard friends, to adulthood and the building of our families, or the construction of our circles of friends, we need others. None of us live totally alone. For those who are alone, most if not all, need someone.

It is in each of our best interest, and it is how God's Kingdom is built, to build

relationships with new friends. We are not called to rest in our current circles, but let our circles grow. I'm not just talking about the casual acquaintances at Starbucks, though those are places to begin, but rather I'm talking about relationships that grow deeper in the same way that streams become rivers become lakes become oceans. Real relationships do not hinge on always agreeing or even liking the same things. They are about love, trust, and a mutuality that transcends geography, time, politics, sports, and more. Loving relationships come from and move back to the hearts of people.

I want to emphasize that the relationship we have are of tremendous value, but we all need to be open to new possibilities in new friends. There is plenty of Christ's love to go around, and we all need to share it with those we know and love, but also with the stranger.

Friends, and I sincerely mean it when I say friends, I will miss each of you. I will cherish the memories that I am taking. I will apply the lessons I have learned. And I will certainly share New Hope with each and every person I meet. I love you, and will never forget you. Farewell to you all. Amen.



Building Congregational Vitality by Debra Caldwell

In the past, congregational vitality was measured by worship attendance, giving per attendee, total membership, and other metrics. It is true that one mark of a vital congregation is a sustainable financial situation. Session and the Congregational Vitality committee have pursued methods to monetize the church and increase our financial stability.

Vitality is also measured by time and talent. New Hope relies on the work of a few people who attend meetings, hammer out (and worry about) the budget, plan events, cut the grass, and do a hundred other tasks to maintain the church as well as do missional work. Unfortunately, we have experienced a decline in elders and volunteers. Those who continue to serve are overworked and overwhelmed. We need all hands on deck to revitalize New Hope!

In addition to the practical elements of maintaining a church, the Presbyterian Mission (PCUSA) defines Congregational Vitality as a worshipping community's, "spiritual strength and its capacity for purposeful mission."

In the coming months we will explore ways to deepen and expand our faith community's journey of inclusion, celebration, and affirmation of all people and welcome them into the life and leadership of the church. We have become a Matthew 25 Church and affiliated with More Light Presbyterians and Covenant Network to reach out to our community. We are planning to apply to become an Earth Care congregation to affirm our commitment to being good stewards of the Earth. We applied for and received grant funding to start a Wednesday Evening project which will include a Supper Fellowship, inclusivity studies, and a game/movie night.

What do you want to do? Die gracefully? Or do you want to be part of a process of change and revitalization? The Congregational Vitality committee looks forward to hearing from you and we have a place at the table if you would like to join us. We meet at 10 am on the second and fourth Wednesday of the month. We ask each of you to join us in praying for God's wisdom and guidance to give us direction for New Hope's future.



MISSION AND OUTREACH



PW ladies wrapped 19 Seafarers' boxes on November 29. Kate Sadler delivered the boxes to the Ministry to the Port of Houston HISC Christmas Shoebox Program.

We are continuing to collect clothing for Clothed by Faith. Terry Owen delivered another fifty pounds of clothes to the organization in December.

We have a Blood Drive on Sunday, January 7 from 8:30 am to 1:00 pm in Fellowship Hall. Everyone who donates will receive a free hoodie! Please contact Terry Owens to sign up. terryowens@consolidated.net



Cabbages, broccoli, kale, chard, beets, and herbs are growing well in the Garden of Grace. We harvested radishes, kale, and a huge Napa cabbage which were shared with our congregation and the Korean church members.

The New Hope Garden Club elected officers and planned a busy schedule of presentations and tours for Spring. At 10 am on Saturday, January 13, we will have a workshop on Starting Seeds. At our monthly meeting at 7 pm on January 23, Master Gardener, Jo Ann Stevenson, will give a presentation on Spring Vegetable Gardening.

Thank you to everyone who donated stuffed animals and supported the Bake Sale. Your generosity will provide about 100 stuffed animals to First Responders to give to children in traumatic or emotional situations!





YOUR SESSION AT WORK

Linda Owens, Clerk to Session

Session met on December 16, 2023 and

we celebrated:

Three members agreed to serve on session.

Although we had a new water leak, it was repaired in half a day and total bill is much less than our last water leak.

The scheduling of a blood drive on January 7, 2024.

35 pounds of clothing being delivered to Clothed by Faith and \$120 worth of food being delivered to Katy Christian Ministries.

Our Garden of Grace continues to thrive.

We will be donating our stuffed animals to first responders this year.

And we worked on plans to:

Decide on a future for New Hope.

For session to meet if we get a lease offer

The session welcomes your prayers of support as we work to raise funds and build awareness of our church.



GREETINGS FROM THE C.D.C



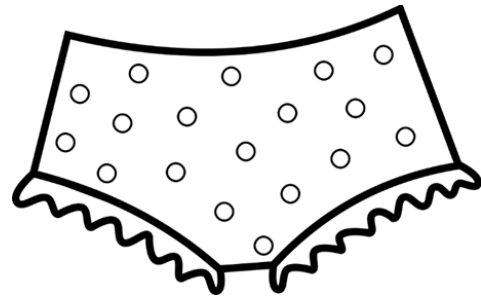
Hello Friends,

New Hope C.D.C is partnering with **Clothe by Faith**, a Christian-based non-profit organization which provides gently used clothing and shoes and new socks and **underwear** to those in need. The fast fashion industry and constant change provide a near continuous stream of used clothing donations. However, brand new, in the package underwear is scarce.

During the month of **January**, we will be accepting donations of underwear-**all sizes, Men, Women, Boys and Girls. Just underwear.** It must be in an **unopened package.**

Place your much appreciated donation under the Giving Tree located in the Fellowship Hall.

Thank you



Clothe by Faith is located at 802 Dominion Drive in Katy.

www.clothebyfaith.org