



## BEACON OF HOPE

APRIL 2024

### Introducing our new Community Newsletter

Welcome to the very first edition of Mt. Hope Community Presbyterian Church's *Beacon of Hope* newsletter! The purpose of this newsletter is to provide our members and our community with information about church and community events, celebrations, mission updates, and spiritual education. As we are just beginning, we hope to publish one newsletter each quarter, with a few special editions when needed. If you would like to join the newsletter staff, then contact Joe Racchini ([joeracchini@comcast.net](mailto:joeracchini@comcast.net)). We need writers and photojournalists to help support these quarterly newsletters.

### A Note from the Pastor

We're a church. Churches have newsletters. We've had lots of ways of letting people know what's going on, and (re-) starting this newsletter will, we hope, keep our members encouraged and our visitors informed on a more regular basis.

#### In this Issue:

- ~The Importance of Attending Church .....1
- ~Play Ball.....2
- ~Primary Election Day .....3
- ~It's not just about hitting the right notes; it's about sharing your heart through music! .....4
- ~Property Progress Update .....5
- ~A Minute for Mission .....5
- ~Spotlight on Faith: Member of the Month .....6
- ~Final Thoughts: The Threads of Hope .....7
- ~Crossword Puzzle (Hidden Word) .....8
- ~Looking Ahead .....9

The full name here is Mt. Hope Community Presbyterian Church. We take that "Community" part seriously – we want to share our love of God, our faith in Christ Jesus and our joy of supporting each other with as many as we can reach. So, read and enjoy. Better yet, read, enjoy and participate! Let us know your thoughts for how we might grow this bright part of Penn Hills. We'll keep the lights on for you! -Trip Torbert, Pastor

### The Importance of Attending Church



Pictured: Jan, Darleen, Laurie, and Rev. Torbert

Church attendance is a significant aspect of spiritual life for many people around the world. It serves as a *beacon of hope*, guiding individuals towards a path of faith, community, and personal growth. Church provides a sense of community and fellowship. It's a place where individuals can come together to worship, share their experiences, and support each other in their faith journey. This

sense of community can provide comfort, strength, and encouragement in times of need.



*Pictured: Rich and Giustino*

Attending church services and participating in religious activities can lead to spiritual growth. Listening to sermons, engaging in prayer, and studying religious texts can deepen one's understanding of their faith and help them grow closer to their spiritual beliefs.



*Pictured: Bao Yan, Ruth and Janet*

Church leaders and fellow members can offer guidance and support in times of uncertainty or difficulty. They can provide counsel based on religious teachings and personal experiences, helping individuals navigate through life's challenges.

Churches often organize charitable events and community service activities. Participating in these events gives individuals the opportunity to serve others and make a positive impact in their community.

Churches teach moral values and ethical principles, providing a moral foundation for individuals. These teachings can guide individuals in making ethical decisions and leading a virtuous life.

Attending church offers numerous benefits including community, spiritual growth, guidance, opportunities to serve, and a moral foundation. Whether you're a lifelong attendee or considering your first visit, the doors of Mt. Hope are always open to welcome you.



## Play Ball!

As the last traces of winter melt away, the air buzzes with

anticipation. The scent of freshly mown grass mingles with the crack of a bat, signaling the arrival of church softball season. Across many fields and parks in the eastern Pittsburgh suburbs, churches from the League of Grace prepare for opening day. Players lace up their cleats, coaches draft possible lineups and game plans, while fans dust off their foam fingers and cowbells.

The League of Grace is a church softball fellowship league in the Eastern suburbs of Pittsburgh, PA, whose main goal is to provide an environment to enjoy fellowship with our Christian brothers and sisters as we Celebrate and share our faith as we use our God given talent and skills in a friendly, supportive, yet competitive manor.



*1990s Mt. Hope Men's Softball team*

Mt. Hope has had a Men's Softball team in a church league for as long as members can remember. Currently the team is coached by Joe Racchini who has been a member of the team for the last 32 years. He is following in the footsteps of the many coaches he watched growing up including Bob Racchini, Jack Heidish, and Andy Vitko.

When asked about how he enjoys running the team, Joe said, "I love that I get to now help lead this fellowship that has been a huge part of my life growing up. It's even sweeter now that my sons are both old enough to play. My dad also still plays from time to time, and when that happens, we have three generations from one family on field at the same time. How awesome is that!"

Every summer the ten teams from the league play 27 games and hold one league tournament at the end of the season in August. Each game is started and ended with a word of prayer to praise God for the gifts and individual talents He has given us, to share joys and concerns from the players, and simply for our time of fellowship with the members of both teams.

The League of Grace transcends the boundaries of sports. It's about fellowship, faith, and the joy of playing together. As the sun sets over the ball field, and the cheers of the crowd have faded away, this time of fellowship on field reminds us that in the game of life, we're all part of God's same team.

A link to the schedule is posted on the church's website. Home field is Friday nights at Hawkeye Park in Monroeville. Come enjoy a fun night of cheering on the members of Mt. Hope's Softball team, or contact Joe Racchini ([joeracchini@comcast.net](mailto:joeracchini@comcast.net)) for more information on how you can join.

**Members of the 2023 Mt. Hope softball team after winning the C Bracket at the end of the year Tournament, August 19, 2023.**

**Front:** Joe Racchini, Adam Johnson, Aron Lenzi, Ray Labertew, Bobby Malinoski, BJ McCoullum, Mario Racchini, Eric Salicce  
**Back:** Shawn Carley, Keith Braho, Paul Sapsara, Jeff DeLucia, Brian Farneth, Bob Racchini **Missing in Photo:** Mark McDonough, Jeff Arnold, Fran Scullo, and Giustino Racchini



## PA Primary Election Day

### Tuesday, April 23, 2024

Yes, that's right! It said APRIL!! Remember that even though most years the Primary is held in May, during a year with a Presidential election, Pennsylvania moves its Primary to the fourth Tuesday of April. Mt. Hope will once again be a voting poll location.

**BAKE SALE**



No matter when it is held, it a time when many from our community will be walking our building for maybe the first time. It presents a great opportunity for our congregation to connect with our community. We will once again be having a Bake Sale for the community. If you are able to help work the bake sale and/or can help provide some mouthwatering lip-smacking delectably delightful baked items for us to sale please contact Diana Dawson prior to 4/21/24.

#### ELECTION REMINDERS:

- Last day to request a mail-in/absentee ballot is April 16, 2024
- Polls are open from 7:00 am – 8:00 pm



# It's not just about hitting the right notes; it's about sharing your heart through music!

As the sun dips below the horizon on Thursday nights, an amazing thing happens as voices from all different backgrounds rise in unison to create a joyful noise. This is the Mt. Hope choir. Every week they gather in the sanctuary, where laughter mingles with the sweet strains of melodies. With their shared passion and talents, they come from all different backgrounds to practice together so they can help lead the music through our worship services. They not only sing but also illustrate joy. Their smiling faces, swaying movements, and self-expression while they sing create an atmosphere of celebration and praise for everyone.

Are you passionate about music? Do you find comfort in the harmonies that resonate through sacred halls? Look no further! The **Mt. Hope Church Choir** extends a warm invitation to all—whether you're a seasoned vocalist or a shower-singer extraordinaire. Whether you know how to read sheet music like a pro or hum by ear, you are welcomed and encouraged to come join the choir. We celebrate diversity. Whether your vocal range spans octaves or inches, we believe that every voice adds to the celestial tapestry. Our seasoned members will guide you, and together, we'll create something magical. Our song selection is a delightful blend of hymns that have echoed through centuries and contemporary worship songs that touch the heart. From Bach to Bethel, we embrace it all.

So, what if vocals aren't your thing, but you still feel a calling to praise God with music in this community? Are you a pianist, a guitarist, or a violin virtuoso? Maybe you play the flute, the banjo, or the didgeridoo? Our choir is always seeking skilled musicians to weave instrumental magic into

our performances. Your notes will dance alongside our voices, bridging the gap between tradition and modernity.

So, whether you're a seasoned vocalist, instrumentalist or a novice, consider joining the Mt. Hope choir. It's not just about music; it's about community, worship, and lifting our voices together in praise. If your heart beats in rhythm with melodies, if your soul longs for community, join us and together, we'll raise our voices, creating harmonies that resonate beyond the sanctuary with a symphony of faith, love, and HOPE!



**Top Photo:** Our Choir members prior to Easter Service 2024  
**Front:** Arnel Montgomery, Amy Williams, Bao Yan **Back:** David Carlisle, Doug Bowser, Barry Irwin, Hilary Moyes, Jan Yobp  
**Hiding in the back of the Photo:** Hamner Williams

**Bottom Photo:** Some of our very talented musicians and vocalist from our July 16, 2023, service  
**Pictured:** Camilla Zanetti, Barry Irwin, and Alyssa Napolitano



## PROPERTY PROGRESS UPDATE

At the start of the year, the property committee started a new initiative, "See something, Say something". Mt. Hope church is a large piece of property and sometimes things that might need addressed are missed. They were asking the congregation to report any areas of the church that might need some attention. Over 100 different projects were identified, and the work to correct them started almost immediately. Here are some of the most recent updates about these projects.

- The stall door in the women's MP restroom has been fixed.
- Deacon's cupboard was moved from JKH to counting room.
- Replaced broken microwave in JKH kitchen
- The Toilette in the Nursey is fixed and working
- Window Air Conditioner was reinstalled in the office.
- Estimates for carpet cleaning are being taken.
- Several Rooms including the downstairs storage room, the MP back rooms, old count room, JKH, Educational wing, etc. are currently in the works of decluttering.

Looking to help? We have lots still on the list. Just reach out to Alyce Duffus or Bob Racchini for a job. If we all do a little, a lot can be done!

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## A Minute for Mission:

In the aftermath of World War II, a small but determined group of believers embarked on a mission that would shape the spiritual landscape of their community. Mt. Hope Presbyterian Church, nestled in the heart of Penn Hills Township, emerged as a beacon of hope and service. The seeds of Mt. Hope were sown under the sponsorship of the Board of American Missions of the former United Presbyterian Church. On

September 22, 1946, in the solemn halls of the Penn Hills Township Municipal Building, the church was consecrated. The Community Commission of the Pittsburgh Council of Churches granted its approval, marking the official birth of Mt. Hope.

Mt. Hope's commitment extended beyond its walls. The church engaged in transformative missions, leaving an indelible mark on the lives it touched, The rich history of the ways Mt. Hope members have reached out into the community and beyond is very wide and long. From Meals on Wheels and Serving at the Homeless Shelters to providing support to our brothers and sisters of faith in Africa.



Today, Mt. Hope's legacy of mission work continues. Mt. Hope stands alongside the hungry, continuing to be a major contributor to local food banks. On holidays, police officers and emergency medical personnel that must work and can't be with their families receive a holiday feast from the members. Just a small gesture of gratitude. The Clothesline continues to provide the community with free gently used and new clothing for those who may be in need. The Clothesline is open on Thursday's from 10:00am to Noon. Also meeting at the same time on Thursdays is one of our largest missions, Hearts and Hands. Each week this incredible group of individuals create homemade items that go to our community members in need. Look for more updates soon on all the wonderful projects that they have been involved in.

Are you feeling called to help with one of these missions? Just contact the church to find out how you can help.

# SPOTLIGHT ON FAITH: MEET OUR INSPIRATIONAL MEMBER OF THE MONTH

At Mt. Hope Church, our vibrant community thrives on faith, fellowship, and the unwavering hope found in Jesus. Today, we turn the spotlight on one remarkable individual who embodies these values and enriches our congregation.

**Dana Vitko**, a devoted member of our church family, radiates warmth and compassion. Her unwavering commitment to service and her genuine love for others make her an inspiration to all who know her. Whether she's volunteering at community events, preparing the sacraments for communion, or just lending a listening ear, Dana's faith-driven actions speak volumes.

Dana's steadfast dedication as a deacon has provided spiritual guidance and practical support to our church family. When her daughters were younger, she actively participated in our dynamic youth program and ignited curiosity and kindled faith as a Sunday School teacher. Her patient teaching style and genuine love for children have shaped countless young lives. As an active member of our Hearts and Hands ministry, Dana exemplifies Christ's love in action. Whether making blankets for newborns, teaching dolls for Children's Hospital, or lending a helping hand to the many projects of this ministry, Dana's compassion radiates brightly.

Dana and her late husband Andy first came to visit Mt. Hope in 1981 from an invitation from Vonda and Bob Racchini. She says that she brought her family including daughters Mindy and Becca to Mt. Hope to "See Joe and Rick (Racchini) in Christmas pageants." But that just got them in the door. She says what kept them here was absolutely, "the kindness and the love of all the people in this church!"

One of her favorite memories of her time at Mt. Hope are the vibrant days of the youth Logos program in the 1990s. During this spirited era, our church's youth community thrived under the guidance of passionate

leaders who infused faith with laughter, learning, and camaraderie. Dana's husband Andy, affectionately known as the Dinner Dean, played a pivotal role in creating memorable evenings for our youth. His mission? To transform ordinary dinners into extraordinary experiences. Armed with creativity and a dash of whimsy, he turned mealtime into an adventure. Picture this: John Knox Hall bathed in warm light, tables adorned with colorful tablecloths, and the aroma of home-cooked delights wafting through the air. As youth members gathered, Dana's husband orchestrated a symphony of joy. His secret ingredients? Laughter, community, and a pinch of mischief. But she points out that he wasn't alone. Youth Pastor Mike Dunlap was the heartbeat of our youth ministry. His energy was boundless, and his love for Jesus infectious. Andy and Mike would often tag-team to create unforgettable evenings. They concocted themed dinners—everything from Baseball Night to a Mt. Hope's Got Talent night. Each meal was a canvas for faith, friendship, and laughter.

She said she has great advice for the community, and those that might be looking for a church home.

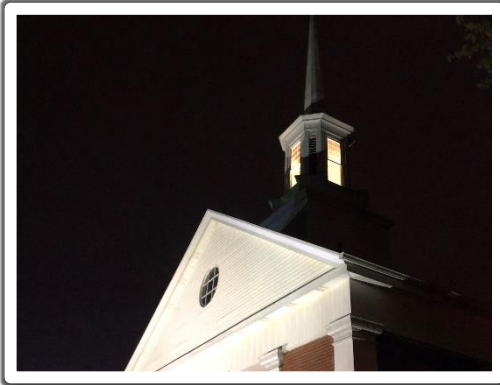
**"If you are looking for a church that will welcome you in and consider all of your needs and give you love, then this is the church for you!" – Dana Vitko**



# Final Thoughts

## The Threads of Hope

In the vast complexity of human existence, hope is the golden thread that weaves through our joys and sorrows, our triumphs, and trials. It is the beacon that illuminates our path when darkness threatens to engulf us.



Hope is not mere wishful thinking or a fleeting emotion. It is a robust anchor that tethers our souls to the promises of God. When life's tempests rage, hope whispers, "Hold on, for God is faithful." It is the assurance that our present struggles are not the final chapter; there is a glorious future awaiting us. The psalmist grappled with his own soul, asking, "Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you disquieted within me?" (Psalm 42:5). In this wrestling match, he preached to himself: "Hope in God!" Richard Sibbes, a Puritan preacher, penned an entire book on this verse, titled *The Soul's Conflict with Itself*. His words resonate across centuries: "Hoping in God does not come naturally for sinners like us. We must preach it to ourselves diligently and forcefully."

Hope is not a passive sentiment; it is a battle cry. As Christians, we wrestle with doubts, fears, and discouragement. Yet, we cling to hope. Our emotional reservoir is filled with the promise that God is our help and our refuge. When forgiveness seems impossible, hope whispers, "God's grace can mend even the most shattered hearts."

"Set your hope fully on the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 1:13).

Our hope transcends earthly circumstances—it rests on the day of Christ's return. Amid trials and sorrows, we fix our gaze on that glorious revelation. Our hope is not wishful thinking; it is faith in the future tense.

What makes Christian hope unique? It depends not on our strength but on the power of an almighty God. Hope enables us to pursue arduous goods, knowing that God's strength sustains us. When despair knocks, hope answers, "My God is greater."

At Mount Hope, we understand that life can be both beautiful and challenging. Our mission is simple yet profound: to be a lighthouse of hope in a world often shrouded in darkness. We believe that hope is not a passive sentiment but an active force that propels us forward. Whether you're rejoicing in the mountaintop moments or navigating the valleys, we're here for you.

Our church family is woven together with the diverse threads of each unique person, yet we are all connected by hope. We gather to share our stories, pray together, and lift one another up. In this church, you'll find acceptance, encouragement, and a sense of belonging. Through music, prayer, and reflection, we draw near to God and as the melodies rise, so does our faith, reminding us that hope is not wishful thinking but a confident expectation. Our cornerstone is Jesus Christ—the embodiment of hope. His life, death, and resurrection illuminate our path. When doubts assail us, we remember His words: "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness but will have the light of life." (John 8:12) As you go through your days and weeks, let the words of Psalm 42:5 echo in our hearts: "Hope in God!" May this hope infuse our lives, transform our perspectives, and propel us toward eternity.

You are invited to become part of our community, and when you do, your unique thread will add richness to our story. Your joys and sorrows, your triumphs and trials—they will all contribute to the beautiful mosaic of Mt. Hope church.

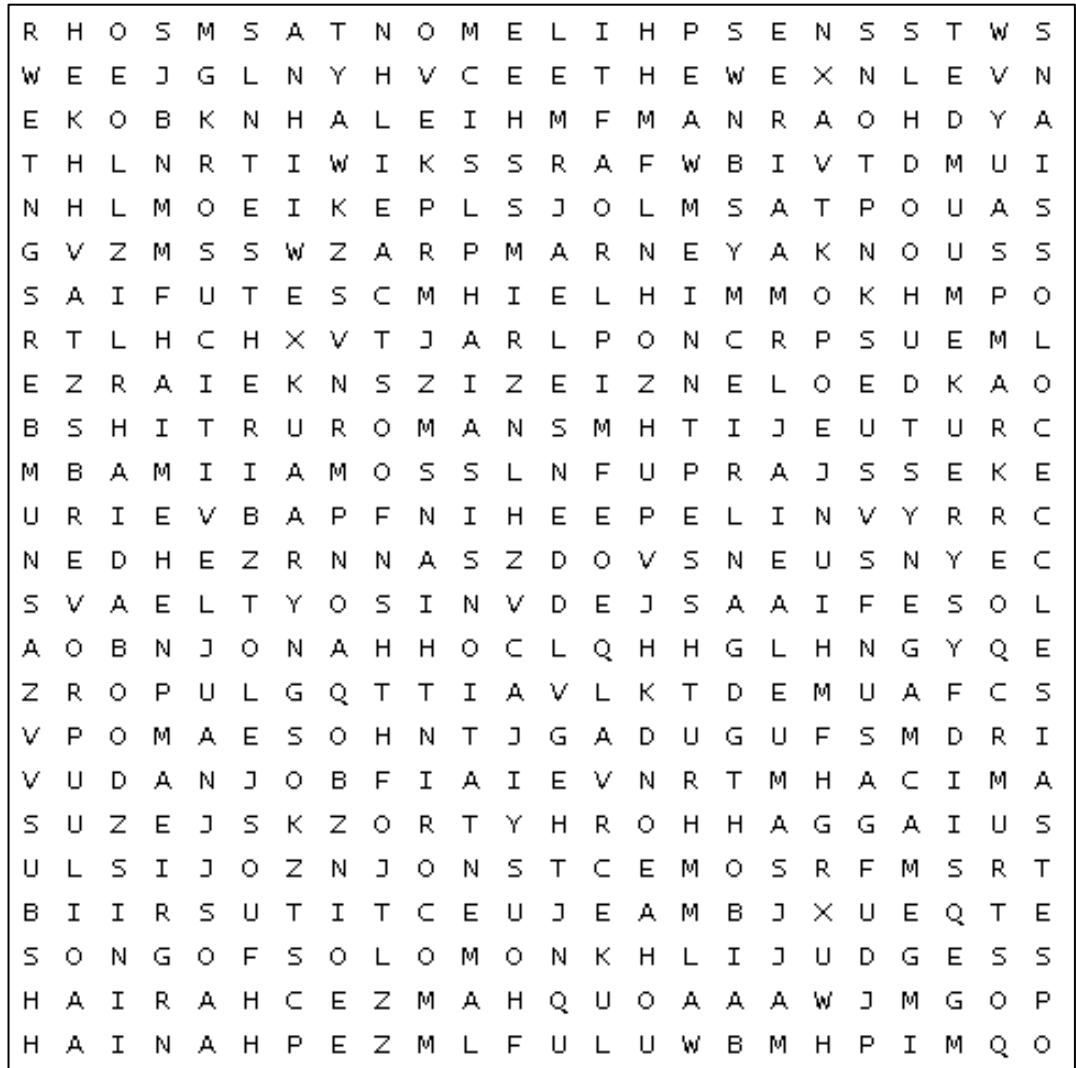


**Hidden Message Puzzle:** This puzzle is a word search puzzle that has a hidden message in it.

1. First find all the words in the list.
2. Words can go in any direction and share letters as well as cross over each other.
3. Once you find all the words. Copy the unused letters starting in the top left corner into the blanks to reveal the hidden message.

# Books of the Bible

- |              |                 |
|--------------|-----------------|
| Acts         | Lamentations    |
| Amos         | Leviticus       |
| Chronicles   | Luke            |
| Colossians   | Malachi         |
| Corinthians  | Mark            |
| Daniel       | Matthew         |
| Deuteronomy  | Micah           |
| Ecclesiastes | Nahum           |
| Ephesians    | Nehemiah        |
| Esther       | Numbers         |
| Exodus       | Obadiah         |
| Ezekiel      | Peter           |
| Ezra         | Philemon        |
| Galatians    | Philippians     |
| Genesis      | Proverbs        |
| Habakkuk     | Psalms          |
| Haggai       | Revelation      |
| Hebrews      | Romans          |
| Hosea        | Ruth            |
| Isaiah       | Samuel          |
| James        | Song of Solomon |
| Jeremiah     | Thessalonians   |
| Job          | Timothy         |
| Joel         | Titus           |
| John         | Zachariah       |
| Jonah        | Zephaniah       |
| Joshua       |                 |
| Jude         |                 |
| Judges       |                 |
| Kings        |                 |



**HIDDEN MESSAGE:**

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# Looking Ahead:

## April – August

- **PLAY BALL!**

Springtime means many things to different people, but to men of the League of Grace Church Softball teams, it means the beginning of a new season. Come root on the Mt. Hope Softball team most Friday nights at Hawkeye Park in Monroeville. Link to the team's schedule can be found on the church's website.

## May

- **MEMORIAL DAY WEEKEND COMMUNITY PICNIC**

The Community is invited to join us on Sunday, May 26 for Worship service (10:30) immediately followed by a community Picnic outside on the lawn. Members will be bringing a variety of foods and Hot Dogs and Hamburgers will be cooked on the grill. Picnic festivities will also include some games, patriotic songs, and a memorial wall for the fallen.

## July – September

- **Movies in the Lot Returns!** We will once again be hosting Community movie nights in the parking lot in July, August, and September. Bring a chair, a blanket or sit in your car and enjoy some FAMILY FRIENDLY FLIXS. Keep an eye out for more details soon! (Movies and dates)

## October

- **GET YOUR GHOUL ON!**

Calling all little princesses, ninjas, Ghosts and ghouls. Join us on Saturday October 19<sup>th</sup> from 4:00 – 6:00 for Mt. Hope's first annual Holy Ghost Trunk or Treat event. Members of our congregation invite our community to bring their little ones for a safe and fun afternoon Halloween fun! As you go from trunk to trunk, enjoy the creatively decorated cars and cast your vote at the end for best. Other activities will include pumpkin decorating, music, and games.

## December

- **LET'S WRAP!**

The Church will offer Free Gift wrapping for the community. Need a gift or many gifts wrapped? Need a little help? No worries! The members of Mt. Hope Church are here to help. We'll provide the wrapping paper, the tape, the ribbons, the bows, and the holiday atmosphere. All you have to do is bring the gifts!

**PLUS - Look for more information about these soon!!!**

- **Tuesday Night Trivia and Tacos**
- **Summer JAM**
- **Family/ Community Game nights**
- **Sunday Service on the Lawn**
- **Holiday Tea**
- **And so much more!**

