

hope UNITED METHODIST CHURCH Newsletter

Issue 23

February 2026



Hope United Methodist Church, 7320 Northcote Avenue, Hammond, IN 46324

Join Us in Worship – Sundays at 10:15



Chili Cook Off with a Mardi gras Twist February 15 after Church

Whether you're a chili master or a chili lover, come join the fun and delicious chili! Share your favorite recipe by bringing a crock-pot full of your delicious chili, or just come and enjoy the variety of chili being shared by our church family and friends.

We will add a twist of Mardi Gras with masks that the children can decorate and Mardi Gras beads they can wear, and top it off with a Pinata! We will have a Three Kings Cakes, with the hidden baby Jesus inside. The person who gets the piece of cake with Baby Jesus wins a gift card to Dairy Queen. A fun-filled family event you won't want to miss!

The chili makers' sign-up sheet is on the counter in the narthex.

Items Available from 6635 Hohman February 3, 10:00 am - Noon

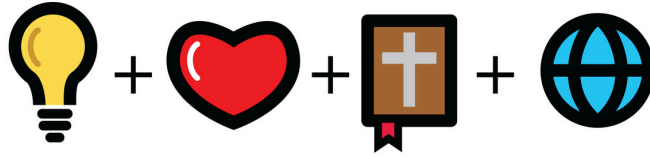
The moving of items from the 6635 Hohman Ave. building is winding down, and, as promised, church members will now be able to visit the building and choose from the remaining art, décor, and furnishings that are not tagged for move to Hope UMC.

The building will be open and members of the Merger Transition Team will be present to answer questions on Tuesday, Feb. 3, 10:00 am – noon.

Items available range from wall art and kitchen items (dishes, serving ware, pots, pans, and utensils) to children's toys, decorative items and crafts, books, and assorted furniture. Please bring your own boxes and bags to pack up selected items. A free will offering for the items you choose is encouraged. Please place your donation in the designated basket in the Hohman Ave. parlor or give it directly to a member of the Transition Team hosting that day's walkthrough.

If assistance is needed to move desired furniture, please contact a member of the church's Board of Trustees or Pastor Pete Ward.

Ash Wednesday Services
February 18
2:00 pm and 7:00 pm



Thoughts from Pastor Jim

Buried Talents

For to all those who have, more will be given, and they will have an abundance, but from those who have nothing, even what they have will be taken away. Matthew 25:29 NRSVUE

Stop! Go read the Parable of the Talents in Matthew 25:14-30, then come back to the newsletter.

Here at Hope UMC, our merger is a gift from God giving us an opportunity to reverse the decline we have experienced for years. There is a lot of activity and energy in our congregation. But, I believe that activity and energy alone will only serve to burn us out and leave us bankrupt if we are not wise about how we spend (invest) our time and energy. Time and energy are limited resources, so we want to get the most out of God's gift and out of our investment.

Because we are still a small church with limited time and energy, how we spend those resources matters. One of the ways that we can ensure that we are using our time and energy wisely is to ask ourselves four questions that can guide us to be good stewards of God's gift to us for any event or activity we are considering.

These are:

1. Will this make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world?
2. If we believe it will, can we describe how it will make disciples?
3. If we can describe how it will make disciples, are we willing to expend the resources necessary to ensure that disciples are made?
4. If we cannot say yes to the first 3 questions, are we willing to reallocate our resources to something that will make disciples?

The first question is about being focused on our mission, which is the reason we exist as a church.

The second question leads us to develop a clear plan with defined steps for making disciples through this event or activity.

The third question determines our commitment to making disciples through this event or activity.

The final question is intended to keep us honest about our commitment to our mission.

Coming together as one new church is truly a gift from God. Let us not bury that gift in the ground of old habits and ways of doing things. Let's invest it in our mission by investing it all in sharing the love and grace of Jesus with our neighbors and our community. In this way, we can live up to our name and be a beacon of hope!

Blessings,
Jim

Opportunities to Grow Our Faith

Discipleship
and Spiritual
Vitality

Messy Church on February 24

Messy Church will embrace Lent with an interactive evening of activities and experiences with prayer. We will begin at 6:00 pm in the Narthex with a welcome. Next, we will move to the Community Center for activities and conversations that connect to prayer in a fun but meaningful way. A light meal will be served at 6:45. We will move to the sanctuary at 7:05 for music and a celebration of worship. Messy Church ends at 7:30 pm.



Messy Church Reflection and Visioning

January's Messy Church was cancelled due to frigid evening temperatures. Leaders used that time to meet on Zoom to reflect on the past year of Messy Church. This past year, 52 people from our community attended. We celebrate, yet reflect, on why most have not returned. Our group made action plans to address scheduling, format, and marketing.

We also determined that we need you! Our leaders need your prayers, your interest, and your presence. We need the wind of God's Spirit and the wind of your presence under our wings. As we strive to connect with all ages who come to Messy Church, we need table leaders and assistant table leaders to build relationships and connect our Christ-centered theme with each person present. We do this through activities and printed discussion points. We even have discussion starters at each table during the meal.

Messy Church is an intergenerational opportunity to share Christ with our community and for each of us to grow as disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.



Worship Committee

In ongoing worship updates, a draft liturgist schedule has been created, and roles will be divided between worship leaders and scripture readers, with training to be finalized. Feedback on the new bulletin format has been mixed, so a standard order of worship will be added to better assist guests. Hospitality efforts are expanding with prayer cards in the pews, new church "swag," name tags, plans for visitor gift bags, and continued work on the photo directory, acolyte training, and the formation of an Altar Guild.

The committee reviewed Christmas Eve worship and overall worship life at Hope UMC. Christmas Eve attendance increased significantly from last year, with about 30 attending the 3:00 pm service and 90 at the 7:00 pm service. Service times were discussed due to challenges for musicians and families, and the congregation will be polled now and again in October. Decorations received very positive feedback, and ideas such as a "Christmas in July" or fall sale will be explored to reduce duplicate items. We will also research biblically themed, non-seasonal wall hangings that reflect Hope.

Our next meeting will be on February 8. If you have any questions or feedback, please feel free to reach out to Sarah Ward.

Reaching Out to Our Community

Evangelism
and Outreach

Community
Impact and
Missions



JAM – Justice and Mercy Committee

“What does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.” (Micah 6:8) The Social Justice Ministry of Hope Church is trying to do all this. Won't you join us?

Currently, we are meeting with Jared Alleman from the Welcome Network in Hammond and Lansing. “The Welcome Network partners with area churches to follow Christ’s call to Welcome the Stranger by providing key resettlement resources for immigrants & refugees in South Chicago & Northwest Indiana.” It advocates for migrant newcomers by providing legal & resettlement services, volunteer mobilization, & spiritual guidance.

Some members of our Social Justice Ministry are supporting Indivisibles of Northwest Indiana in their protests against violent ICE raids. Other members are carefully following and responding to bills before the Indiana Legislature that appear to be unjust. We all continue our efforts to fight hunger by supporting both the Vine Food Pantry and the Hope Blessing Box.

We meet on the second and fourth Thursdays of the month on Zoom from 7:00 to 8:00 pm. We pray and try to relate Bible passages to current events locally or nationally. We then discuss what we can do to promote justice and mercy around us. To join us call Mary Jo Shea and Joe Shea at 219-781-6693 or the church office to receive a Zoom link.

February’s Mission is The Vine

The Second Mile Giving for the month of February is The Vine Food Pantry. Our foodbank needs our help. The Vine disperses almost 7,000 pounds a month to over 200 families, making a significant difference in our community. If you are unable to donate financially, we are also accepting non-perishable food donations.

Thanks to all who donated in January to support the Neighborhood Meal, and to the volunteers who took the time to prepare the meal and make this possible. I’m sure it was much appreciated by those who were hungry. Blessings, Marcos Pontes and Missions Team



Another Record Year at The Vine !

Entire year 2025

Days open: 205

Volunteer hours served: 1203

Pounds of food distributed: 93,275

New individuals served.....	775
Returning individuals served.....	4969
Total.....	5744

New households served.....	283
Returning households served.....	2485
Total.....	2768

December 2025

Days open: 18

Two volunteers served 108 hours

Pounds of food distributed: 7,953

New individuals served	66
Returning individuals served.....	436
Total.....	502

New households served.....	21
Returning households served.....	218
Total.....	239

Building Relationships

Relational
Vitality

United Women in Faith Update

United Women in Faith will meet on February 2. The board will meet at 11:00 am, and Mary's Circle will meet at noon in the Hope library and on Zoom. Georgia Brown will conduct the day's devotions, and we will finalize our schedule for providing meals to Briana's Hope once a month.

The box for collecting items for Phil's Friends is in the narthex. We urge everyone to donate articles to help support cancer patients. Also, please remember, all women of faith are invited to join our group. You don't have to attend our church or any church; just come to Mary's Circle, which meets on the first Monday of the month at noon (at the church and on Zoom) and bring a bag lunch.

Pictures from Our Preschool



Escape Into the Pages

Set in 18th century Maine, *The Frozen River*, by Ariel Lawson, follows a midwife, Martha Ballard, whose diary pulls her into a murder investigation after a man turns up dead in the frozen Kennebec River. It's a mix of historical fiction and mystery, inspired by a real woman's life, and it digs into power, secrets, and who actually gets believed - all while being an engaging read.

Please join us via Zoom for a casual discussion of *The Frozen River* on February 16 at 1:00 pm. You may call the church office for the link. We welcome new participants!

Paws for Peace to Visit Hartsfield

Paws For Peace will be going to Hartsfield Village on February 11 at 2:00 PM. We will meet at the Assisted Living wing. Bundle up your furry friend and join us. The dogs and residents enjoy the opportunity to interact. If you want more information, please contact Suzanne Wasmund at 219-865-6453.



2/1 - Kathy Peck
2/1 - Sheila Kayes
2/2 - Stephanie Tanas
2/3 - Betty Barnhart
2/3 - Xavier Valdez
2/5 - David Copeland
2/5 - Maya Strong
2/7 - Kecia Bell
2/10 - Krista Baker
2/11 - Toni Poropat
2/15 - Adam Slaboski
2/16 - Beth Ashcraft
2/16 - Ervin Zaikis
2/18 - Susan Camacho
2/19 - Char Copeland
2/21 - Pam Salyers
2/23 - Kristine Heady
2/24 - Mary Wallace
2/25 - Alice Foley
2/26 - Sue Robertson
2/27 - Brenda Petty
2/28 - Adele Gawrys

Happy Month of Love!

We are staying warm inside, but taking opportunities to play outside in the snow as weather allows (and following state regulations). Did you know that research shows cold air can be good for your child's development and does not cause sickness? Fresh air and outdoor play are great for growing bodies and minds!

Parent-Teacher Conferences will take place on February 16. There will be no classes for students that day, and we ask that no children attend so we can create a space for open and meaningful communication between teachers and parents.

We are also planning a Special Someone Dance on **March 13**, open to the church, preschool, and community! If you would like to help with planning, please reach out to Karianne at (219) 844-3030 ext 305. ALL are welcome!

Happy February Birthday to staff and children: Ms. Karianne (12), Zamyia (12), Zariya (12), Jersei (15), and Connor (23)! We are sending hugs, hearts, and birthday wishes.

Merger Update for Community Preschool and Childcare (CPCC)

As of January, our preschool is a registered childcare ministry under Hope UMC. The new EIN (Employer Identification Number) required our director, Karianne Padilla, to reapply to the many state and federal programs to which Community Preschool and Childcare are connected. Financially speaking, our program could have sustained a loss in reimbursements for childcare vouchers and On My Way Pre-K. Thanks to Karianne's leadership and persistence, our program will maintain our current Level 4 in Paths to Quality and our NAEYC (National Association for the Education of Young Children) accreditation. This means we will continue to receive our current level of reimbursement for CCDF (Child Care and Development Fund) vouchers and On My Way Pre-K tuition.

We will incur a loss of 2-3 months' reimbursement from the federal food program due to new program guidelines. The CPCC Board is asking **congregants to purchase a Visa gift card from Raise Right (SCRIP)** to donate to the CPCC food program during this period when they are not receiving reimbursement from CACFP (Child and Adult Care Food Program). Thank you for considering a Visa gift card in any amount. Thank you to Karianne for her leadership during this transition.



Opportunities in our District and Conference

Northern Lakes District Leadership University 2026 - Free Zoom workshops for laity and clergy will be held on Sat., Feb. 7, 2026 (8–11am CST). Register by Feb. 6. Learn more and register at inumc.org/districts/northern-lakes-district or contact Eva Goeb - eva.goeb@inumc.org

2026 Annual Conference Session - Thinking about how to get more involved in the Conference in the new year? **The District Equalization Members' Willingness to Serve** form gathers names of those willing to serve as an equalizing member at the 2026 Annual Conference Session. To express your willingness to serve and find more information visit <https://inumc.swoogo.com/Serve2026>. The application deadline is **February 2** at 11:59 p.m. Questions, please see Pastor Jim or Pat Mosley.

Michigan City United Women in Faith is inviting any ladies to their 75th Valentine Tea. It will be held at First United Methodist Church at 121 E 7th Street in Michigan City on **February 14** at 1:00 PM. It will be their last tea and want to share with as many people as possible. Contact Lora Ward at 708-650-6417 if you are interested in going.

Northern Lakes District Spring 2026 Lay Servant Academy - You are invited to join us for the Lay Servant Ministries Academy to begin or continue training for living out the call to make disciples for the transformation of our churches, communities, and world. This is an in-person LSA and you must attend all four sessions to receive credit. The first class will take place on **February 22** and will continue on **March 1, March 8, and March 15**. Training will take place at Hebron UMC, 202 West Church Street, Hebron, Indiana. For more information contact Karen Williams at 219-869-2324 at 219-869-2324 or mrs.karen.wms@gmail.com. **Registration deadline:** Prior to start of class on February 22, 2026.

Meet the STAFF

This month, Staff Parish is inviting you to enjoy learning a bit more about David.

Meet Dave Bieschke, Music Director

- Favorite Movies:** Cinema Paradiso and Out of Africa
- Favorite Meal:** His mom's Pennsylvania Dutch pot pie
- Favorite Quote:** Let's not ask for the moon, we have the stars (from the movie: Now, Voyager).
- Dream Destination:** Australia
- Activity:** Time with family and friends
- Go-to Starbucks Order:** Dark roast coffee with cream and egg bites
- Dave's schedule:** 9:00-12:00 Sundays

Dave says the best part of his 'real' job is working from home and the best part of his church job is the joy he brings to others through music!

Finance and Administrative



Year-End Report on 2025 Giving

In the name of our Lord and Savior and in Jesus Christ his only Son, greetings.

We do not have the final report for January as of this writing. However I would like to take this time to give you an update on how 2025 ended, as well as a breakdown on year-end giving, so you can see how your giving relates to the overall giving in the congregation.

In 2025, the church received approximately \$166,000 in pledges from 137 giving units. For example, Lora and I are one giving unit. A breakdown of the actual giving units, in terms of giving size, shows these results:

- 27 giving units gave less than \$100
- 23 giving units between \$100 and \$500 (approximately \$10/week)
- 22 giving units gave between \$500 and \$1000 (approximately \$20/week)
- 52 giving units gave between \$1000 and \$5000 (between \$20 and \$100/week)
- 8 giving units gave between \$5000 and \$10,000 (between \$100 and \$200/week)
- 6 giving units gave between \$10,000 and \$20,000 (between \$200 and \$385/week)

A quick review shows that out of the 137 giving units, 72 giving units gave \$20 or less per week. When you join the United Methodist Church, you take a vow that you will support your congregation with your prayers, your presence, your gifts, your service, and your witness. During the coming year, the Finance Committee will lead a stewardship campaign, focusing on all the ways you can support Hope UMC.

Remember, the finance committee is here to serve you. If you have any questions on our budget, our expenses, or our income, please feel free to reach out and we will do our best to get you an answer as soon as we can.

Blessings

Pastor Pete, Finance Chair



Raise Right for Valentines and for Community Preschool and Childcare

Don't forget your Valentine! Consider a Raise Right gift card for his/her favorite restaurant, flowers, or favorite place to shop. Raise Right gift cards are an easy way to support Hope UMC, as well as show affection for your special person.

Please consider purchasing a Visa gift card to donate to Community Preschool and Childcare. Your donation will be used to purchase nutritious snacks for our children. Due to the changes associated with our name change from Woodmar to Hope, the federal program that reimburses CPCC for food required us to reapply as a new program. We will have 2-3 months without receiving reimbursement from the CACFP (Child and Adult Care Food Program). **Your assistance with a Visa gift card in any amount** will allow us to purchase food from Aldi.

Hope United Methodist Church
7320 Northcote Ave, Hammond, IN 46324
Phone (219) 844-3030
Office Hours: Monday-Thursday 8:30-2:30

Web: INhopeumc.org
Facebook.com/INHopeUMC
Brenda's email: admin@inhopeumc.org
Pastor's email: james.denton@inumc.org

Pastoral care needs may keep Pastor Jim out of the office during office hours. It is always advisable to call to schedule a time to meet with him. Please do not hesitate to reach out to Pastor Jim or Brenda.



February 2026



Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
<p>9am - Choir Rehearsal</p> <p>10:15am - Sunday Worship @</p> <p>11:30am - Adult Bible</p> <p>11:30am - Change Management</p>	<p>8:30am - Church Office Open @</p> <p>10am - Pastor's Office Open @</p> <p>10am - The Vine Food Pantry @</p> <p>6:30pm - Operations Team @ Hope</p>	<p>8:30am - Church Office Open @</p> <p>10am - Pastor's Office Open @</p> <p>10:30am - Sunrise Seniors @ Hope</p> <p>5:30pm - League of Women Voters</p> <p>5:30pm - Nantreux Lobby - Legal</p>	<p>8:30am - Church Office Open @</p> <p>10am - Quilters</p> <p>10am - The Vine Food Pantry @</p> <p>10:30am - Book/Bible Study @</p> <p>1pm - Pastor's Office Open @ Hope</p> <p>6pm - Brianna's Hope @ Hope UMC</p> <p>7pm - Praise Belts Rehearsal @</p>	<p>8:30am - Church Office Open @</p> <p>10am - Pastor's Office Open @</p> <p>10am - The Vine Food Pantry @</p> <p>10am - CPCC Board Meeting @</p> <p>12:30pm - Knit & Crochet @ Hope</p>		
<p>9am - Choir Rehearsal</p> <p>10:15am - Sunday Worship @</p> <p>11:30am - Adult Bible</p> <p>11:30am - Chili Cook-off @ Hope</p>	<p>8:30am - Church Office Open @</p> <p>10am - Pastor's Office Open @</p> <p>10am - The Vine Food Pantry @</p> <p>7pm - Book Club</p>	<p>8:30am - Church Office Open @</p> <p>10am - Pastor's Office Open @</p> <p>10:30am - Sunrise Seniors @ Hope</p>	<p>8:30am - Church Office Open @</p> <p>10am - Quilters</p> <p>10am - The Vine Food Pantry @</p> <p>10:30am - Book/Bible Study @</p> <p>1pm - Pastor's Office Open @ Hope</p> <p>2pm - Ash Wednesday Service</p> <p>6pm - Brianna's Hope @ Hope UMC</p> <p>7pm - Ash Wednesday Service</p> <p>7pm - Praise Belts Rehearsal @</p>	<p>8:30am - Church Office Open @</p> <p>10am - Pastor's Office Open @</p> <p>10am - The Vine Food Pantry @</p> <p>12:30pm - Knit & Crochet @ Hope</p> <p>6pm - Guiding Council @ Hope</p>		
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