

hope UNITED METHODIST CHURCH Newsletter

Issue 24

March 2026



Hope United Methodist Church, 7320 Northcote Avenue, Hammond, IN 46324
Join Us in Worship – Sundays at 10:15



H O L Y W E E K

Palm Sunday Worship Service

March 29 at 10:15

Will include fan palms and palm crosses.

Palm Sunday Pancake Breakfast

March 29, 8:30 to 1:30 in the community center

See page 2 for more Information

United Women in Faith Agape Meal

Tuesday, March 31 at noon in the narthex

Lenten Meal and Holy Communion

See page 4 for more information.

Maundy Thursday Service

April 2, 7:00 pm, at Hope United Methodist Church

Good Friday

Walk-In Interactive Stations of the Cross

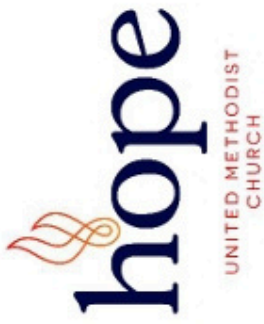
April 3, afternoon (time to be announced later)

At Ridge United Methodist Church

8607 Columbia in Munster

Good Friday Combined Evening Service

April 3, 7:00 pm, at Hope United Methodist Church



**Invite Family and Friends to the Trustee's
FREE Pancake Breakfast & Bake Sale!
Palm Sunday, March 29th from 8:30 - 1:30**



Pancakes, Scrambled Eggs, Sausage, Milk, Juice and Coffee

Baked Goods will also be Available for Purchase

Profits from the Bake Sale will support the Choir

HOPE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

7320 NORTHCOTE AVE • HAMMOND, IN 46324 • (219) 844-3030 • INHOPEUMC.ORG



Thoughts from Pastor Jim

Renewed in Mercy

“Don’t be conformed to the patterns of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds so that you can figure out what God’s will is—what is good and pleasing and mature.” Romans 12:2 (CEB)

Our theme for Lent this year is “Renewed in Mercy.” I think this is particularly timely for us as we are in the midst of renewal as the new Hope United Methodist Church, and this renewal is bearing fruit. We have seen new people worshiping with us, seen more energy and activity, made a commitment to social justice, and actively imagined how we can update our facility to serve our needs now and in the future. Our youth are asking for a youth group, and we are in the planning stage of creating one.

Yes, there is evidence that we are entering a new season, a springtime of renewal. Yet this fruit might die on the vine if we do not attend to one basic thing – our individual renewal as disciples of Jesus Christ. God is indeed doing a new thing with our congregation, and I pray that we each embrace personal growth as well.

Being renewed by the transformation of our minds and spirits is our goal this Lent. One of the foundational beliefs of Methodists is that God’s grace in Jesus Christ, through the work of the Holy Spirit, transforms us into a new creation. But we also believe that this transforming grace is both response-able and co-operative.

By response-able, we mean that God’s grace enables us to respond with a faithful “yes” to the Holy Spirit, but we are free to say “no.” We say “no” when we cling to our own way, when we prioritize other commitments, and when we feel that we are fine as we are. God still loves us when we say “no” but we miss out on being perfected in holy love. We say “yes” by co-operating with the Spirit.

To co-operate means actively participating in the work the Spirit is doing in us. We co-operate by using all of the Means of Grace. The Means of Grace are the practices that God has given us that allow us to be open to and cooperative with God’s Spirit. These practices do not earn God’s love, and they are not an admission ticket to God’s grace. They are simply ways that we respond with a “yes” to God’s invitation to be renewed.

Through personal and corporate prayer, Bible study, worship, receiving Communion, serving in Christian love, and being active in mission work, we are letting God have our hearts, minds, and souls. The work of transformation is solely God’s, and our work is cooperation by showing up in the ways that God has provided for this to happen.

Let this Lent be a time of YES! Let it be a time of co-operating with the Holy Spirit. May your Lenten fast be one of giving up the time for God to renew us through devotion to God’s work within us.

Blessings, Jim

Opportunities to Grow Our Faith

Prayer Request Policy and Communication Guidelines

As a caring and prayerful community, we are honored to lift one another up in prayer. To help us manage and share prayer requests with care and clarity, please review the following guidelines:

Bulletin Prayer Requests

- Prayer requests will remain active for 4 weeks. If you would like a name to continue appearing in the bulletin, you will need to resubmit the request.
- The prayer list is reset at the beginning of each month. If you would like a name to continue appearing in the bulletin, you will need to resubmit the request.
- To include a name in the bulletin, please submit your prayer request to the church office or use the online form by the last Monday of each month.

Weekly Email Prayer Requests

- Prayer requests for the weekly email communication can be submitted to the church office at any time during the week.
- Requests submitted during the week will be included in the next weekly prayer email.

Important Note

The bulletin and weekly email are managed separately. If you would like a prayer request to appear in both, please indicate that clearly.

Worship Committee Update

The Worship Committee is exploring new wall hangings and reviewing several colorful design concepts. Larger size options, fabric choices, pricing, and return policies are being researched. The committee is also considering customizable artwork and may invite members to sponsor specific pieces. Our goal is to have some new banners prior to Holy Week.

Our Lenten theme is *Renewed in Mercy*, with a contemplative altar design. Holy Week plans include Maundy Thursday at 7:00 pm, a combined Good Friday service at 7:00 pm, and possibly a Noon Good Friday service at Hope. Palm Sunday preparations are underway, with fan palms and palm crosses planned. More to be discussed at the March meeting.

Additional updates include bulletin improvements, new name tags, Hope branded swag, and confirmation of the church's prayer policy communication. (see separate article)

Lastly, we discussed improvements to the flow of worship, including updates to the liturgist/reader schedule and adjustments to the order of worship. Pastor Jim and Sarah will finalize those details and connect with the liturgists and readers.

Next meeting is March 1.



United Women in Faith Agape Meal

Mary Circle of United Women in Faith will host the Agape meal this year on Tuesday, March 31 at noon in the narthex. Meatless dishes traditionally eaten during Holy Week will be served, including Kugel (a Lithuanian recipe), assorted olives, bread, and cheese.

A program of community interest will be presented, and Pastor Jim Denton will offer communion. All Hope UMC members and friends are invited. Please call the church office if you plan to attend.

Reaching Out to Our Community

Evangelism
and Outreach

Community
Impact and
Missions

Social Justice Ministry

“The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing” (Edmund Burke). Members of the Social Justice Ministry refuse to “do nothing.” We are doing our best to fight injustice, and we need your help. Join us on Zoom on the second and fourth Thursdays of the month from 7:00-8:00 pm for respectful, faith-based discussions.

We don't just talk. Some members have contacted their Indiana legislators to protest a bill that would impose fines and or jail sentences on homeless people. Others have voiced their opposition to the expansion of ICE operations to include mandatory enforcement by local police officers, public schools, and universities. Bills reducing funding for libraries and public education are also of concern.

We are supporting the Welcome Network, which partners with area churches to follow Christ's call to Welcome the Stranger. We will be happy to share information about how to support this organization financially or by volunteering. Also, some of our members are participating in the activities of Indivisibles of Northwest Indiana and have joined their Saturday protests at the corner of Ridge Road and Indianapolis Blvd. in Highland.

We will continue our efforts to support free, fair elections and plan to sponsor a voter registration drive this spring. We also continue our efforts to fight hunger by supporting both the The Vine Food Pantry and the Hope Blessing Box. To join us, call Mary Jo Shea or Joe Shea at 219-781-6693, or call the church office to receive a Zoom link for our meetings.



Messy Church on March 24

Messy Church meets on Tuesday, March 24, at 6:00 pm for an Easter Extravaganza. Come and celebrate the hope of Easter and the joy of being in community.



March Mission is Our Preschool/Childcare Food Program

March's Mission, also known as Second Mile Giving, will benefit our Community Preschool and Childcare's food budget. The food program that reimburses close to half the cost of our food purchases is a federal program administered by the USDA. The name change and new Employee Identification Number for Hope UMC have created a funding gap. Community Preschool and Childcare will be able to reapply for reimbursement in April. Your financial assistance is greatly appreciated.



The Vine Food Pantry

Thank you for your generous Second Mile Giving to the food pantry. In February, \$670 was donated to The Vine Food Pantry.

January 2026

Days open: 15

Two volunteers served 93 hours

Pounds of food distributed: 6,891

New individuals served40

Returning individuals served.....369

Total.....408

New households served.....13

Returning households served.....184

Total.....197



1 Sue Fusner
3 Mary Baker-Cook
3 Ken Baker
4 Carol Wagner
4 Jim Baker
5 Phyllis Widstrand
6 Steve Strains
7 Jerry Kolanowski
9 Ameya Serna
9 Blake Cook
13 Dean Seehausen
14 Logan Malloy
14 Bellamy Avina
16 Bong Yohl Kim
17 Tim Petty
18 Jan Yehnert
18 Jack Yerkes
18 Shirley
Lopatkiewicz
18 Debbie Austin
19 Amy Rummel
20 Andrea Fukuda
20 Peggy Link
20 Kathryn Wong
21 Esther Bunger
23 Joe Ramirez
23 David Mora
23 Ansley Avina
24 Alyson Hawkins
24 Donna Wilkinson
25 Pam Longhi
26 James Thomas
30 Karen Mulcahy-
Smith
31 Paulette Tapper



Congregational Buddies Forming

The goal of Congregational Buddies is to develop a beloved community between Hope UMC congregants and the children and staff of Community Preschool and Childcare. The plan is simple and filled with joy. A small group of congregants will gather for a monthly birthday celebration with children and teachers who have a birthday that month. We will gather for a short morning celebration with decorations and cupcakes. We may even offer a book about God's love to the birthday children.

Would you like to join Congregational Buddies by making a child feel loved and connected to our faith community? Thank you to Cheryle Seljan for feeling God's call to pursue this opportunity to serve our children and teachers with the love of Christ.

For more information, contact Cheryle at seljancheryle@gmail.com or Cyndi Slaboski at cslaboski@gmail.com. Our first celebration will be in April.

Between the Pages

Please join Hope UMC Book Club on March 16 at 1:00 pm for a discussion via Zoom of *The Alice Network* by Kate Quinn. In this work of historical fiction, the author weaves together the stories of two courageous women—one a female spy recruited into the real-life spy ring known as the Alice Network during WWI, and the other an American socialite searching for her missing cousin in the aftermath of WWII. Spanning decades and continents, this gripping novel explores bravery, betrayal, resilience, and the lasting scars of war. We hope you will join our informal discussion on March 16. Please call the church office for a Zoom link.

Paws for Peace to Visit Hartsfield

Paws For Peace will go to Hartsfield Village on March 25, at 2:00 pm. Please meet at the Assisted Living Facility for a fun-filled time with the residents and our furry friends. We would like to have more pets to share with the residents. If you are interested, please call Suzanne Wasmund at 219-864-6453. We only ask that your pet be up to date on its rabies shot.

Happy March!

Spring is definitely on its way, and we are enjoying every bit of it by getting outside as much as possible. Parent-teacher conferences went very well, and teachers shared that the one-on-one time with families was incredibly valuable. It was wonderful to connect and celebrate the growth happening here!

CP&CC teachers and staff have been invited to a Preschool Staff Appreciation on Sunday, March 8, to honor their dedication with a Suessical Celebration during our worship service! Parents and students are invited to show their support by wearing red/white or your favorite Dr. Seuss gear to honor our preschool staff during the worship service!

Speaking of getting outside, we are hosting a POPPIN' POPCORN fundraiser (March 3-24) to raise funds for new playground mulch and sand. If you haven't seen the flyers yet, an order form is available on the counter by the church office. Every order—big or small—helps tremendously, and we truly appreciate your support.

A BIG THANK YOU to the congregation for donating \$875 toward this month's breakfasts, snacks, and lunches during this time of transition with the food program. Your generosity means so much to our children and program.

Don't forget! We are planning a Special Someone Dance on March 13, open to the church, preschool, and community. If you would like to help with planning, please contact Karianne at (219) 844-3030 ext. 305. All are welcome—we hope to see you there! Happy Birthday to Logan (16) and Journey (29)!



Children's Ministry Update

Our Sunday School room is slowly coming together! We've added a child-friendly map of the Middle East and some cozy bean bags to make the space more welcoming. Plans are also in the works to install a TV so we can incorporate videos into our lessons. This room will also serve as a meeting space for other church groups at times.

During Sunday School, the children learn how Scripture relates to their everyday lives. They are also practicing how to navigate the Bible and look up specific passages on their own. Please remember that Sunday School does not meet on the first Sunday of each month.

Thanks to your generous contributions, our "Change for Change" children's mission project continues to make a meaningful impact. We've had thoughtful discussions about how these funds can help others, and the children have the final say in where the money goes. With the most recent donations, they chose to give:

- \$100 to purchase food for The Vine Food Pantry
- \$100 to support the Preschool
- \$100 to help a child attend camp
- \$100 to purchase items for our local Humane Society. The children selected items directly from the Humane Society's wish list, and Carrie will be delivering them soon.

Thank you for supporting our children as they grow in faith and learn the joy of giving!





Staff Parish News

Welcome, Joseph Junkins! Please join us in welcoming Joseph Junkins, who will begin serving as our new custodian in March. We're delighted to have him join our team! Details about his specific work hours will be shared soon.

Thank You for Your Generosity

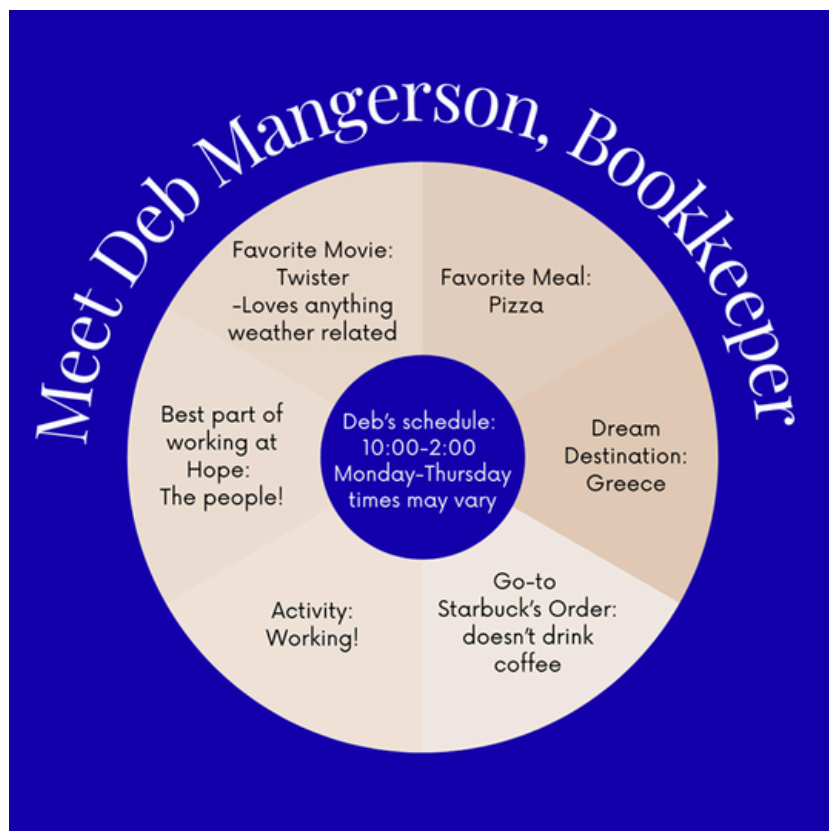
A heartfelt thank you to everyone who donated items to help us honor our preschool teachers on March 8. Your kindness and support make a real difference as we celebrate and appreciate our amazing teachers!

Staff Parish Relations Committee



Meet the
STAFF

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



Finance and Administrative



Financial Update

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

On behalf of the Finance Committee, I want to share with you where Hope UMC stands financially as of the end of January. For the month of January, Hope UMC lost \$27,610.

When we do a deep dive into the finances for the month, we find that our income from offering received was approximately \$15,381. Additional income of \$1,935 comes from rental income for the parsonage and the community center and donations for the mortgage and altar flowers.

Expenses for the month were \$43,141. These expenses are predominantly fixed expenses, with very little discretionary spending. You may be asking how do we manage to continue to keep the doors open when our expenses continue to exceed our income.

Both churches have been very fortunate that they have money either in investments or from the sale of property. From the former Woodmar Church, we have money invested in Heartland Foundation. Those dollars are managed by the Endowment Committee, chaired by Pete Vukovich, with restrictions on how those dollars can be accessed.

The former First United Methodist Church has money invested in Vanguard, again with certain restrictions on how that money can be accessed, as well as money invested with Heartland Foundation, which they received from the sale of the parsonage they owned.

Each month we receive a detailed accounting of the balances in those accounts. I will share those numbers with you once we receive the new statements. It's important to understand that there are restrictions in place on how those dollars are supposed to be spent. Those dollars were never intended to be used to offset the deficit incurred by expenses exceeding income. That is the job of the congregation through effective stewardship. The finance committee will begin focusing on developing an effective stewardship campaign to be initiated later this year.

Remember, the finance committee is here to serve you. If you have any questions about 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



Former First UMC for Sale

The sign is up! The former First United Methodist Church building at 6635 Hohman Avenue is now officially for sale.

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](https://www.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.

“AND THE GIFT GOES ON...”

Hope UMC Endowment Fund Fact Sheet

“Just what exactly is the Hope Endowment Fund?”

It is an investment fund, managed by Hope UMC Endowment Committee, which can be contributed to now or by a provision in your will. This is an endowment fund, which means that all gifts received go to the principal and are invested. The investment interest income increases with time and is the only money that is used for the support of Hope UMC and its missions. Your gift is included with other gifts received, making the Endowment Fund a significant resource that can be wisely invested.

“Why do we need an Endowment Fund?”

There is a long list of needs for upkeep, improvements, missions, and other worthwhile programs that cannot be financed from our regular giving that funds the annual budget. As the Endowment Fund principal grows, so does its investment income.

“What has the Endowment Fund done for Hope so far?”

From 2023 to 2025, the Endowment Fund has distributed almost \$43,000 to our church for missions, outreach, education, building and maintenance, equipment, worship, and music. Without this money, many programs would have been limited or cut completely, and many much-needed repairs would have been delayed.

“How did the Endowment Fund acquire these funds to distribute?”

Cash gifts and will bequests have been the most common ways. We all want to see our church prosper, continue to be an important force in the lives of the people in this community, and to provide resources and programs for the children and their children, and so on into the future. To help ensure this vision, despite the usual ups and downs of the economy, we encourage you to make a gift to the Hope Endowment Fund.

This can be done in two ways:

1. Make a cash gift now.
2. Plan a future gift by making a provision in your will to the Hope Endowment Fund.

A gift to the Hope Endowment Fund will add to this reservoir of strength for our church and will keep on giving back, year after year.

Any Endowment Committee member can give you further information and details of how to make a gift. Hope UMC Endowment Fund Committee: Pete Vukovich, Jane Harper-Alport, Chuck Anderson, Georgia Brown, Nancy Craig, Pastor James Denton, Bob Underwood, Pete Ward, and Mission Committee Representative Marcos Pontes.

****Note:** Gifts to the Endowment Fund must specifically designate: “Hope UMC (Hammond)-Endowment Fund” 7320 Northcote Ave. Hammond, IN 46324



March 2026



Woodner UMC Hammond Hope UMC Events

Mar 2026 (Central Time - Chicago)

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>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 - NantreKladdy - 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 Bells Rehearsal @</p>	<p>8:30am - Church Office Open @</p> <p>10am - Pastor's Office Open @</p> <p>10am - The Vine Food Pantry @</p> <p>10:30pm - Book/Bible Study @</p> <p>12:30pm - Kait & Cochet @ Hope</p> <p>6:30pm - NantreK - Girl Scout</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 - Kait & Cochet @ Hope</p> <p>6pm - Guiding Council @ Hope</p>	
<p>9am - Choir Rehearsal</p> <p>10:15am - Sunday Worship @</p> <p>11:30am - Adult Bible</p> <p>11:45am - Confirmation Class</p>	<p>8:30am - Church Office Open @</p> <p>10am - Pastor's Office Open @</p> <p>10am - The Vine Food Pantry @</p>	<p>8:30am - Church Office Open @</p> <p>10am - Pastor's Office Open @</p> <p>10:30am - Sunrise Seniors @ Hope</p> <p>6pm - Messy Church @ Woodner</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 Bells Rehearsal @</p>	<p>8:30am - Church Office Open @</p> <p>10am - Pastor's Office Open @</p> <p>10am - The Vine Food Pantry @</p> <p>10:30pm - Book/Bible Study @</p> <p>12:30pm - Kait & Cochet @ Hope</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 - Kait & Cochet @ Hope</p>	
<p>9am - Choir Rehearsal</p> <p>10:15am - Sunday Worship @</p> <p>11:30am - Adult Bible</p>	<p>8:30am - Church Office Open @</p> <p>10am - Knitting and quilting for</p> <p>10am - Lounge - Crochet</p> <p>10am - Pastor's Office Open @</p> <p>10am - The Vine Food Pantry @</p>	<p>8:30am - Church Office Open @</p> <p>10am - Pastor's Office Open @</p> <p>10:30am - Sunrise Seniors @ Hope</p> <p>6pm - Messy Church @ Woodner</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 Bells Rehearsal @</p>	<p>8:30am - Church Office Open @</p> <p>10am - Pastor's Office Open @</p> <p>10am - The Vine Food Pantry @</p> <p>10:30pm - Book/Bible Study @</p> <p>12:30pm - Kait & Cochet @ Hope</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 - Kait & Cochet @ Hope</p>	
<p>8:30am - Pancake Breakfast @</p> <p>9am - Choir Rehearsal</p> <p>10:15am - Palm Sunday Worship</p> <p>10:15am - Sunday Worship @</p> <p>11:30am - Adult Bible</p> <p>11:45am - Confirmation Class</p>	<p>8:30am - Church Office Open @</p> <p>10am - Pastor's Office Open @</p> <p>10am - The Vine Food Pantry @</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>6pm - Brianna's Hope @ Hope UMC</p> <p>7pm - Praise Bells Rehearsal @</p>	<p>8:30am - Church Office Open @</p> <p>10am - Pastor's Office Open @</p> <p>10am - The Vine Food Pantry @</p> <p>10:30pm - Book/Bible Study @</p> <p>11am - CPCC Board Meeting @</p> <p>12:30pm - Kait & Cochet @ Hope</p> <p>7pm - Maundy Thursday Service @</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 - Kait & Cochet @ Hope</p>	<p>Good Friday Stations of the Cross</p> <p>7pm - Good Friday Evening Service</p>