

*"Let the light of Jesus shine through you!"*

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## Upcoming Events

### Communion Sunday

Sun. Jan. 4<sup>th</sup>

### New Hope Board Meeting

Sun. Jan. 4<sup>th</sup>, 11:30 a.m.

### Executive Board Meeting

Tue. Jan. 6<sup>th</sup>, 6 p.m. @ Liberty Pole

### Liberty Pole Board Meeting

Mon. Jan. 12<sup>th</sup>, 4:30 p.m.

### Men's Group Gatherings

Tue. Jan. 13<sup>th</sup>, 9 a.m. & 5 p.m.

@ Viroqua Family Restaurant

### Ruth Bible Study Group

Sun. Jan. 18<sup>th</sup>, 3 p.m.

@ New Hope

### Food Pantry Open

Wednesdays: 5 – 6:30 p.m.

Thursdays: 9 – 11 a.m.

### Wednesday Warriors

Wed., 3:30 p.m. @ New Hope



## A New Year of Building Bridges!

In mid-to-late December, thousands of people gathered in a small river town to watch a historic landmark come crashing down. Countless others watched from afar as live streaming cameras spread the event around the world. I was one of these people, watching from the comfort of my home as the Black Hawk / Lansing Bridge was intentionally imploded and came crashing down into the icy cold Mississippi River. For 94 years, this vital river crossing linked the communities of Lansing, Iowa and De Soto, Wisconsin and became a well-known landmark over that time. The old bridge will be missed but thankfully a new bridge is being built directly adjacent to the place of the former structure and will open in the coming years.



Much like the icy cold expanse that now temporarily separates these two communities, people in our world, our nation, our communities, even some families are becoming increasingly divided. I see it all around. An “us versus them” mentality seems to swirl around so many aspects of our lives. It’s sad, disheartening, and destructive. We need more bridges and less ditches. But who and where are the bridge-builders?

In a world that is increasingly divided, WE, the followers of Jesus Christ, need to be proactive and intentional about building bridges over the chasm that separates people from others AND from God. Our faith calls us to be peacemakers, to love our neighbors, and to cultivate unity in our churches and communities. Over this new year, I pray that our churches can seek out ways to build bridges in our communities. May we work together to reunite people, build community relationships, and connect more individuals and families to God through the work of our hands and the love of God in all we do. Together, through the bridges we build, we can do effective kingdom work right here in the heart of the Driftless Region.

May your 2026 be filled with bridges built and blessings abounding.

~ Jeff Nelson

# Notes from Pastor Sandy

Another Christmas has come and gone. I have watched “A Charlie Brown Christmas” again and danced to Vince Guaraldi’s music. We have lit the candles and not burned down the churches. We have sung the old, old songs and are enriched by them. Family, food, and gifts have enriched us. And now... it’s January in Wisconsin.

It may be dark and cold, but it won’t be dull! We have the All-Church Conferences coming up on January 25<sup>th</sup> and there are lots of new things to celebrate in each church and lots more to plan. The men’s group will be starting. Please plan on participating in that and feel free to bring friends, sons and grandsons, and people you work with. It is men around a table with hot coffee and fellowship, helping to support each other.

The Book of Ruth study will be starting on Sunday, January 18<sup>th</sup> at the parsonage at 3:00 p.m. We discussed a variety of times, but it seems that the majority could make this time. It is NOT written in stone and can be adjusted as needed. Our study book is called “God of the Ordinary: A study in the book of Ruth” by my buddy Alistair Begg. It relates the well-known story of Ruth but grounds it in ordinary people and events. When you add together a great story, a great author, and the input of ordinary people over coffee and food, you can’t help but have a wonderful study.



Finally, we’ll continue through the Gospel of Luke with the early ministry of Jesus—from dedication in the Temple, to baptism and early teachings. We’ll talk about John the Baptist and Elijah and how similar they are. We’ll see Jesus hanging out with the Bible Smart Guys in the Temple in an entirely new way. It will be a wonderful month of going deep into Luke’s wonderful gospel story.

You have likely heard many syrupy comments about Christmas. It is all about love and family and giving. But without CHRIST, Christmas does not happen. Love and family and giving should happen every day. What makes Christmas special is that on THIS day, we experienced the greatest gift of all from Almighty God Himself. He adopted us into His family when we accept Jesus as our Savior. And the gift that Jesus brings is reconciliation with God, the removal of our sins—every time—and everlasting life. Accept No Substitute! Keep Christ in Christmas all through the year.

Blessings to all,

Pastor Sandy & Ron



## Preparing for the Year Ahead

Behind the fellowship and the fun of our church ministries lies the nitty-gritty business-like details that have to be figured out in order for it all to work efficiently! A major part of these details are ironed out during our annual church conferences! From approving budgets, audits, and leadership positions to looking back at and celebrating our ministry over the past year, each detail lays the groundwork for our ministry in the year ahead.

This year, each of our churches will be hosting their annual church conference during worship on Sunday, January 25<sup>th</sup>. Conference booklets for your respective church will be available for attendees to take, keep, and review at their leisure. We strongly encourage all members and friends to come and participate in this vital conference for their church. However, only members of our churches will have a vote in the business of their respective church conference. Please join us for these important services and help us prepare for our future ministry here in the Driftless Region!



### Waiting...

#### January Online Bible Study Series

For many, January is seen as a month of waiting. With the holiday rush behind us and the cold snow of winter keeping many indoors, we long for the warmth of spring and the chance to get outside and enjoy life *comfortably*. We try to fill our time, keeping busy until those green blades of grass appear. However, we get a little stir crazy. Our anxiety naturally peaks when we are faced with the unknown and as a result, we become restless. The truth is, waiting for something can be hard!

We face plenty of times of waiting on our faith journeys as well! We often see waiting as being a state of inactivity, however it is one of the most active periods on a Christian's journey! Just look outside... even in the bleak winter the birds are flying, moving from tree to tree. Deer frolic in freshly fallen snow. There is still life in these times of waiting! It's time to open your eyes and see these waiting times in a whole new light! We invite you to join us throughout the month of January as we explore what it means to faithfully wait and the challenges we face in waiting patiently on God. We will also learn how to embrace the necessary mind shift to benefit from our waiting seasons. It is a lesson we can all learn from! Links to join our series of studies can be found on our website: <https://driftlessministry.org/online-bible-study/>.



**Faithful Waiting** – begins Thursday, January 1<sup>st</sup>

**Waiting by the Brook: Learning to Wait Patiently on God** – begins Thursday, January 8<sup>th</sup>

**The Waiting Room** – begins Sunday, January 18<sup>th</sup>

**What Are You Waiting For?** – begins Sunday, January 25<sup>th</sup>



### Iron Sharpens Iron



A new community ministry is about to launch! Our churches are starting a men's group, giving area men a space where they can strengthen and empower one another in their lives, helping them to live boldly while encouraging them in their faith journey. We currently plan to meet once a month at various locations around the region. However, for this first gathering we are offering you two opportunities to participate! Our first gatherings will take place on Tuesday, January 13<sup>th</sup> at 9 a.m. and also 5 p.m. at the Viroqua Family Restaurant. Choose the time that works best for you. If you are interested in finding support, encouragement, advice or simply want to chat about everyday life with other men, don't miss out on this opportunity! For more information, please reach out to Ron Conrad at (608) 881-4277!



### Thank You for the Pictures!

A HUGE thank you goes out to everyone who took pictures and submitted them for this month's newsletter (you'll see some of them on the pages to follow). Your snap shots help to show that our churches are alive and on the move... and are much better than any clip art found online! Your thoughtful submissions are greatly appreciated and also help to make our newsletter more meaningful for everyone. I look forward to more snap shots of our churches in action in 2026! If you have any pictures from our services, ministries, or other church activities, we welcome them with open arms! Simply send them to [jefferynelson04@yahoo.com](mailto:jefferynelson04@yahoo.com) and just give a brief explanation of what's being depicted (because Jeff doesn't know *everything* that goes on!). Then look for them to appear in the next newsletter or they may even make it on our website! Once again, thank you for capturing these wonderful moments in the life of our churches!



### Prayers for January

Use the following prayers throughout this month to help supplement your prayer time!

**Sunday**

*Father, fill my heart with joy rooted in you, no matter the circumstances.*

**Monday**

*Lord, as I step into today, help me leave behind what hinders me and walk confidently in the new life you have given me.*

**Tuesday**

*Prince of Peace, help me to turn my anxieties over to you. Allow me to rest in Your peace and to share it with others in my words and actions.*

**Wednesday**

*Almighty God, teach me to be patient with others, showing grace as you so patiently guide me.*

**Thursday**

*Loving Lord, give me a tender heart to show kindness to others, even when it is unexpected or difficult.*

**Friday**

*Abba Father, I surrender my worries to you. Help me rest in your care.*

**Saturday**

*Jesus, help me shine your light brightly in a world that needs hope.*



### Working Together in Ministry

It's easy to sit on the sidelines and watch the church do its ministry. But it is much more fun and gratifying to be a part of the action! You are invited to be a part of the work of the church! We encourage everyone to come and participate in the discussions at your respective church meeting. Your ideas are vital to our ministry!

**New Hope Church Board Meeting**

Sunday, January 4<sup>th</sup>, 11:30 a.m.

**Executive Board Meeting**

Tuesday, January 6<sup>th</sup>, 6 p.m. @ Liberty Pole

**Liberty Pole Church Board Meeting**

Monday, January 12<sup>th</sup>, 4:30 p.m.



### Time for a Puzzle Swap!

With the long, cold winter months approaching, there is interest in setting up a puzzle lending library at the Retreat Methodist Church. You can bring your puzzles in, set them on a table, and pick up one you find interesting to put together at your home! Many of us have puzzles that we've already done, but don't want to throw them away. Give those old puzzles new life and share them with your neighbors and friends, providing our community hours of entertainment during some of the most reclusive months of the year!



### Food Pantry Needs

The New Hope Food Pantry welcomes your generous donations to help those in need in our communities. This month the pantry is seeking donations of **syrup, snack crackers, peaches, and toiletries**. In addition to these items, the food pantry also greatly appreciates your monetary donations!

If you wish to donate items or funds to the New Hope Food Pantry, feel free to drop them off at any of our three churches.

You may also drop them off during the pantry's open hours:  
Wednesdays, 5 – 6:30 p.m.  
and Thursdays, 9 – 11 a.m.



**The New Hope Food Pantry is located at  
E2286 State Highway 82, De Soto, WI 54624**



### God of the Ordinary: A Study of Ruth

The book of Ruth may be one of the loveliest short stories ever written, telling an unforgettable tale of purity, faithfulness, innocence, loyalty, duty, and love. Yet it is set in dark times: the final verse of the book of Judges, which precedes Ruth in the Bible, tells us that “in those days there was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes.”

Against this backdrop of strife and chaos, Ruth is a story of ordinary people in Bethlehem making the most of their bad situation—and finding God in the midst of it. We invite you to join us for this wonderful Bible study focused on the book of Ruth. Our first meeting will be Sunday, January 18<sup>th</sup> at 3 p.m. in the parsonage next to the New Hope church. If adjustments need to be made to our meeting time/place to accommodate more individuals, that can certainly be arranged! Everyone is invited to participate. If you would like more information, please reach out to Pastor Sandy at (608) 881-4276. We hope you can join us for this amazing study!



### Bible-in-a-Year Plan

#### January Scriptures

- 1 – 2 Sam. 13; Dan. 8; Rom. 15:14-33
- 2 – 2 Sam. 14; Dan. 9; Rom. 16
- 3 – 2 Sam. 15; Dan. 10; Mark 1:1-20
- 4 – 2 Sam. 16; Dan. 11:1-19; Mark 1:21-45
- 5 – 2 Sam. 17; Dan. 11:20-45; Mark 2
- 6 – 2 Sam. 18; Dan. 12; Mark 3:1-19
- 7 – 2 Sam. 19; Hos. 1-2:1; Mark 3:20-35
- 8 – 2 Sam. 20-21; Hos. 2:2-23; Mark 4:1-20
- 9 – 2 Sam. 22; Hos. 3; Mark 4:21-41
- 10 – 2 Sam. 23; Hos. 4:1-11; Mark 5:1-20
- 11 – 2 Sam. 24; Hos. 4:12-5:4; Mark 5:21-43
- 12 – 1 Kings 1; Hos. 5:5-15; Mark 6:1-29
- 13 – 1 Kings 2; Hos. 6-7:2; Mark 6:30-56
- 14 – 1 Kings 3; Hos. 7:3-16; Mark 7:1-13
- 15 – 1 Kings 4-5; Hos. 8; Mark 7:14-37
- 16 – 1 Kings 6; Hos. 9:1-16; Mark 8:1-21
- 17 – 1 Kings 7; Hos. 9:17-10:15; Mark 8:22-9:1
- 18 – 1 Kings 8; Hos. 11:1-11; Mark 9:2-50
- 19 – 1 Kings 9; Hos. 11:12-12:14; Mark 10:1-31
- 20 – 1 Kings 10; Hos. 13; Mark 10:32-52
- 21 – 1 Kings 11; Hos. 14; Mark 11:1-14
- 22 – 1 Kings 12:1-31; Joel 1; Mark 11:15-33
- 23 – 1 Kings 12:32-13:34; Joel 2:1-11; Mark 12:1-27
- 24 – 1 Kings 14; Joel 2:12-32; Mark 12:28-44
- 25 – 1 Kings 15-16; Joel 3; Mark 13:1-13
- 26 – 1 Kings 17; Amos 1; Mark 13:14-37
- 27 – 1 Kings 18; Amos 2-3:2; Mark 14:1-31
- 28 – 1 Kings 19; Amos 3:3-4:3; Mark 14:32-72
- 29 – 1 Kings 20; Amos 4:4-13; Mark 15:1-20
- 30 – 1 Kings 21; Amos 5; Mark 15:21-47
- 31 – 1 Kings 22; Amos 6; Mark 16



Find the full plan and more online at:  
<https://driftlessministry.org/bibleplans/>

### A Season of Blessings

A special "Thank You" to all those who donated to the New Hope Food Pantry! Local businesses, organizations, churches and monthly supporters have enabled the pantry to thrive this year.

Recent monetary donations, as well as local food drives leaves us well stocked and ready for the new year. This past Christmas, each family received a ham and a homemade apple crisp.

Our mission would not be possible without such a generous community!

Thank You and Blessings,  
Debbie, Linda, & Robbin



Paul Larson from the Vernon County Fair dropped off a donation of 120 pounds of cheese!



Chief Martinson and Chief 2 Yaun dropped off a donation of juice, milk, canned goods, and \$576 in cash that they collected at their Santa Breakfast in December.



The New Hope Food Pantry received a \$1000 donation from the Chad Wild Myhre Memorial.



The De Soto Area Lions Club dropped off a \$400 donation raised during their Soup, Salad, and Sandwich Supper held back in November.

*This is the day that the Lord has made;  
let us rejoice and be glad in it.*

~ Psalm 118:24 ~

### An Active Advent!

It has been a busy Advent and Christmas season for our churches! Each of our churches participated in some fun and important ministries across our communities!

After initially being delayed by frigid weather, members and friends of the Retreat congregation came together during the week to assemble and distribute Christmas cookies for several community members and friends of the church. Those who received their cookies were very appreciative and there were smiles all around!



*Above: Mary Ruth Marx, Marla Withey (with Donna Inman), and Joan Seymour receive their Christmas cookie packages from the Retreat church.*

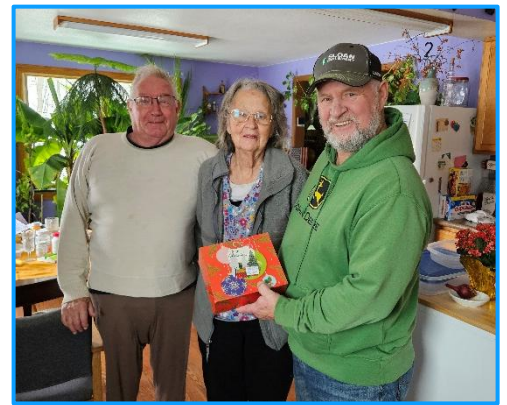
*Right: John Hanson delivers a Christmas cookie package to Jack and Ramona La Haie.*

Sunday, December 14<sup>th</sup> brought other activities around region. The Wednesday Warriors sang for the New Hope congregation, spreading Christmas cheer and sharing the true meaning of Christmas with those in attendance.

Later in the afternoon, Pastor Sandy, Ron, and Janna Thew from Liberty Pole joined the West Prairie Singers for their Christmas Concert. Together, they filled the North West Prairie Lutheran Church with beautiful Christmas music for all to hear.

And to top it all off, on Sunday, December 21<sup>st</sup>, members of the Liberty Pole congregation gathered for some Christmas caroling! It looks like it was a fun evening with plenty of Christmas cheer!

All of this festive fun happened even before we reached Christmas Eve! We hope you were able to join us during the Advent and Christmas seasons and that you all have a truly blessed New Year!



*Above: The Wednesday Warriors sing for the New Hope congregation.*

*Above Right: The West Prairie Singers, including Pastor Sandy, Ron, and Janna Thew, make a joyful noise celebrating the birth of our Savior!*

*Right: Members of the Liberty Pole congregation enjoyed an evening of Christmas Caroling, spreading Christmas cheer around the area!*



## Shining Celebrations!

### Birthdays

Frank Hammond – Jan. 1<sup>st</sup>  
 Vicki Newsome – Jan. 1<sup>st</sup>  
 Sheryl Haakenson – Jan. 3<sup>rd</sup>  
 Nancy Cox – Jan. 4<sup>th</sup>  
 Alma Robertson – Jan. 6<sup>th</sup>  
 Oscar Johnson – Jan. 7<sup>th</sup>  
 Casey Funk – Jan. 9<sup>th</sup>  
 Ben Hanson – Jan. 10<sup>th</sup>

Olive Brinkman – Jan. 10<sup>th</sup>  
 Adam Caley – Jan. 11<sup>th</sup>  
 Jim Taylor – Jan. 18<sup>th</sup>  
 Debra Solverson – Jan. 18<sup>th</sup>  
 Diane Suiter – Jan. 20<sup>th</sup>  
 Connor Frank – Jan. 21<sup>st</sup>  
 Bill Nummerdor – Jan. 21<sup>st</sup>  
 Judy Gardner – Jan. 21<sup>st</sup>

Debora Hornby – Jan. 21<sup>st</sup>  
 Cheyenne Fedler – Jan. 22<sup>nd</sup>  
 Darwin Kumlin – Jan. 23<sup>rd</sup>  
 Roger Hanson – Jan. 24<sup>th</sup>  
 Chris Baker – Jan. 27<sup>th</sup>  
 Mark Arneson – Jan. 28<sup>th</sup>



### Anniversaries

Dewey & Jodi Waddell – Jan. 1<sup>st</sup>  
 Paul & Ann Adams – Jan. 19<sup>th</sup>



Did we miss your birthday, anniversary, or other special day?  
 Let us know! E-mail us at [newsletter@driftlessministry.org](mailto:newsletter@driftlessministry.org).

### **Fellowship Sunday**

Break up your winter and avoid cabin fever by enjoying some fellowship during our Fellowship Sunday! Come and enjoy a delicious treat while catching up with your church family and friends. The next Fellowship Sunday at the Retreat church will take place on Sunday, January 4<sup>th</sup> following worship. Don't miss this fun opportunity to enjoy some fellowship!



### Church Contacts



**Pastor –** Rev. Sandy Conrad  
 (608) 881-4276  
[pastor@driftlessministry.org](mailto:pastor@driftlessministry.org)

**Lay Leaders –** Debbie Groves: (608) 648-3684  
 Barb Robson: (608) 606-5809  
 Jeffery Nelson: (608) 379-2933

**Food Pantry –** Debbie Groves: (608) 648-3684  
 Robbin Hennen: (608) 804-0314



# January 2026

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<b>LP: Liberty Pole</b> <b>NH: New Hope</b> <b>R: Retreat</b>	<p>Did you miss Sunday worship?            Catch up by watching it online at  <a href="https://driftlessministry.org/sermons/">https://driftlessministry.org/sermons/</a>.</p> <p>New videos are uploaded            every Sunday afternoon/evening!</p>		<b>31</b>	<b>1</b> 	<b>2</b> <i>Pastors Sabbath</i>	<b>3</b>
<b>4</b> Epiphany Sunday Communion Sunday Fellowship Sunday (R) NH Board Meeting 11:30 a.m.	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b> Epiphany Exec. Meeting 6 p.m. @ Liberty Pole	<b>7</b> Wednesday Warriors 3:30 p.m. @ New Hope Food Pantry Open 5 – 6:30 p.m.	<b>8</b> Food Pantry Open 9 – 11 a.m.	<b>9</b> <i>Pastors Sabbath</i>	<b>10</b>
<b>11</b> Baptism of the Lord Sunday	<b>12</b> Liberty Pole Board Meeting 4:30 p.m.	<b>13</b> Mens Group Gatherings 9 a.m. & 5 p.m. Viroqua Family Restaurant	<b>14</b> Wednesday Warriors 3:30 p.m. @ New Hope Food Pantry Open 5 – 6:30 p.m.	<b>15</b> Food Pantry Open 9 – 11 a.m.	<b>16</b> <i>Pastors Sabbath</i>	<b>17</b>
<b>18</b> Ruth Bible Study 3 p.m. @ New Hope	<b>19</b>  Newsletter Submission Deadline	<b>20</b>	<b>21</b> Wednesday Warriors 3:30 p.m. @ New Hope Food Pantry Open 5 – 6:30 p.m.	<b>22</b> Food Pantry Open 9 – 11 a.m.	<b>23</b> <i>Pastors Sabbath</i>	<b>24</b>
<b>25</b> Annual Church Conferences 8 a.m. @ Retreat 9:15 a.m. @ Liberty Pole 10:30 a.m. @ New Hope	<b>26</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>28</b> Wednesday Warriors 3:30 p.m. @ New Hope Food Pantry Open 5 – 6:30 p.m.	<b>29</b> Food Pantry Open 9 – 11 a.m.	<b>30</b> <i>Pastors Sabbath</i>	<b>31</b>

*Shine*

Liberty Pole, New Hope & Retreat Methodist Churches  
c/o Jeff Nelson  
120 Rosewood Ln N  
West Salem, WI 54669

**Return Service Requested**

Address Label Here

**2026**  
*Annual Church Conferences*



**Driftless Ministries**  
*Liberty Pole, New Hope, & Retreat Methodist Churches*

**Sunday, January 25, 2026**

*Join us for  
worship!*

**Every Sunday**  
8 a.m. @ Retreat  
9:15 a.m. @ Liberty Pole  
10:30 a.m. @ New Hope

