

NEW HANOVER HIGHLIGHTS

A Publication of New Hanover Evangelical Lutheran Church



Special Meeting



Advent Activities



Christmas



Longest Night

More Opportunities Explore Opportunities Explore Opportunities Explore Opportunities

“Each of us is an inn-keeper who decides if there is room for Jesus.” —Neal A. Maxwell

Special Congregational Meeting

Sunday, December 10th, 10:00 AM

All “Voting Members” are encouraged to attend a special congregational meeting immediately following the worship service. The official agenda is to vote and adopt the following documents: 1.) CONSTITUTION for NEW HANOVER EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH 2023 and 2.) 2024 New Hanover Evangelical Lutheran Church Budget. No other items may be voted upon or brought up for discussion per the current constitution.

NHELC offers three Christmas Eve services

Sunday, December 24th

All services will be held in person. The 9:00 AM and 8:00 PM services will be available online too.

- 9:00 AM** Featuring a live nativity
- 4:00 PM** Candlelight Christmas Eve Service
- 8:00 PM** Candlelight Christmas Eve Service
(See page 6 for special music)



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Be an angel to an underprivileged youth

NHELC is gathering Christmas gifts for the residents at Martin Luther School (Gemma Services). Check out the Angel Tree in the welcome center. The tree is decorated with angels, which have a gift suggestion printed on the back. To help, take an angel(s) from the tree, purchase the gift, then bring the **unwrapped** gift to church by **Sunday, December 3rd**, and place the gift by the tree. Gifts must be brought to the church by December 3rd so the gifts can be taken to Martin Luther School for staff to process. Thank you for bringing Christmas joy to the hearts of youth with special needs.

Martin Luther School provides hope for students who need emotional and behavioral help. Students range in age from kindergarten through twelfth grade.



Christmas Gathering Social

Thursday, December 14th, noon – 3:00 PM

All are invited for a Christmas Gathering social at NHELC in the Fellowship Hall. Enjoy a delicious luncheon and friendly fellowship followed by a Christmas hymn sing. In keeping with the holiday gift-giving spirit, participants are invited to prepare Care Packages for the homeless. A sign-up sheet is available on the desk in the welcome center to help with planning this event. For information on the event or to help organize, contact Pastor Scott at psstaub@gmail.com.

LIVE NATIVITY

brings Christmas story to life

You can be a part of the live nativity during the 9:00 AM worship service on Christmas Eve day. Sign up today and witness the Christmas story through the eyes of one of those from biblical past who observed the birth of our Savior. A sign-up sheet is available on the desk in the welcome center. Hurry. There's a limited number of open cast positions.



Advent Social

Sunday, December 10th, 2 – 4 PM

The Advent Social is for all ages. Activities include making crafts, playing games and decorating cookies, bags and cards for NHELC homebound members. Snacks will be served.

Bring a donation of personal care items such as tissues, toothpaste, toothbrushes, Chapstick, lotion, individually wrapped snacks, etc. for the homebound members' bags. Sign up on the sign-up genius (<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10C0F4EAFAC2CAAF4C16-45586827-advent>) or the paper sign-up on the desk in the Welcome Center by **Sunday, December 3rd**, if you are planning to attend so event planners can prepare for the activities. The cookies, bags and cards will be given to homebound members by the carolers on December 17th. Any questions about the Advent Social, contact Jean Moser at (610) 367-0342.



Christmas Pageant

Sunday, December 17th, 10:15 AM

Come out and support our children and enjoy our 2023 Christmas Pageant. The pageant will take place on Sunday, December 17th, at 10:15 AM. Regular J.A.M. will not be held that day. Bring cookies or a snack to share. Drinks will be provided.



Sunday, December 17th, 1 – 3 PM

Gather your friends and family members for a fun and uplifting time, singing favorite and beloved Christmas carols to our NHELCL homebound members. Carolers will gather in the Fellowship Hall at 1:00 PM to plan the routes and pick up the goodie bags prepared at the Advent Social. After caroling, we will return to the church to enjoy some cookies and hot cocoa. Caroling is a wonderful opportunity to spread some Christmas cheer. Contact Director of Music Ministry Patricia Nyce or Jean Moser (610-367-0342) with any questions about the caroling.

Longest Night

Thursday, December 21st, 5 – 9 PM

NHELCL is working with St. James Pottstown to host a Longest Night Labyrinth and Prayer Walk. The event will be held at St. James Lutheran Church at 1101 E. Hight St. in Pottstown. This is open house style. Come when you can and leave at your will. A labyrinth is a path of prayer and is for all ages. Unlike a maze, a labyrinth has no dead ends and there are no choices to make. There is one path to the center. Walking the labyrinth is a prayer one does with the whole body. It provides a three-fold process of experiencing God.

More instruction will be provided at the Labyrinth Walk. Other options will be available for those who have difficulty walking the labyrinth.

Ample parking is available at the rear of the church. An elevator and stairs are available for entering the building. Nikki Young will be present during the event. Contact Nikki with any questions.

Welcome to the Soupik Family



Hello, we are the Soupik Family — Jamie, Alyssa, Lainey and Maggie. We are neighbors of the church on Swamp Picnic Road, and have been attending the picnics, worship and J.A.M.

Jamie is a carpenter and enjoys hunting, fishing and sports. Alyssa is a teacher and enjoys arts and crafts and reading. Lainey and Maggie attend J.A.M. (Jesus and Me); Maggie will be baptized on December 17th at our worship. Their extended family includes two dogs, three cats and fish.

We look forward to meeting our new church family and invite you to introduce yourself.

God on Tap

Join in the discussion on **Remembering Pearl Harbor** at this month's God on Tap. The dinner and discussion will be held at Main Street in Bally at 6:00 PM on December 7th. This year, December 7th will mark 82 years since the attack. For more information, email Randy Dotterer at RDPTW6489@Gmail.com or call/text him at 610-306-0621. God on Tap meets the first Thursday of the month.

NHELC Book Club

The NHELC Book Club is reading *The Heaven and Earth Grocery Store* by James McBride. You are invited to join the discussion of this book on **Tuesday, December 5th, at 6:30 PM at the Plaza Azteca in Greshville**. Would you like more information about this event? Contact Sharon Tracey.



Do you like to read?

Readers are needed for the Lessons and Carols service on Sunday, December 31st. A sign-up sheet is available on the desk in the Welcome Center.



Parents of young children: check out the new nursery



The Nursery room is located between the Welcome Center and the Fellowship Hall. Parents are welcome to use the room during worship services as needed. The room provides a comfortable play area in a joyful environment with toys and books included. The room has a changing room access and a private nursing room next door. Plans are in the works to install a video monitor to broadcast worship services. See an usher if you need directions.

Join us for J.A.M (Jesus and Me)

If you are new or have not attended before, consider joining us for J.A.M. on Sunday mornings. J.A.M. runs from 10:15-11:15 and is for all ages. If you have any questions, contact Nikki Young. **Please note – there will be no J.A.M. on December 24th and 31st.**



Come to the Loaves & Fishes mid-week dinner

**Wednesday, December 20th
5:45 PM in Fellowship Hall**



Breakfast Fellowship

Men's Breakfast

Saturday, December 9th, 8:00 AM
Brookside Family Restaurant
1338 North Charlotte Street

Men meet the second Saturday of the month. No reservations required. For more information, contact Ron Fegley at 484-300-3025.

Women's Breakfast

Wednesday, December 13th, 8:30 AM
Shorty's Sunflower Café
1494 North Charlotte Street

Women meet on the second Wednesday of the month. Reservations are required. To reserve your seat, contact Sandy Wesner at 215-679-9021 by Tuesday noon before the breakfast.

Christmas Cheer – What is Cheer?

So often, one hears the phrase Christmas Cheer in movies, public declarations, advertising, and to describe a favorite beverage during the holiday season (a season which begins now sometime in September, just saying). However, what does it mean? So, in the immortal words of my granddaughter Aubreyella, “Look it up, Grandpa!” So, I did.

Cheer as a noun is defined as:

1. A shout of approval, encouragement, or congratulation. “a remark that drew cheers from the crowd.”
2. A short, rehearsed jingle or phrase, shouted in unison by a squad of cheerleaders.
3. Comfort or encouragement. “a message of cheer.” (The American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language, 5th Edition)

Now I understand and like the word “cheer”. In the first definition, I believe Christmas Cheer was exactly what God intended the word to mean. God

sent angels/messengers to announce and proclaim the coming of our Lord, Jesus Christ. The angles were heard on high (shouting), volume 11 on a scale of 1 to 10 for you Spinal Tap band fans, for you who don't know Spinal Tap, “Look

it Up!” Anyway, the proclamation drew wide approval, encouragement, and cheers from the shepherds and for those waiting for the messiah. It inspired people from vast distances to travel to witness the event.

Which brings us to definition 2. Both the shepherds and “wise people” traveled to the scene, and they returned to their homes in the field and abroad. No doubt to tell others about what was proclaimed and what they had witnessed. Today, one wishes others, “Merry Christmas!” A rehearsed jingle, no doubt spoken unconsciously in Joy to pass on the original short phrase of celebrating the coming of the Lord to save us all.

And finally, I believe we all when we wish someone Merry Christmas, we speak it in hope of bringing comfort or encouragement to others. Merry Christmas is a message of cheer. The cheer being the congratulations and affirmation to God, for sending God's son to this earth to walk and teach us how to encourage and love one another. That I believe is Christmas Cheer. Not the tree, lights, meal, or gifts (however they are all excellent); however, it's the cheer that makes Christmas special. A time when we all can wish love and peace to a world that so desperately needs it and proclaim that God has saved us all.

Merry Christmas,
Pastor Scott



Cemetery Committee seeks an assistant caretaker

Duties consist of taking care of cemetery and church grounds, helping with maintaining equipment and assisting with funerals. If interested in this position, contact Norm Hunsberger at 484-431-3622 or nhunsberger29@gmail.com.



Council Corner

- ◆ The Council and Food Ministry Board express a big “Thank You” to Jim Davidheiser for his temporary chef responsibilities for our Loaves & Fishes Food Ministry while Chef Chris Fatzinger was on medical leave for six weeks recovering from recent surgery. Welcome back Chef Chris!
- ◆ The Council wishes the staff and the entire NHELCC membership a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!
- ◆ Please plan to attend the December 10th Congregation Meeting for presentation of the 2024 Annual Budget and the first ratification vote of the NHELCC Constitution updates (two separate Congregational meetings required to fully ratify Constitution).
- ◆ Council nominations are open! Please see any current Council member if you have any interest in supporting the business side of NHELCC and joining the Council.
- ◆ The Council voted favorably to allow Pastor Scott to take up to five weeks of un-paid sabbatical time annually, not to be used all at the same time, and revisited annually. This is within the acceptable ELCA guidelines for full-time rostered leaders.
- ◆ Projected 2024 budget anticipated deficit could be erased if each giving unit increased giving by \$75.00/month.



GriefShare

GriefShare is a grief support group where you can find help and healing for the hurt of losing a loved one. GriefShare is for everyone who is grieving the death of a loved one—whether you’ve experienced the loss of a spouse, parents, child (infant, young child, teen, adult, unborn), friend, sibling, coworker, or other relative. There are many GriefShare groups meeting on a weekly basis at locations nearby. The program is designed so that you can join the group at any time. There are also online opportunities. To register for this program or to learn more, visit www.GriefShare.org.

For questions or assistance, feel free to call Rosalie Lisa 610-416-8193.

Christmas Eve music enhances worship experience

The traditional service on Christmas Eve will be at 8 PM. We will begin the service at 7:30 PM with 30 minutes of beautifully arranged music for organ, brass, and flute. Selections include *March of the Three Kings*, *Tomorrow Shall Be My Dancing Day*, *And the Glory of the Lord* (from *Messiah*), and *Wachet auf*. The Chancel Choir will be singing *Ding Dong! Merrily on High*, with additional handbell and percussion accompaniment. Come early, bring a friend, find a good seat and delight in the beauty of this worship service.



Mental Health Wellness: Coping Over the Holidays

By Marlene Hansley, MSN, RN

The holiday season is a joyous time of the year filled with families, friends and activities. For some people though, the holiday season brings on stress, sadness and depression brought on by many situations. There are useful tips people can do to help minimize the stress and sadness and ways to help others who may be in need this holiday season.

The holidays are a happy time so why do I feel so down? Stress leads to sadness and depression. Stress over family, gifts, loved ones far away and loved ones lost leads to an empty feeling. This stress and sadness brings on a range of emotions for people.

Some ways to cope with the above include:

- ✓ Maintain a well-balanced nutrition plan. A good diet promotes a positive feeling of self.
- ✓ Get regular exercise to improve mood and energy levels. Go outside even on a cold day and get some much-needed vitamin C.
- ✓ Maintain a healthy sleep pattern. Lack of sleep affects your mood, how you think, and overall functioning. Seven to nine hours per day is recommended but everyone is different. Most important is to be consistent.

- ✓ Make time for family and friends. They are a good support system.
- ✓ Do a random act of kindness such as volunteering or donating to a charity. Activities like this increase self-esteem. Reach out to someone in need with a call or visit or send a card to someone.

Feeling down at times is normal for individuals, especially during difficult times. Persistent or ongoing sadness and depression may indicate something deeper. Winter brings cold weather and darkness which can affect the mental state of people. Check out resources on the websites for mental health such as NAMI and the Centers for Disease Control (CDC).

Grief and loss is difficult for those with recent loss. My family and I are one of many families facing this situation this holiday season with the loss of someone very dear. Reach out to others and let them know you care. It is truly a random act of kindness.

Reference:

www.mayoclinichealthsystem.org



While waiting ...

Advent does not lead to nervous tension stemming from expectation of something spectacular about to happen. On the contrary, it leads to a growing inner stillness and joy allowing me to realize that he for whom I am waiting has already arrived and speaks to me in the silence of my heart.

Just as a mother feels the child grow in her and is not surprised on the day of the birth, but joyfully receives the one she learned to know during her waiting, so Jesus can be born in my life slowly and steadily and be received as the one I learned to know while waiting.

—Henri J.M. Nouwen, *The Genesee Diary*

December Celebrations

Happy Birthday to the following members, who will be celebrating their 90th or greater birthday in December. Their addresses are listed below for those who would like to send birthday greetings.

Marlyn Bieleski

Marlyn celebrates her 96th birthday on December 5th
2300 North Charlotte Street
Pottstown, PA 19464

John LeVan

John celebrates his 90th birthday on December 15th
35 North Walnut Street, Apt. 214
Boyertown, PA 19512-1031

Paul Knauer

Paul celebrates his 90th birthday on December 22nd
2262 Big Road
Gilbertsville, PA 19525

Ray Feick

Ray celebrates his 92nd birthday on December 31st
2987 Lutheran Road
Gilbertsville, PA 19525



Happy anniversary to the following couples, celebrating their anniversary in December.

- 12 Mike and Sheri Wenerowicz
- 14 David and Bonnie Eichenlaub
- 25 John and Hazel LeVan
- 28 Terry and Roxanne Hersh
- 30 Richard and Emily Willis
- 31 Bob and Elfriede Ilik

And, we extend a happy birthday to the following who will celebrate a birthday in December too.

- 1 Kathy Kane, Michael Wirt
- 2 Chris Fatzinger, Elfriede Ilik, Rochelle Morrell, Doug Senne
- 3 Thomas Hennessey
- 4 Daniel Dinsmore, Bill Kingsepp, Samme Marazas
- 5 Alec Domenick, Daniel Smale
- 6 Nancy Gross, David Lynn, Camryn Urbassik
- 7 Becky Gallagher, Chase Sharp, Nathan Smoot
- 8 Peter Wurst
- 9 Ryan Fegley, Jayne McHugh, Yvonne Peto
- 10 Doris Callow
- 11 Rachel Clark, Kendra Holiday, John Nuss
- 12 Ryan McNichol
- 13 Shannya Wentzel, Roger Yost
- 14 Peyton Comtois, Angela Kirn, Lois O'Dell, Michelle Stapleton, Raymond Velazquez
- 15 Denise Gaugler
- 16 William Boys
- 17 Carl Asti, Rachelle Kunsch
- 18 Bree Hennessy, Jonathan Mayan, Stacey Shirk
- 19 Domenic Capone
- 20 Scott Ehling, Jeffrey Moser
- 21 Justin Duncan, Landon Woods
- 22 Brittney Agliano, Michael Norris
- 23 Norm Hunsberger, Virginia Specht
- 24 Tom Kehs
- 25 Natalie Weller, Johnathan White, Nicholas White
- 26 Barbara Eisenhart
- 27 Jeffrey Antonuk, Darlene Medlar
- 28 Beth Yost
- 29 Julia Camp, Andrew Zuchero
- 30 Deb Becker, Joanne Evans, Joan Flack, Jennifer McCarthy, Helen Weaver
- 31 Joseph Allen

Keep in Touch

New Hanover Evangelical Lutheran Church

2941 Lutheran Road

Gilbertsville, PA 19525

newhanoverlutheran.org

610-326-1335

facebook.com/NewHanoverLutheranChurch

Office Hours: Monday – Friday, 9:00 AM – 2:00 PM

Call for an appointment.

Reconciling in Christ (RIC)

Frequently Asked Questions

What do we have to do to become an RIC church?

There are four principal steps to achieving RIC status within the ELCA. They are:

1. Our church explicitly states a welcome to people of “all sexual orientations, gender identities, and gender expressions” or “LGBTQIA+” and names our commitment to racial equity or anti-racism in our Welcome Statement
2. Be open to calling an LGBTQIA+ and Black, Brown, Indigenous, Person of Color (BIPOC) rostered leader
3. Allow LGBTQIA+ weddings and blessings to be performed in our sanctuary
4. Make a “meaningful” annual contribution to support the national RIC program

What does this process look like?

Most RIC processes take 1-2 years. During that time there will be:

- One-to-one conversations between the RIC Core Team and congregation members
- Bible studies
- Video discussions
- Open forums

We can then earn the RIC designation when we approve the new Welcome Statement through a congregational vote.

What is a “Welcome Statement?”

A community’s Welcome Statement is a public document created to specifically welcome “lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, and asexual/aromantic” (LGBTQIA+) people or “people of all sexual orientations, gender identities, and gender expressions” and a “commitment to racial equity” or “anti-racism.”

Why single out LGBTQIA+ folks and a commitment to anti-racism? Aren’t we already welcoming?

Earning and displaying the RIC designation helps remove the guesswork for those seeking a safe and welcoming congregation. When an LGBTQIA+ Christian enters an RIC church they will know that they are welcome to be themselves and to fully participate in the life of the church.

That is not always the case in many churches. LGBTQIA+ people either assume they are not truly welcome or that they have to take a risk to see if the congregation they visit will let them truly be a part of the church and still be themselves.

When was the RIC program started and why?

Since 1983, the RIC program has been a public way for faith communities to see, name, celebrate, and advocate for people of all sexual orientations, gender identities, and gender expressions in the Lutheran church.

What impact will this have on church attendance?

Becoming RIC is not a silver bullet to improve attendance or finances. Many congregations do see growth after becoming RIC, but that is not why we would consider doing it. If we want to become RIC, we should do so because we believe it is what God is calling us to do.

What happens after we become RIC?

We would be added to the ReconcilingWorks list of RIC congregations. People can go to the ReconcilingWorks website to look for RIC congregations in our area and we will show up when folks search for local churches. We can advertise ourselves as a faith community that has done this discernment work and is affirming to LGBTQIA+ people. This might practically look like putting the RIC logo on our signs, in our bulletins, our newsletter, website, etc. We can also publish our Welcome Statement in the bulletin or on the website, etc.

Who can I talk to if I want to learn more or share some thoughts?

The NHELIC RIC Core Team is responsible for setting the schedule of educational opportunities and drafting the Welcome Statement that will be presented to the church council for approval. Then, in turn, the Welcome Statement will be presented to the congregation for approval.

The members of this team are Pastor Scott, Diane Bealer, Rick Hausch, Sharon Tracey, Josh Young, and Janet Psota. Please feel welcome to approach any of these Core Team members with questions or concerns.

How many ELCA organizations are RIC?

Currently, approximately 9% of ELCA organizations and ministries are recognized as RIC. This number includes congregations, seminaries, synods, campus ministries, etc. At the time of this writing there are 1031 RIC organizations and 303 organizations in the process of becoming RIC.

What is the relationship between ReconcilingWorks, the ELCA?

ReconcilingWorks is an independently organized 501(c)(3) organization. The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) formally recognizes ReconcilingWorks as an "Independent Lutheran Organization," affirming collaborative work in reaching out to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, and asexual/aromantic people.

ReconcilingWorks advocates for change within the institutional churches to ensure that all rites, sacraments, and ministries of the Church are open to all.

Prayer

God, when you called each of us into being, you delighted in your works. You gifted us with differences that illuminate the breadth of beauty, wisdom, and practices of love in your creation. In whatever ways we still struggle to accept and celebrate our own unique offerings, free us from narrow thinking that confines, constrains, or condemns your good work in us. Amen.