



Bits from Blayne

A Lutheran Pastor's Pet Peeve

I have a confession to make. Pastors have pet peeves too. One of mine comes from a phrase I have heard Christians use countless times. It is almost always spoken with good intentions, usually by someone who sincerely wants another person to know Jesus and the salvation we have in Him. "All you have to do is give your heart to Jesus." I understand what they mean. I really do. But there are five words in that sentence that make this Lutheran pastor squirm a little: "All you have to do." If salvation is truly by grace, why does the sentence begin by telling me what I have to do?

This is one of those places where different Christian traditions sometimes use very different language. You may have worshiped in a church where people were invited forward for an altar call, to make a decision for Christ, accept Jesus into their heart, or publicly commit their life to Him. Lutherans tend to speak differently, and there is a reason for that. We begin by asking a very simple question: Who makes the first move?

Scripture's answer seems remarkably consistent. Jesus tells His disciples, "You did not choose me, but I chose you" (John 15:16). Paul writes, "For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God" (Ephesians 2:8). Romans tells us where faith itself comes from: "So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ" (Romans 10:17). Even our confession of faith is God's work in us, as Paul writes, "No one can say 'Jesus is Lord' except in the Holy Spirit" (1 Corinthians 12:3).

Perhaps the strongest picture comes just a few verses before that familiar passage in Ephesians. Paul describes our condition apart from Christ by saying, "You were dead in the trespasses and sins" (Ephesians 2:1). Dead is a pretty helpless condition. Yet Paul doesn't tell the dead sinner to make a decision, take the first step, or give Jesus anything. Instead, two of the most beautiful words in Scripture appear: "But God." Paul continues, "But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ" (Ephesians 2:4-5).

Notice who is doing the verbs. God loves. God chooses. God calls. God makes alive. Christ seeks. Christ saves. The Holy Spirit creates faith through the hearing of God's Word. We receive. That does not mean there is no response from the Christian. Of course there is. We confess. We repent. We follow. We pray. We serve. And perhaps my favorite word for our response is surrender. We surrender our hearts, our wills, our plans, and even our stubborn insistence that we must somehow contribute something to what Christ has already accomplished. But surrender is not the price we pay for grace. It is what happens when faith quits trying to negotiate and simply receives what Christ has already given.

That is also why our worship can look different from some other Christian traditions. People sometimes ask why Lutheran churches generally do not have an altar call where someone comes forward to accept Christ. I sometimes think we actually do have an altar call. We simply understand the direction differently. We come to the altar not primarily to give something to Jesus, but because Jesus has something to give to us. Christianity does not begin with a lost sinner finally finding Jesus. Jesus tells us, "For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost" (Luke 19:10). He is the seeker. We are the lost.

So perhaps the next time you hear someone say, "All you have to do is give your heart to Jesus," you will understand why your Lutheran pastor might twitch just a little. Not because giving our lives to Christ is a bad thing. Quite the opposite. Surrender it all. But the order matters. We love because He first loved us. We follow because He called us. We confess because the Holy Spirit has given us faith. We surrender because Christ has already claimed us as His own.

Before you ever gave your heart to Jesus, Jesus gave His life for you.

That is not something you have to do. That is something Christ has already done.

+In Christ,
Pr. Blayne

Worship Schedule

Date	Time	Minister	Lector	Readings
September 7 (Monday) Bring Food Bank Items	6PM	Pastor Blayne	Duane Nelson	Ezekiel 33:7-9 Psalm 32: 1-7 Romans 13:1-10 Matthew 18: 1-20
September 13 Communion Potluck	4PM	Pastor Blayne	Teri Ann Vejtasa	Genesis 50: 15-21 Psalm 103: 1-12 Romans 14: 1-12 Matthew 18: 21-35
September 20 Council Meeting Sunday School @9	10AM	Pastor Blayne	Denise Haynie	Isaiah 55: 6-9 Psalm 27: 1-9 Philippians 1:12-14, 19-30 Matthew 20: 1-16
September 27 Communion	4PM	Pastor Blayne	Frank Wright	Ezekiel 18: 1-4, 25-32 Psalm 25: 1-10 Philippians 2: 1-4 (5-13) 14-18 Matthew 21: 23-27 (28-32)



Fall Schedule

Beginning Sept. 13, afternoon services are at **4PM**



Please submit information for the monthly newsletter by the 20th of the month. Send it to NewHopeLutheranNewsletter@gmail.com ready to cut and paste into the newsletter. Thank you!
~Cheryl

Contacts

Mailing Address

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Email

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Church Council

Duane Nelson, President - 406-485-2423
Thomas Fritz, Vice President - 406-974-3336
Denise Haynie, Secretary - 406-939-3856
Wanda Robinette, Treasurer - 406-939-3404
Ron McFarland - 406-853-3348
Frank Wright - 406-974-2042
Peter Ferm - 406-529-3478

Event Contacts

Baptisms - June Nelson - 406-485-2423
Weddings - Wanda Robinette - 406-939-3404
Funerals - Frank Wright - 406-974-2042

Facebook Group

New Hope Lutheran Church

Location

1400 B Ave, Circle

Cash Flow - Jul 2026

7/1/2026 through 7/31/2026

Category	7/1/2026-7/31/2026
INFLOWS	
Div Income	3.57
Offering	2,715.00
Thrivent Donations	25.00
TOTAL INFLOWS	2,743.57
OUTFLOWS	
Donation	
Good Neighbor	500.00
Worship Building	750.00
TOTAL Donation	1,250.00
Internet Expense	22.95
Music	50.00
Pastoral	
Contract Pastor	1,500.00
Other	250.00
TOTAL Pastoral	1,750.00
TOTAL OUTFLOWS	3,072.95
OVERALL TOTAL	-329.38

Financial Report submitted by Wanda Robinette.

Sunday School

September 20 - Children's
Sunday School @ 9AM



Bible Studies

Thursdays at the Sr. Center
at 7PM with Mabel



Find information,
resources, online small
group study sessions,
Daily Prayer and Readings,
and more!
www.theNALC.org



Find information,
resources, and more!
www.lcmc.net

New Hope Lutheran Church Council Meeting Minutes from July 19th, 2026

The council meeting of New Hope Lutheran Church was called to order at 11:02 a.m. by President Duane Nelson. The members attending were Frank Wright, Duane Nelson, Wanda Robinette, Ron McFarland, Denise Haynie.

Correspondence - None.

The minutes from our June council meeting were read. Thomas made a motion to approve the minutes with one correction, Wanda seconded.

Wanda gave the **treasurer's report**. Denise made a motion to approve the treasurer's report, Frank seconded.

Committee Reports

Worship Committee: There are five Sundays in August. There seems to be some confusion when it comes to our potluck, it is always the second Sunday of each month after service. Food Bank Sunday is always the test Sunday of the month. August 2nd, we have worship with catechesis following. August 9th, we have worship at 6:00 p.m. with potluck to follow. August 16th, worship at 10:00 a.m. with council meeting to follow. August 23rd, worship at 6:00 p.m. with communion. August 30th, we have worship at 6:00 p.m.

Finance: None

Education: None

Building: The weeds seem to be very resistant to any chemical or salt we have used due to the hot dry conditions. Ron sprayed another bunch of weeds last week, hoping to kill or suppress them. The church mice seem to be gone, we trapped one and caught one in the garbage can, hopefully that is it! We will store our linens and silverware in totes until we are certain they are all gone. Joel and Denise set two traps outside the church back area hoping to catch them before they enter the building. Ron sealed up some cracks that may have been letting them in the building.

Old Business:

LCMC District meeting in Bismarck, July 31st - August 1st

New Business:

We need to get the piano tuned and a key fixed. Denise will talk to Ruth Clarin about this and when the fellow will be in town next to get it fixed.

Pastor's Report:

- Timothy and Madi's wedding
- LCMC district gathering, July 31st -August 1st
- Thanks to Mark Joblinski for filling the pulpit
- Prayers for Tiffany and family
- Blayne's installation in Miles City on August 12th

Next meeting, August 16th at 11:00 a.m

Newsletter items are due by the 20th of each month!

The meeting was adjourned at 12:01 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Denise Haynie



Matthew 19:14

14 Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these."



New Hope Lutheran Church
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