

JULY 2026



MT HOPE MESSENGER

MOUNT HOPE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST



REMEMBER,
RELEASE,
REIMAGINE.

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PRAYERS

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PASTOR'S NOTE

I am feeling a bit like a rubber band being stretched toward my greatest capacity for launching mode. A rubber band laying on a table cannot go anywhere. A rubber band cannot launch across the room unless someone or something pulls it back, creates tension in its very fibers and loads it with potential energy.

Sabbath and a sabbatical time is about loading ourselves with potential energy. Ministry best happens after Sabbath rest. Rest? Mt. Hope as a collective are some of the hardest working folks I have ever pastored. My lowest marks on my ministry evaluations throughout my ministry have been in the category of self-care. I ask for your forgiveness if my propensity to work has fed an undervalued notion of Sabbath. Our faith is built, not just on work but also on rest. Rest is just as important as work. I would even say that one without the other is dangerous. I type these words even as I add things to my to-do list as a time of sabbath rest begins for us all. There is so much to do that I fear I won't be able to leave on time.

At the beginning of this, *our*, Sabbatical journey, I have been moved by the words of Abraham Joshua Heschel in his classic book on Sabbath-keeping. He writes, *"He who wants to enter the holiness of the day must first lay down the profanity of clattering commerce, of being yoked to toil. He must go away from the screech of dissonant days, from the nervousness and fury of the work of acquiring. He must say a farewell to manual work and learn to understand that the world has already been created and will survive without the help of man."*

We have something in common, this is Mt. Hope's first sabbatical after 179 years of ministry and this is my first sabbatical after 21 years in ministry. It is time to be about the work of sabbath. "The embodied action of sabbatical, of rest for the sake of renewal, is conformity to Christ—it is one of the ways in which we follow in the footsteps of Jesus," writes Robert Saler in his book called *Planning Sabbaticals*. Wayne Muller writes, commenting on Jesus' healing ministry:

Jesus did not wait until everyone had been properly cared for, until all who sought him had healed. He did not ask permission to go, nor did he leave anyone behind "on call," or even let his disciples know where he was going. Jesus obeyed a deeper rhythm. When the moment for rest had come, the time for healing was over. He would simply stop, retire to a quiet place and pray... When Jesus prayed he was at rest, nourished by the healing spirit that saturates those still, quiet places.

I couldn't be more excited about Mt. Hope taking a Sabbatical. Entering into this time together has already changed us for the better and when it makes us feel uncomfortable, use that energy to lean toward God asking God how we can use this opportunity to grow closer to you, God? How can we grow through our discomfort and emerge as a stronger body of believers in your life-changing word?

As we value our work and play, our labors and our rest, there are folks in place to care for you. **Rev. Peggy Haymes** will be the primary pastor during this time. She has led the congregation in worship and is excited to offer pastoral leadership to the congregation during our Sabbatical. Please come and share in a time of worship and fellowship and introduce yourself to Rev. Peggy on July 5th at 10:00 am as we celebrate the beginning of a time of rest and renewal. I cannot wait to see what God is going to do among us.

Thank you for this gift and the space to be about the work of renewal. Thank you for taking the time to do this work as a church. It will feel awkward and maybe even less than purposeful at times, but don't be discouraged, God is on the move. Stick with it. The "work" of sabbath is discipline, wise discernment, and a letting go in order to trust in God's abundance.

I will do my very best to use this time wisely; to not give into the temptation to work instead of rest, to not toil instead of to trust, to not delay spending time in prayer until I believe all my work is done. I will focus my eyes on God. I will be about the work of rest and will be renewed when I return. I pray that Mt. Hope does the same. Can you imagine the potential energy we will have together to go far in our love for Christ by doing this work together now? This tension we feel now will harvest rewards. Rubber bands of renewed energy and focus.

Pull back. Feel the energy building. Launch.

Courage for OUR sabbath renewal.





Partners in
HEALTH
and
WHOLENESS
AN INITIATIVE OF THE
NORTH CAROLINA COUNCIL OF CHURCHES

PHW Quarterly Newsletter: June 2, 2026



WISE MOMENT

HOPE CONNECTION: YOU BELONG

We're excited to share this article from Partners in Health and Wholeness, featuring Mt. Hope's "Hope Connection: You Belong" ministry. Through the WISE Abundant Life Cohort, God has opened doors for us to serve our rural seniors by offering bus rides, friendship, mental wellness support, and fresh food. We're grateful for every life touched. A heartfelt thank you to everyone who makes this ministry possible.

Scan the QR Code
OR

[Click/Tap Here to View
the PHW Newsletter](#)



From Isolation to Belonging: How One Church is Supporting Rural Seniors

At Mt. Hope United Church of Christ in Whitsett, N.C., leaders began noticing a painful pattern: older adults in their congregation were quietly disappearing from community life. Some could no longer drive. Others were homebound due to physical or mental health challenges. Many were experiencing loneliness, grief, depression, anxiety, or spiritual disconnection. In rural communities, losing the ability to drive can also mean losing access to worship, friendship, support, and even basic needs like fresh food.

The church also identified the heartbreaking statistics that illuminate this need: the suicide rate for rural residents is 1.2 times higher than for urban residents and the highest suicide rate in rural NC is among those 85 and older, reaching 26.5 per 100,000 people.

But rather than asking, *"How do we create another program?"* Mt. Hope asked a deeper question: How do we help people know they still belong?

Through the Abundant Life Cohort, Mt. Hope United Church of Christ received a \$5,000 grant to help transform that question into action — creating new ways to reconnect isolated seniors to worship, friendship, mental health support, and community life.

That question became the heart of their Abundant Life project: **Hope Connection: You Belong.**

What They're Doing

- Creating a "Hope Connection" church bus ministry where older adults are
- personally picked up, welcomed onto the bus by a driver and volunteer aide, offered
- a light snack and drink for the ride, and brought back into spaces of worship, friendship, support, and belonging
- Hosting "Puddle Clubs" — supportive gatherings inspired by the image of butterflies gathering together for nourishment, connection, and renewal
- Creating "Choose Happiness" Mental Wellness Support Boxes for homebound seniors, filled with coping tools, reflection resources, activities, encouragement, and mental health supports
- Offering fresh food and nutritional support alongside relationship-building and spiritual care
- Partnering with organizations like National Alliance on Mental Illness to reduce stigma and increase mental health awareness

Their project is rooted in one simple but powerful message: **You are not forgotten. You are not alone. You belong.**

VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL

LET YOUR LIGHT SHINE

JULY 6 - 10 & 12

VBS is right around the corner and we are ready to roll! We have 28 children registered and a wonderful team of youth helpers ready to jump in. We can't wait for a week filled with crafts, music, Bible stories, snacks, playground time, and so much more. It's going to be a joy to watch these little ones let their light shine! Please keep our VBS team, volunteers, and children in your prayers as we prepare for this special week.

VBS Sunday is July 12th. Join us as we share what we've learned and let our light shine together!

INTERESTED?

ALAMANCE HOSPITAL

Alamance Hospital is looking for crocheters to make hand size animals for the ER Dept. You can do this either as a community volunteer or go through the hospital system. Community volunteers need to supply their own materials. Contact Cindy Hyle community volunteering. If you would like to go through the system instead, complete an application online at www.conehealth.com/volunteer.

CHURCH OFFICE

WELCOMING BARBARA HONEY

We are excited to welcome Barbara Honey to the church office! Barbara is a familiar face to many of you, and we're grateful to have her join us in this new role.

Office Hours

Monday, Wednesday, Friday
9:00AM - 12:00PM

THANK YOU!

To My Mt. Hope Family,

Thank you for all the cards, calls, food and visits. A special thank you to Lorie, Margie and Bonnie for taking care of me for the first two weeks of my recovery. Also to John and Melinda for helping to get set up for the surgery. Nothing is ever too small and all is and was appreciated. Can't wait to start getting those hugs again.

Lots of love and hugs,

Brenda C.

To our friends at Mount Hope Church,

Thank you for making our Teacher/Staff Appreciation week so special this year! We all enjoyed the delicious desserts and kindness that was provided. Thank you again for your thoughtfulness!

With gratitude,

Southeast Guilford High School



OUT OF THE GARDEN PROJECT

Important Schedule Update

Because July 4th is a holiday, the Out of the Garden Project has been rescheduled to **Tuesday, July 7th at 2:00 PM.**

<https://mthopeucc.com/out-of-the-garden>

WOMEN'S FELLOWSHIP

September 8, 2026 @ 11:00AM

Enjoy the summer. We will begin again the second Tuesday in September at 11 am.

- Marcia

CHURCH, A WORD?

GOD IS SPEAKING AND WE HAVE SOME "WORK" TO DO.

Have you ever had *that* someone? You know the one. The one who somehow gets you out of the house when you were determined to stay home. The one who talks you into going somewhere, meeting someone, or trying something you never would have chosen for yourself. Half the time you're reluctant, and the other half you're confused about how you got dragged into it to begin with.

And yet! Despite the discomfort, despite feeling completely out of your element, despite every instinct telling you this is not your thing, you somehow end up having the time of your life.

Of all the ways I could describe my relationship with God, this is the one I'm choosing today.

God has a habit of leading us beyond what is familiar and comfortable. God invites us into conversations we would rather avoid, asks us to trust and stay put when we would rather run the other way, and nudges us toward God's self when sometimes we would rather be anywhere else because we have not yet realized where the journey is taking us.

If you're like me, when you read Pastor Kristin's words, something has been stirred in you (yet again). As she prepares for this season of sabbatical, we too are being invited into this sacred season in our own way.

This is the holy ground we're standing on.

Part of the sacred work before us is learning to release. As God often does, God is leading all of us into a new season together. Sabbatical is a holy gift, and gifts can only be received with open hands. Perhaps part of our "work" is learning that we can love one another deeply enough to make room for growth, trusting that God is with us both in the going and in the returning.

Over the coming months, we will be invited into this sacred work together. We will continue to engage in the cycle of remembering, releasing, and reimagining. We may struggle together as we learn to rest in our restlessness and grieve what needs to be let go. To capture this chapter of our story, we will write a song together as we welcome Pastor Kristin home in October, so that our journey, our love, our prayers, and our praise may be multiplied.

But before we can do any of this, we must first come together to release Pastor Kristin into this season of renewal and dedicate ourselves to the sacred work before us as she does the same.

I have never been part of a community that uprooted my entire being to the point of surrender, to the point where I could no longer ignore the call to ministry. So, as I recognize Pastor Kristin as a gift to us all, I invite everyone to recognize the gifts this church gives to all who walk through its doors, including its leadership. God has shaped many people here: her, us, and countless others before us. And God will continue to shape what comes next through this church.

We're being invited into holy work. Are you ready?

-Ekin

IMPORTANT DATES

JULY 5

SEND-OFF AND WELCOME MEAL

JULY 12

LAST SUNDAY BEFORE SABBATICAL

JULY 19

RE-MEMBERING WORKSHOP

WORSHIP & WORKSHOP

RE-MEMBERING

As we prepare to be "stretched like rubber bands", walking a parallel path to our Pastor during our Sabbatical, we welcome *Rev. Kendra Joyner-Miller* in worship and leadership on Sunday, July 19th. Following worship, she will guide us through an important part of our Sabbatical journey: the sacred work of remembering. We will gather in the New Fellowship Hall from 11:15 AM – 12:15 PM for a Re-Membering workshop. Rev. Kendra invites us into this time of holy reflection saying:

"We will take time for holy reflection, remembering all the saints who came before us who helped to shape and mold us as people of faith. We ask that each person bring a photo of someone who greatly impacted their life that can be shared. We will also dream about how we live in the legacy of these saints and carry forward re-membling the body of Christ that Saint Paul calls us to in 1 Corinthians."

HIGHLIGHTS

Rev. Kendra Joyner-Miller

Sunday - July 19th

11:15 AM - 12:15 PM - New Fellowship Hall

TO DO:

Bring a photo of someone who greatly impacted your life to share.

Mt Hope United Church of Christ
Consistory Minutes – May 14, 2026

Members Present: Gloria Apple (President), Dave Blakesley (Vice President), Dallas Belvin, Cindy McGee, Dona Branson, Dora Moore (Assist. Treasurer), Tammy Holt (Assist Treasurer), Cheryl Royal, Don Kirkman, Tracy Brady, Pastor Kristin Gerner Vaughn

The meeting was called to order by Gloria Apple, a quorum was established, and all were welcomed.

Prayer and Devotion

Lighting of the candle by Pastor Kristin.

A devotional was provided by Dave Blakesley on “Live Creatively for Christ” by Billy Graham.

We Celebrate Our Past

Approval of Minutes:

A motion was made by Dona Branson and seconded by Dallas Belvin to approve the minutes from the April 2026 Consistory Meeting.

Treasurer’s Report:

The April Consolidated Fund Activity Report showed a starting balance of \$218,557.01 an ending balance of \$229,177.70 with total receipts of \$35,079.64 and total disbursements of \$24,458.95 reported. The General Fund with a starting balance of \$55,973.85, end balance was \$48,598 with receipts of \$16,497.45 and disbursements of \$23,873.30. A motion was made by Dave Blakesley and seconded by Tracy Brady to approve the report. Motion carried.

Pastor’s Report

Pastor Kristin announced that plans are being made for her sabbatical with the sabbatical team members. There is going to be a new member’s class May 31st and new members will join the church on June 14th. These include Mr. and Mrs. Dave Elson, Mr. and Mrs. Mowery, Mr. and Mrs. Zeb Mims and Pam Sinclair. Zeb and Kire’s daughter, Maeve, will be baptized on June 28th.

Ekin Ustunel will begin a pastoral internship with Kristin this summer completing 300 hours. Ekin will begin working in a pastoral care role and small group leadership. Divinity school has agreed to pay up to \$3000. Pastor announced attendance is up to around 80+ per Sunday.

Committee Reports

Maintenance and Trustees	Items in quoting process; work to begin soon on 2 grants
Food Ministry	n/a
Historical	n/a
Mission & Outreach	n/a
Music and Worship	Church Service August 23 11:00 Lake McIntosh; Sept 20 homecoming
Social Concerns	n/a
Communications	n/a
WISE Team	Awarded grant to help with bus transportation for home bound and puddle club activities for senior citizens. June 7 th first pick up and June 16 th training for Hope Boxes.
Fellowship Committee	n/a
Personnel	n/a
Youth	n/a

Prayer of Intercession

Old Business:

Projects needing attention Basement, Columns, Windows and Roof -quotes in process

New Business:

Digging to take place at church to keep water from getting under foundation

Charge and Benediction:

The meeting was adjourned.

Next meeting will be on June 11th at 6pm

Respectfully submitted,

Tracy Buff, Assistant Secretary

Events

- 1st NO Choir
- 2nd Yoga 5:30 PM - OFH
- 4th NO MOBILE MARKET (MOVED)
- 5th **Worship: Bluegrass Sunday** 10:00 AM - Sanctuary
- 5th **Send-off and Welcome Meal** Following Worship
- 6-10th **VBS** 9:00 AM-12:00 AM
- 6th Yoga 5:30 PM - OFH
- 7th **Mobile Market** 2:00 PM - Old Julian Parking lot
- 8th **Choir** 6:30 PM - 8:00 PM - Sanctuary
- 9th Yoga 5:30 PM - OFH
- 9th **Consistory Meeting** 6:30 PM - Conference Room
- 12th **Worship: VBS/Communion** 10:00 AM - Sanctuary
- 13th Yoga 5:30 PM - OFH
- 14th **Women's Fellowship** 11:00 - NFH
- 15th **Choir** 6:30 PM - 8:00 PM - Sanctuary
- 16th Yoga 5:30 PM - OFH
- 19th **Worship/Workshop** 10:00 AM -12:15 PM - Sanctuary
- 20th Yoga 5:30 PM - OFH
- 20th **Men of Valor** 6:30 PM - OFH
- 22nd NO Choir
- 23rd Yoga 5:30 PM - OFH
- 26th **Worship** 10:00 AM - Sanctuary
- 27th Yoga 5:30 PM - OFH
- 28th **WISE Gathering** 6:30 PM
- 29th NO Choir
- 30th Yoga 5:30 PM - OFH



Anniversaries



- 2 Jeryl & Gloria Apple
- 4 John & Melinda Kozak
- 6 Tony & Terri Staley
- 20 Jeff & Beth Harris
- 27 Richard & Sonia Knowles
- 31 Tommy & Susie Simpson



Birthdays

- 1 Terri Staley
- 1 Linda Breedlove
- 1 Wes Royal
- 3 Cheryl Royal
- 4 Helen Busick
- 7 Darlene Greeson
- 9 Donnie Cheek
- 10 Richard Freeman
- 11 Harriett Phipps
- 13 Steve Greeson
- 14 Cole Levens
- 14 Patti Harden
- 18 Stan Buff
- 20 Jonathan Kilby
- 24 Gary Owens
- 25 Kendall McDade
- 26 Constance Blakesley
- 26 Darryl Welker
- 27 Emma Vaughn
- 27 Tracy Nelson
- 29 Shannon Levens
- 29 Rob Sinclair



Prayer Concerns

HEALTH CARE CENTER

R. Denny Ingold - *Clapp's Nursing Center* (#304)

Robert Ingold - *Clapp's Nursing Center* (#801)

Mary Catherine Moser - *Brookdale Clare Bridge* (#68)

Gwen Hall - *Ashton Place*

Carolyn Simpson - *Liberty Commons*

MT. HOPE MILITARY CONNECTIONS

Kyle Gerner

Michael Terraforte

Wade Greeson

Jonathan Vaughn

MEMBERS, FRIENDS, & RELATIVES

Amanda Levens

Carolyn Simpson

Debra Prater

Grady Greeson

John McDade

Linda Ayers

Mike Vaughn

Phillip Fitante

Travis White

Brenda Currie

Cindy Belvin

Donald Chaplin

Gwen Hall

Joyce Ingold

Martha & Bug Whitesell

Peggy & Woody Levens

Sharon Mims

Virginia Barker

Brian Neal

Clifton Greeson

Elizabeth Craft

Jim Gallagher

Julie Payne

Mary Catherine Moser

Peggy Greeson

Shirley Clapp

Carmen Kriegsman

Darryl Welker

Evalia

Jo Ann Gauldin

Lin Gallagher

Michael Hughes

Peggy Welker

Shirley Kime

Family of Joe Suggs

**HAVE A
PRAYER
REQUEST?**

Connect with your church.

[Prayer Request Form](#)

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