

Life Together



February 2026

A Loving Family, Growing in Faith, Sharing the Hope...of Christ!

A Message from Pastor Karen

God does some of his most amazing work during our darkest moments. Just ask Mr. Banks...

A number of years ago, I had the incredible privilege of interviewing Mr. Banks, a deeply spiritual man, who at the age of 106, had been an eyewitness to one of the most traumatic centuries in all of history. A living legend, he was a revered member of my hometown's African American community, and one of the wisest men I have ever met.

The son of former plantation slaves, Mr. Banks' earliest years were spent in rural Mississippi, where only the hardest workers could make the barren land yield enough to keep one's family from starvation.

Living through two World wars, a crushing depression, Jim Crow laws, illness, brutal poverty, and witnessing a brutal lynching of a friend, he claimed that his faith in God gave him a spirit of victory that could overcome even the most unspeakable adversities..."Yes, I've known bad times... but God seen fit to carry me through whatever came my way."

Mr. Banks believed that his memories of livin', lovin', and learnin' in a church community helped him survive some of his toughest times. As we talked, he quoted this line from Isaiah 43 - *"Thus says the LORD, who makes a way through the sea and a path through the mighty waters..."* Then he offered this advice... "Put your trust in God, and he will make a way where there IS no way. Too many fellas I knew, lost everything because they stopped listening to him."

A smile creasing his face, he continued... "What they needed was some deep conversation with the Lord... like these lines from Psalm 27: *"The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid? ... Wait for the Lord, be strong, and let your heart take courage..."*"

Cond. on page 2



Abiding Hope Lutheran Church

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Erie, PA 16506
814.868.8685
Website:
www.abidinghopeerie.org
Office email:
ahadmin@hotmail.com

Pastor Karen Parish

Cell: 814-881-3266
pastorparsh@gmail.com

Church Hours:

Monday & Tuesday 9:30 to 3:30; Wednesday 9:30 to 12:30

Sunday Worship: 9:30

Sunday Bible Study: 11:00



Sunday services can be viewed, live streamed, at 9:30 on Facebook or anytime on the website.



Staff

Office Assistant:
Denise Miller

Coordinator of Music:
Sheryl Williams

Sexton: Jeff Neely

Life Together ~ February 2026

Mr. Banks' wisdom continues to speak words of encouragement and hope - even in our present situation, where the very fabric of our world seems to be shredded and the people we love talk about being lost and confused. Relationships are broken and folks are left to deal with their darkest demons – by themselves.

If we are to survive, we need to consider a better way out of our current misery.

God uses adversity to deepen our experience of grace and the relationships that bind us together. Writes Magray deVega, in her book Embracing the Uncertain, "To receive the care of God during tough times does not mean we are lifted out of this world. Instead, it means learning to perceive God's presence and power in a new way because it might not be easily visible to our usual ways of seeing. It is not about escaping the world, but it is about interpreting the present time from the understanding that God is right here - with us and among us."

Mr. Banks was in perfect agreement: "Amidst the cold foolishness you feel in the darkest of times, you ARE being cared for under God's mighty wings. When you learn this truth, then you are on the road to understanding God's love FOR YOU. Your present suffering is but a moment when you consider the vastness of God's eternal love.

Thank God for SAVING GRACE and for angels on earth like Mr. Banks who are not afraid to give witness to the precious stories of God's mighty acts.



♪ Music Notes ♪

It seems like we just celebrated Christmas, and here we are nearing the end of the Epiphany season! Musical highlights for February will include Traditional Worship with Organ accompaniment on February 1st, Blended Worship with Guitar, Bass and Piano accompaniment throughout the month, and Instrumental Selections on Feb. 15th by our String and Woodwind Ensemble. Our Choir anthems will be on alternate Sundays as rehearsal allows with the unpredictable weather we have been having since December!

Ash Wednesday services will be offered on Wed., Feb. 18th at Noon at New Hope Presbyterian and at 6:30pm at Abiding Hope. More details to follow in the coming weeks!

Blessings,

Sheryl Williams ~ Coordinator of Music

sheryl4013@yahoo.com ~ (814) 882-2830



Please keep in your prayers: The family and friends of Gail Boyce. Also: Kathy Cirillo,

Darcée Anthony, Ava Whitely, Ed Whitbred, Matt, Carolyn & Elliot Marrotti, Paul Pacileo, Josh, Adrianna, Titus, Lauren Steele, Christina Sonthemier, Jackie Seib, Dick & Diana Stoker, Harry & Susan Speakman, Leslie Gallagher-Kelly & Michele Rion & Sue, Candy & Arch Watkins, Kathy Sinnott, Bob McDaniel, Maury & Linda Allen, Damian & Marcia Santabene, Don & Donna Holder and Little Library requests.

Please contact Pastor Karen with prayer requests: pastorparsh@gmail.com, cell phone: 814-881-3266 or contact the church office: ahadministor@hotmail.com or 814-868-8685.

Come, Join Us for Our Lenten Series 2026

JESUS OUR SAVIOR, WELCOMES ALL OF HIS FOLLOWERS AS SERVANTS AND FRIENDS – that we may creatively come together – sharing our love with those in need, as we provide meals, gifts of love, wall decorations and faith growing opportunities to some of the most vulnerable individuals in our community.

We will provide faithful Christian witness to individuals in our community through a series of learning / sharing workshops – held at Abiding Hope on Wednesdays from 1:00 until 3:00. Participants will take turns sharing snacks for our work teams. All activities will happen at Abiding Hope in partnership with New Hope Presbyterian.

LENT LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES:

Sunday evenings at 7:00 on ZOOM	Read Through the Bible in a Year – 2 nd and 4 th Sunday of the month	Sign up at church office or contact PK
Thursday 1:00 – 2:30	Surviving tough times with God's help	All are welcome-AHLC
Sunday after church	Bible study focusing on the lectionary	All are welcome-AHLC
Saturday 3-28	Easter Flock Saturday from 1:00 until 3:00	Volunteers needed

HERE IS OUR SCHEDULE OF LENTEN EVENTS: we will provide all craft material unless you have additional items to donate

DATE	AGENCY THAT BENEFITS	TIME(S)	ACTIVITY
Wednesday 2-18	Ash Wednesday Worship	12 @ New Hope; 6:30 @ AHLC	Worship / distribution of ashes
Wednesday 2-25	Serving Humane Society pups & kitties with rice filled socks	1:00–3:00	Rice & tube socks
Wednesday 3-4	Serving Mercy Center Seniors by making creative jewelry	1:00–3:00	Jewelry making with beads
Wednesday 3-11	Community Shelter Making tied blankets	1:00–3:00	Fleece
Sunday 3-22	Healing Service	9:30	
Wednesday 3-18	Liberty House	1:00 – 3:00	Making dinner
Wednesday 3-25	Walnut Creek Nursing Home	1:00–3:00	Wall decorations / Crosses and posters
Sat 3-28	EASTER FLOCK Event	1:00–3:00	Volunteers need for crafts, activities and raffle baskets
Sunday 3-29	Palm Sunday	9:30	Readers needed for Passion Play
Thursday 4-2	Maundy Thursday at New Hope Presby.	6:30	Jesus says “Love one another as I have loved you”
Friday 4-3	Good Friday at AHLC	12:00 & 6:30	12:00 Stations of the Cross 6:30 Shadows and Darkness
4-4	Guided Easter Prayer Vigil	Sundown (7:30)	Silent prayer and meditation guided by readings
June	Art sale – great prices for high quality used art – accepting donations	To be announced	We have several hundred art prints and woodcarvings

Living our Faith

Faith isn't what we say in a building for an hour on Sunday, but what we DO for the other 167 hours of our week.

Here are steps you can take right now:

1. Join the ELCA e-Advocacy Network. By signing up for this network, you will receive legislative updates and key advocacy opportunities in your inbox. You can also share these action alerts with your personal network on social media.
2. Reach out to your members of Congress by email, letter, or phone — and encourage your congregation to do the same. Explain why, as their constituent, issues affect you, your neighbors, your community and our larger world.
3. Invite your officials to visit your congregation's ministry or project. Lawmakers are more likely to support helpful legislation when they see firsthand the needs of a community. Show that we speak from places of compassion, credibility and concern.
4. Build a relationship with the staff in your member of Congress' state or district office. Let them know what positions you'd like your member to take on crucial issues affecting our vulnerable neighbors and God's creation.
5. Write a letter to the editor of a local newspaper, lifting up an issue of concern. Mention your elected officials by name. Remember the most powerful voice is your own.
6. Contact LAMPA (<https://www.lutheranadvocacypa.org/>), our Lutheran State Public Policy office, to get involved in this ministry for the purpose of engaging in advocacy for hunger-related issues in the state legislature.
7. Is a group from your congregation coming to Washington, D.C.? Connect with the ELCA advocacy staff by sending an email.



Year-End Statements: Your year-end statements will be emailed to those who have their email listed with the church. Printed copies are in mailboxes in the Heritage Room. Please check carefully and confirm that your records match. If not, please let me know!

Cindy Filson ~ AHLC Financial Secretary ~ AHfinsec@outlook.com



Thrivent Choice Dollars: Thank you to the eligible Thrivent members who direct their Choice Dollars to Abiding Hope Lutheran Church! This money is being used to carry on the mission and ministry of our congregation. If you are a Thrivent member and have questions about this program, please contact your Thrivent Financial Representative or go to thriveon.thrivent.com and log in.



On Sunday, January 11th, Pastor Karen installed the 2026 Church Council. Newly appointed members are Barb Ruhlman, Treasurer and Jo Zeimet. Returning members are Andy Saska, Analee Cree, Penny Gresh, Diana Stoker, Lois Kuhns, Rich Filson and Dr Paul Mirone. See Officer's list on page 5.

Souper Bowl of Caring – Sunday, February 8th

AHLC will be collecting canned soup and monetary donations for KAFP and the Second Harvest Food Bank as part of the Souper Bowl of Caring campaign. Contribute by designating your gift "Souper Bowl" on your envelope, or cash (or cans of soup) can be placed in the donation soup kettle in the sanctuary. Thank you.



tacklehunger.org

Little Free Library/Pantry

Visits to the library definitely decline during the cold, blustery days, but on other days there remains a steady stream of visitors selecting/exchanging books. Children often accompany parents and select books from the children's section, along with the "literacy packets" from our grant!

Visitors also arrive, typically during the night, for food. Gloves, hat, scarves have also been of great benefit to these visitors! We welcome small bags of nuts/trail mixes, individual cups or small boxes of cereals, ready-to-eat meals in pouches, granola bars. Adult and children's gloves, hat, scarves are also a strong need this time of year. Many thanks for the congregational support of this ministry for our neighborhood!



Prayer Warriors

On February 18, the Prayer Warriors of Abiding Hope will meet from 1-3:00 pm to pray for the many needs of our congregation, neighborhood, community, USA, and the world. The sanctuary and Quiet Room are open for prayer and meditation. Please join us on this day and time from wherever you are, for as long as you can, to be Christ's intercessor in prayer. How powerful our prayers are when three or more are gathered!



Receiving Communion: If it is a challenge for you to come forward to receive communion, please alert the usher and you will be served communion at your seat.



Save ^{THE} date

Feb 2 & 16-10-12noon: Prayer Shawls Gathering
 Feb 5,12,19 & 26: Care & Share with Damian 1pm
 Feb 8: Souper Bowl of Caring
 Feb 10 @ 6:30: Church Council
 Feb 13: Night to Shine Dinner Dance @ Shrine Club
 Feb 18: Ash Wednesday worship @12@ new hope & 6:30pm @ AHLC
 Feb 18 from 1-3: Prayer Warriors
 Feb 25, Mar 4,11,18, & 25 @1pm Lenten Service Project
 Feb 18 MNO 6:30 @ The Cab
 Feb 19 LNO 5:30 @ Underdog BBQ



February Birthdays

2/3 Linda Allen
 2/18 Cindy Filson
 2/21 Emily Miller
 2/22 Marian Wygant
 2/28 Rick Penn

Feb. Anniversary

2/14 Carol & Tom Korn ~ 56 yrs



Abiding Hope

2026 Church Council

President

Andy Saska

Vice-President

Penny Gresh

Secretary

Analee Cree

Treasurer

Barb Ruhlman

Financial Secretary

Cindy Filson

Council Members

Pastor Karen Parsh

Lois Kuhns

Jo Zeimet

Rich Filson

Diana Stoker

Paul Mirone

Little Jesus Project

During every church visit, please take at least one "Little Jesus" from the basket in the Narthex (under the monitor) and commit to placing it in waiting rooms, on an elevator, restaurants, coffee shops, public bathrooms, self-checkouts and the post office! Pray for the person who will find it and spread the joy of finding "a Little Jesus"! Over 350 have now been distributed from our church!



Registration for 2026 Summer Camp at Lutherlyn

Opens Feb. 1st! Learn more about this summer's awesome line up of programs at www.lutherlyn.com/summer. And view [Lutherlyn 2026 Camper/Guardian Handbook](#) for details about summer camp. Camperships are available for those who need assistance. Email for application register@lutherlyn.com.



Recap of January 13 Council Meeting

We start the year welcoming 2 new members, Jo Zeimet and Barb Ruhlman. A joy to have these members step up to share their love of Christ and the Abiding Hope Family.

- Concern about our budget only covering 3 piano tunings a year. Goes out of tune more often due to temperature changes.
- Over budget again for landscaping, due to additional salting. Looking for bids by March when current contract expires.
- LED lights have been installed. **THANK YOU, ANDY SASKA, for your time and talent to make this happen. We TREASURE YOU!**
- Hospitality committee to organize in March
- Easter Flock to continue - March 28. Looking for participation from Lamb of God, Mount Calvary and New Hope Presbyterian.
- Elections held, Andy Saska, President, Penny Gresh, V.P., Analee Cree, Secretary, Cindy Filson, Financial Secretary, Barb Ruhlman, Treasurer

Our meetings end with prayers for people in our congregation and in our lives. This is a reminder of our mission and the power of prayer in our lives. Respectfully submitted by: **Analee Cree**



Recap of January 18 Congregational Meeting

Sincere thanks to all members who attended, asked questions and added their thoughts to the summary of reports submitted. This meeting brings to light how active Abiding Hope is within our walls and the outreach we do in our community. We are thankful for each of you who make all of this possible. Extra thanks to those who submitted the recaps and heartfelt THANK YOU to Nancy Cunningham for putting it all together. If you haven't read it, please take the time and feel proud to be a member of Abiding Hope Lutheran Church - Submitted by **Analee Cree**



Night to Shine 2026

Night to Shine is an unforgettable, worldwide celebration, centered on God's love, honoring and valuing people with special needs, happening in over 1,000 cities, all 50 states and across 60 countries. Abiding Hope is thrilled to be part of this event on February 13 at the Shrine Club, in partnership with Our Lady of Peace.



ErieNTS25 rolled out the red carpet for 140 honored guests, ranging in age from 14 to 82. They receive flowers, thoughtful gifts, professional photo, each crowned queen and king, dancing, dinner and cheered on as they enter on the red carpet. This beautiful event is all at "no cost" to the attendees. This started out 100% financially covered by Tim Tebow. Because of the growth, he donates to each event. How can you help? You can attend as a cheerleader when they enter, be a buddy for the evening, so the parent can spend time in the parent room and/or donate to help cover this cost. The money/check is payable to Our Lady of Peace, as they are the sponsor of this costly event. Please consider helping anyway you can. You can find more information on their Facebook page or ntserie.org. - Submitted by Analee Cree



Update from KAFP: KAFP has been able to purchase, along with their regular order from Second Harvest, potatoes, fresh tomatoes, bananas, green peppers, apples, onions and frozen green beans and other items during these cold winter months. Food bundles, which include all the ingredients for a healthy meal including the recipe, have been a huge success. KAFP "shoppers" continue to grow in number and KAFP continues to provide carts full of healthy food and, as available, personal items and cleaning and laundry supplies.

Special thanks to those who donated during the holidays and throughout January. Your financial and food donations help the food pantry eliminate hunger within our neighborhood. Thank you. **Rich Filson** ~Director – KAFP



Easter Flock ~ Saturday, March 28 - 1-3 pm

What better way to celebrate our risen Christ, than to open our doors and share that salvation. The team is looking for volunteers and **donations of raffle baskets** or **monetary donations to make raffle baskets**. The money raised on tickets for these baskets is used to help cover the expense of hosting this event. Tickets are 6 for \$5 or 15 for \$10. Please contact Analee (amc542009@hotmail.com) or mark donations "Raffle Baskets". If possible, bring your baskets to AH on or before March 20th when the committee will make bidding on baskets by Sunday worship attenders that may not be at the event. Sincere thanks. – Analee Cree



Easter Flock Volunteer Meetings: Feb 10 & 24, March 10 & 24 at 12:30; Set-up March 27 @ 10.





Green Corner NWPA Synod Green Team

Winter Gardening

This time of year, I like to look at photos of other people's gardens to gather ideas. Winter is a good time to make plans for the next season. I decided today, when I was out in the snow removing a badly damaged shrub, what little bush I'll move into its place. The dead branches of the shrub will be put into a pile that will create habitat for animals up in the woods. These woods, back far enough that trees are unlikely to fall on the house in a heavy wind.

They shade the house in the summer and block cold winter winds. I and local wildlife are fortunate that someone planted these trees, and I've added more over the years. This may be the year you want to plant your own windbreak and shade cover. With the climate crisis, shade is becoming more important.

How does your garden look in the snow? Patios, arbors, and seating make garden more comfortable and define the area in the snow. Do you want to enlarge or shrink a garden bed? What about adding or widening a path or two to make weeding and walking easier? How about a new patio? Should you consider a water feature? There is a lot of information available on water gardening. I've had extremely inexpensive feeder goldfish grow to over a foot long in a pond that was deep enough for them to survive the winter. My daughter puts a heater and filter in her pond with koi and a few big goldfish.

There are so many options for rocks and plants around a water feature! It's also, a wonderful habitat for wildlife.

In winter, I compost in one of two big containers in my little fenced food garden.

One container is an old claw foot tub. The other is a large half plastic barrel. Both are placed in corners of my food garden.

Every fall, I dig out one container of rich black compost dotted with eggshells into the garden beds. I use the empty container all winter to fill with my kitchen food waste. In the spring, I top that container of now partially done compost with a little potting soil or good soil that has never grown beans or members of the tomato or pepper family, then I plant beans into the newly compost-filled half barrel or bathtub. Next year this container will hold tomatoes. The other container waits with last year's bean roots (they add nitrogen) and fresh mulch, for the first tomato plants of the season. My lazy unorganized slow composting takes a year for one container of compost to be emptied. There are numerous websites and books devoted to more planned, faster, intensive composting, that include layering and combining brown and green types of food and garden waste. There are also many different types of compost containers, many are homemade. I also add kitchen scraps to a container of red wiggler worms in my basement. Adding some of the worms and their castings to my rhubarb and asparagus late last spring made a big difference!

Stay warm and cozy this winter, planning next spring's garden, composting, and planning projects. Every garden is different. Happy gardening!

The Green Team's purpose is to "raise awareness of and advocate for the care of creation." Our mission is to support and encourage creation care ministries, raise awareness, model creation care advocacy consistent with ELCA teachings in our faith communities and public life.

Like and follow us on Facebook: Northwestern PA Synod Green Team – Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

Contact us at:

nwpasynodgreenteam@gmail.com





Abiding Hope February 2026 Calendar



2402 W Grandview Blvd. Erie, PA 16506 ~ 814-868-8685 ~ <http://www.abidinghopeerie.org/>

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1 4 th Sunday after	2	3	4 Tops 9-11	5	6	7
Epiphany Traditional Worship 9:30 Choir 9 & 10:45 Bible Study 11 The Gospel of Matthew	Groundhog Day Prayer Shawls 10 am Al-Anon 7:30	Ministry Team meeting 10:30 M Lessons 4-5 Al-Anon 7:30		Care & Share 1-3 M. Lessons 4-5, 6-8		M Lessons 8-12 Overeaters 10:30 Lower-level rental party 2:30-6:30p
8 5 th Sunday after	9	10	11 Tops 9-11	12 KAFP 9-11:30	13	14
Epiphany Blended Worship 9:30 Choir 9 & 10:45 Bible Study 11 Bible Reading via ZOOM 7 pm	Sun 2/8 	Ministry Team meeting 10:30 Easter Flock 12:30 Church Council 6:30 M Lessons 4-5 Al-Anon 7:30		Care & Share 1-3 KAFP Kearny Area Food Pantry M Lessons 4-5, 6-8	Night to Shine Shrine Club Dance-6pm	M Lessons 8-12 Overeaters 10:30
15 Transfiguration	16	17	18 Tops 9-11	19	20	21
Of Our Lord Instrumental Worship 9:30 Choir 10:45 Bible Study 11 The Gospel of Matthew	Presidents' Day Prayer Shawls 10 am Al-Anon 7:30	Ministry Team meeting 10:30 2/18 Prayer Warriors 1-3 MNO @ The Cab M Lessons 4-5	 Wednesday Worship 12 at New Hope 6:30 at AHLC Choir 6pm M Lessons 6-7	Care & Share 1-3 Ladies Night Out @ Underdog BBQ ~ 5:30 M Lessons 4-5, 6-8		M Lessons 8-12 Overeaters 10:30
22 1 st Sunday of	23	24	25 Tops 9-11	26 KAFP 9-11:30	27	28
Lent Blended Worship 9:30 Choir 9 & 10:45 Bible Study 11 Bible Reading via ZOOM 7 pm	DL Newsletter Al-Anon 7:30	Ministry Team meeting 10:30 Easter Flock 12:30 M Lessons 4-5	Lenten Service Project 1pm Humane Society M Lessons 6-7	Care & Share 1-3 KAFP Kearny Area Food Pantry M Lessons 4-5, 6-8		M Lessons 8-12 Overeaters 10:30

Meet Jeff Neely ~ AH's New Sexton



Hi, I am Jeff Neely. My wife Sharon and I have been married for 11 years. We attend church at Grace McKean. I recently retired from Millcreek School District where I worked as head custodian for 32 years. I enjoy watching Steeler's football and traveling with my wife.



