

The title 'the Vine' is written in a white, elegant serif font. The letter 'V' is particularly large and stylized, with a green vine-like flourish extending from its top left. A ladybug is perched on the stem of the 'V', and a pink flower with a yellow center is at the top of the stem. The background is a photograph of vibrant pink bougainvillea flowers against a blurred green background.

the Vine

Spring Edition | 2026

A New Day - A New Life! Page 4

VBS 2026: Rainforest Falls Page 22

RHLS Habits of Mind Journey Page 40

the Vine

The quarterly journal of RED HILL LUTHERAN CHURCH & SCHOOL

I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. -John 15:5

Dear Friends,

As we enter into the spring season and the renewal of life associated with spring, we will likewise enter into the season of Easter and the renewal of spiritual life that the Resurrection brings! The Christian hope for new life is a hope promised in Scripture. The Apostle Paul, writing to the church at Corinth, reminds them (us) of this truth:

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come” (2 Corinthians 5.17).

Through His life, death, and resurrection, Jesus has achieved for us what we could not do in our own power: deliver us from the grip of sin, fear, and hopelessness. Our past is not final, and our future is not futile. New life is offered to us every day as we walk with Jesus in faith.

Martin Luther believed this new life, offered to us daily through Christ, is grounded in our Baptism. For Luther, Baptism “signifies that the old creature in us ... is to be drowned and die through *daily* ... repentance, and ... that *daily* a new person is to come forth and arise up to live before God in righteousness and purity forever.» So fundamental was this Baptismal promise of new life for Luther, that when he was tempted, afraid, or in doubt, he would remind himself “*baptizatus sum*,” “I am baptized,” affirming again his new life in Christ.

As you read through this edition of *The Vine*, consider the new life that is yours in Christ Jesus. Are you living as a new creation in Christ? Or, are you carrying the burdens of yesterday’s guilt and tomorrow’s worries? How can Red Hill Lutheran Church and School help you to live and serve in newness of life? The Easter hope of new life is your promise from God to claim—today!

In Christ,

Pastor Seth



Table of Contents

Page 4

A New Day - A New Life!

Page 8

Created For Community

Page 12

Mexico Housebuilding

Page 14

DiscipleU; HisStory

Page 20

Palm Sunday and Springfest

Page 22

VBS 2026: Rainforest Falls

Page 26

The Grapevine

Page 30

Robotics at Red Hill Lutheran School

Page 32

Growing Together

Page 39

Winter Preschool Family Playdate

Page 40

RHLS Habits of Mind Journey

Page 44

Missions

Page 46

Pentecost - The Power of the Holy Spirit

Church & School Staff

Rev. Dr. Seth Britton, *Senior Pastor*

sbritton@redhillchurch.org

Dr. Paul Marquardt, *Principal*

pmarquardt@redhillschool.org

Lori Browne, *Director of Admissions*

lbrowne@redhillschool.org

Stephanie McArthur, *Exec. Director of Ministries*

smcarthur@redhillchurch.org

Cyndi Tully, *Church & School Administrator*

ctully@redhillchurch.org

Donna Kunz, *Executive Assistant to the Senior Pastor*

dkunz@redhillchurch.org

MJ Siegert, *Communications*

msiegert@redhillchurch.org

Marty Schaefer, *Director of Arts and Worship*

mschaefer@redhillchurch.org

Isaiah Coughran, *Director of Contemporary Worship*

icoughran@redhillchurch.org

Jessica Hickey, *Preschool Director*

jhickey@redhillschool.org

Beth Stoffregen, *Director of Children's Ministry*

beths@redhillchurch.org

Tim Rivera, *Student Ministry Coordinator*, trivera@redhillchurch.org

Jason Harney, *Director of Music/Principal Conductor/*

Jubilee Bells, Hand Bell Choir/ Childrens Choir Directo

jharney@redhillchurch.org

Dr. Linda Brown, *Organist*

lindabrown@redhillchurch.org

General Inquiries

info@redhillchurch.org

The Vine Editor

Donna Kunz

Creative Directors

Donna Kunz

Marty Schaefer

Front Cover Photo

Donna Kunz

Contributing Photographers

Donna Kunz; Stephanie McArthur; Manny Olmedo;
Ted Rigoni; Tim Rivera; Brandon Stoffregen; Liz Weber

A New Day—A New Life!

Springtime is the season of new life! Flowers bloom, the days grow warmer, and the nights grow shorter! Winter's chill and darkness will give way to spring's life and light.

What is true of nature's seasons is also true of our church seasons. The solemn season of Lent, typically begun in mid-winter, calls us to reflect upon the darkness, sinfulness and brokenness of our human condition, as well as the cost God Himself paid to save us from this hopelessness. The Lenten season culminates with Holy Week, typically near the beginning of spring, which is the final week of Jesus' earthly life. Also referred to as the *Passion Week*, these holy days reveal the depths of God's passion for you and me—this whole world! The winter of death will be overcome by the new life of spring!

Just consider the words we use to describe these holy days. Let's start with "Palm Sunday." Of course, Palm Sunday is the day that Jesus arrived in Jerusalem to the shouts of "hosanna" ("Save us now!") and the waving of palm branches (See John 12.12-15). Palm branches were often used in public celebrations to welcome a conquering hero because they were abundant in surrounding trees. The palm branches would be cut or pulled down and then waved back and forth as one would wave a flag or banner. (In our day think of a 4th of July parade and waving the America flag as military veterans pass by). For many, Jesus was a conquering hero—at least they thought He was going to conquer, to do battle with the occupying, Roman government as they expected God's Messiah to do! And, in part, the crowds were right; this procession by Jesus is fulfilling prophecy and making a claim: the long-promised Messiah is here! The *Lutheran Study Bible* describes it this way:

*Palm Sunday is a high point, as a crowd at the Jewish capital openly acclaim Jesus as Messiah. It is also a turning point, however, since it galvanizes His opponents. Like the crowds in Jerusalem, we are prone to fickleness—today all for the Lord, tomorrow turning from Him. Though we often prove faithless, Jesus remains constant. His love and forgiveness never falter.*¹

¹ *The Lutheran Study Bible* (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2009).

However, those who thought Jesus was going to fight the Romans and go to war were to become disillusioned and angry as Jesus literally surrendered to the authorities. The joy and excitement of Palm Sunday gave way to the confusion and fear of Maundy Thursday. It was on this day, Maundy Thursday, that Jesus instituted the sacrament of Holy Communion and issued a "new command" (*Maundy*—from the Latin "*Mandatum*" meaning, "*Mandate*") that his disciples love one another as He has loved us. In order to demonstrate this love, Jesus washes the disciples' feet, a job for the lowest of slaves. Jesus leaves the upper room, walks to the Garden of Gethsemane, and prays for God to get Him through the suffering. Jesus is arrested, faces trial, and is savagely beaten. Jesus' disciples flee in fear and deny that they even know him (John 13.1-5).

The dawn of "Good Friday" brings more beatings and Jesus' eventual death by crucifixion. On this day, the eternal, omnipotent, omniscient God willingly came to die in our place; to take our sin and its consequences, death, into His divine life. God is holy, just and good, God cannot allow sin in His presence. Sin must be punished. And, God loves us, and wants to be WITH US! On the cross, God justly deals with sin and death, as well as our broken relationship with Him. Christian theology has referred to this action of God on the cross as propitiation.

*Propitiation is a big word that means satisfaction. Because God is a holy God, His anger and justice burns against sin. And He has sworn that sin will be punished. There must be a satisfactory payment for sin. But God said, "If I punish man for his sin, man will die and go to hell. On the other hand, if I don't punish man for his sin, My justice will never be satisfied." The solution? God said that He would become our substitute. He would take the sin of mankind upon Himself in agony and blood—a righteous judgment and substitute for sin. His wrath burned out on the cross when His only Son died as man's propitiation for sin. And this is love (see 1 John 4:10).*²

² Adrian Rogers, "Complete Payment for Sin" (Love Worth Finding Ministries).

This is love indeed! Jesus was willing to go through whatever it would take to restore our relationship with the Father. The scourging and the crucifixion that He will face prove this truth (Matthew 27.32-44).

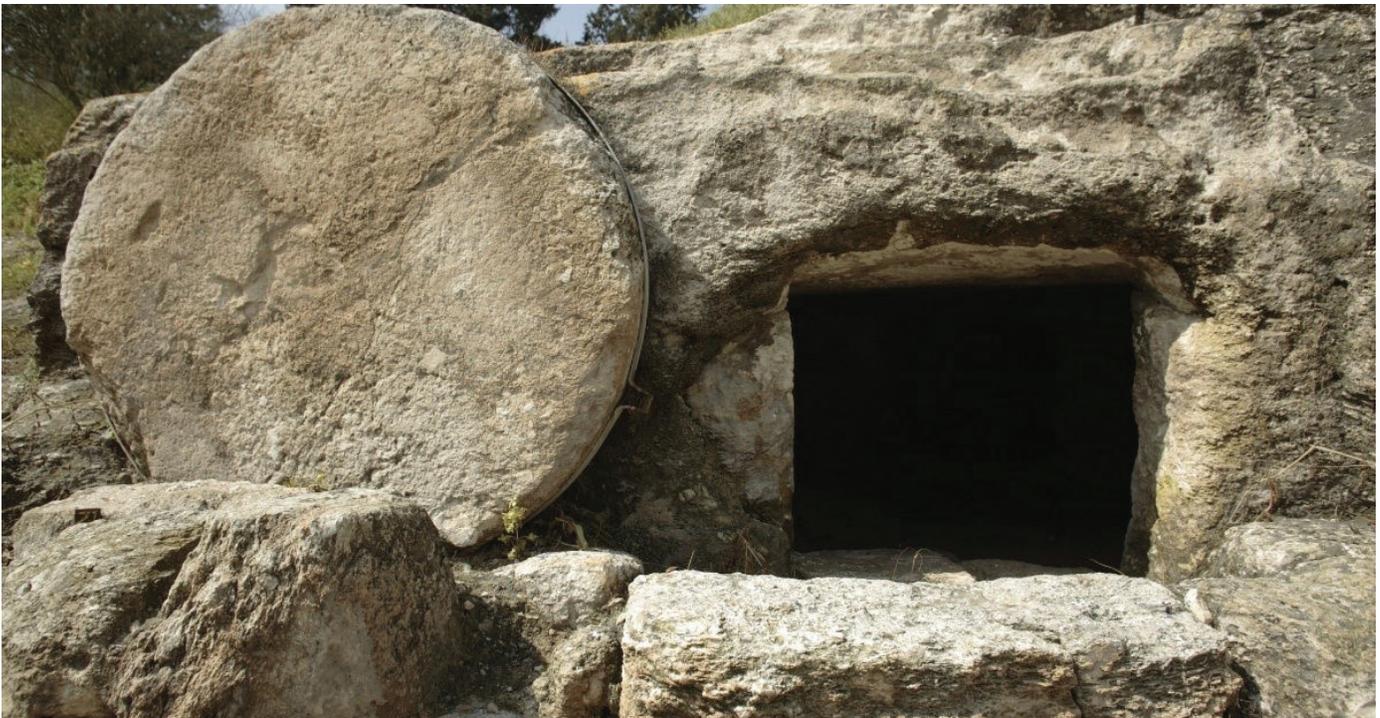
As Jesus' body is taken down from the cross, His few followers who stayed wrapped His body in burial cloths and placed it in a borrowed tomb. A few of the women who followed Jesus (including His mother Mary) and the "beloved" disciple John, likely left the tomb bewildered and confused. What about all that Jesus said? Did Jesus tell the truth? Is evil more powerful than good, death more powerful than life? I'm sure that these questions, or others like them, were swirling in their heads. Perhaps they began the countdown to Sunday, the first day of the week in the ancient world, to the time when they would be allowed to visit the grave and anoint Jesus' body one final time. I also imagine that after two sleepless nights the women left their homes as soon as they could—at sunrise on Sunday. They would make one final walk to the tomb to say farewell to the man who changed their lives (Matthew 27.57-61).

As the women approach the tomb something is wrong. Mark describes it this way:

When the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, so that they might go and anoint him. ² And very early on the

first day of the week, when the sun had risen, they went to the tomb.³ And they were saying to one another, "Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance of the tomb?" ⁴ And looking up, they saw that the stone had been rolled back—it was very large. ⁵ And entering the tomb, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, dressed in a white robe, and they were alarmed. ⁶ And he said to them, "Do not be alarmed. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has risen; he is not here. See the place where they laid him. ⁷ But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going before you to Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you." ⁸ And they went out and fled from the tomb, for trembling and astonishment had seized them, and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid. (Mark 16.1-7)

I love the angel's simple words: "He had risen. He is not here." He is alive! Can you imagine the sheer joy? Jesus is alive! Death is NOT the last word! He is not here! The tomb is empty! Because of Easter, death has been defeated, our sins forgiven, and reconciliation to God accomplished. God in Christ has given us a new day and new life; a chance to start over and enjoy a new relationship with him. Because of Easter, all that Jesus said and did was confirmed! Jesus is the way, the truth and the life!



Too good to be true? Many have claimed that Easter is just not possible. Skeptics suggested that perhaps what the disciples had was a “resurrection” of their confidence in the teachings of Jesus? Maybe Jesus didn’t really die on the cross but only “swooned?” Maybe the disciples stole his body and spread the hoax of a resurrection? However, if you look at all of the evidence and take into account the sheer power of the Christian movement, it takes more faith to believe the resurrection didn’t happen!

While there have always been doubts, questions, and sheer refusal to believe the resurrection of Jesus, the Bible is remarkably consistent and reliable when it comes to Jesus’ victory over the grave. Christian apologist Hank Hanegraaff notes:

Of the many evidences available, none is more compelling than the fact that the resurrected Christ appeared to over five hundred individuals at a single time (1 Corinthians 15:6). Christ appeared to numerous other individuals as well, providing “many convincing proofs” of His resurrection (Acts 1:3). Christ in His resurrection body was even touched on two occasions (Matthew 28:9; John 20:17), and challenged the disciples (Luke 24:39) and Thomas (John 20:27) to feel His wounds. For those who continue to harbor doubts about the veracity of the biblical evidence, one need only point to Dr. Simon Greenleaf, the greatest authority on legal evidences in the 19th century. It is noteworthy that after examining the evidence for the resurrection of Jesus Christ, Greenleaf suggested that any cross-examination of the eyewitness testimonies recorded in Scripture would result in “an undoubting conviction of their integrity, ability, and truth.”³

Additionally, theologian and author Dr. Michael Horton, notes two, key points about the historicity of Easter:

The earliest Christians testified to the following elements of the resurrection claim, even to the point of martyrdom...

1. *Jesus Christ lived, died, and was buried...*
Marcus Borg, co-founder of the skeptical “Jesus Seminar,” even concedes that Christ’s death by Roman crucifixion is “the most certain fact about the historical Jesus.” There are numerous attestations to these facts from ancient Jewish and Roman sources. According to the Babylonian Talmud, “Yeshua” was a false prophet hanged on Passover eve for sorcery and blasphemy. No less a towering Jewish scholar than Joseph Klausner identifies the following references to Jesus in the Talmud: Jesus was a rabbi whose mother, Mary (Miriam), was married to a carpenter who was nevertheless not the natural father of Jesus. Jesus went with his family to Egypt, returned to Judea and made disciples, performed miraculous signs by sorcery, led Israel astray, and was deserted at his trial without any defenders. On Passover eve he was crucified.

The burial of Jesus in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea is mentioned in all four Gospels (Mt 27:57; Mk 15:43; Lk 23:50; Jn 19:38-39). This is a specific detail that lends credibility to the account. Furthermore, it’s an embarrassing detail that the disciples would not likely have forged. After all, according to the Gospels, the disciples fled and Peter had even denied knowing Jesus. Yet here is a wealthy and powerful member of the ruling Jewish Council (Sanhedrin), coming to Pilate to ask for permission to bury Jesus in his own tomb. Adding to the embarrassment, according to John 19:38-42, Joseph was assisted in the burial by another leader of the Pharisees, Nicodemus (who met with Jesus secretly in John 3). Joseph was of such a stature that Pilate conceded to deliver the body over to him, but only after confirming with the centurion that Jesus was in fact dead (Mk 15:44-45).

2. *Jesus Christ’s tomb was empty after three days.*
Not even this claim should be controversial today, since it was acknowledged by Romans and Jews as well as by the first Christians. Of course, there were widely divergent explanations, but there

³ Hank Hanegraaff. “Jesus’ Resurrection: Miracle or Myth?” See, www.equip.org.

was a remarkable consensus on this point. The Jewish leaders claimed that the body was stolen by the disciples. This is asserted in Matthew 28:11-15)...unable to locate Jesus, dead or alive...the very fact that they sought alternative explanations for the resurrection demonstrates that the empty tomb was a historical fact.⁴

Of course, there are other evidences of the resurrection that I have not mentioned here. Again, as one of my professors said to me, “When you look at all the evidence of Easter, it takes more faith *not to believe* than to believe!” Easter is our hope. Easter is God’s promise. Again, I cite Hank Hanegraaff who makes the point so well:

The importance of this event cannot be minimized, for Jesus Himself proclaimed that His resurrection would prove His power over death, and thus His deity (John 2:18-22). Not only that, but Christ’s resurrection is the very heart of the gospel (1 Corinthians 15:1-4).

Yes! Jesus is alive! A new day, a new life has begun! The early church understood Jesus’ resurrection as the central witness to a new act of God in history and the victory of God in vindicating Jesus as the Messiah. The resurrection marks the central faith confession of the early church and was the focal point for Christian worship, observed on the first day of each week since the first century (See Acts 20:7; Sunday was officially proclaimed the day of Christian worship in AD 321). Personally, because of Good Friday and Easter, our lives and deaths are taken up into His. The very same power that raised Jesus is available for us in the present moment. Because of Easter, everything is different!

Fifty days after Easter, on the Day of Pentecost, the church would be sent out into the world, empowered by the promised Holy Spirit, to proclaim this message of hope found in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. As Saint Paul writes:

Now if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? 13 But if there

⁴ See Michael Horton, “Risen Indeed!” www.whitehorse-inn.org

is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. 14 And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain. 15 We are even found to be misrepresenting God, because we testified about God that he raised Christ, whom he did not raise if it is true that the dead are not raised. 16 For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised. 17 And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. 18 Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. 19 If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied. (1 Corinthians 15:12-19)

Where there was futility, now there is hope. Where there was darkness, now there is light. Where there was death, now there is life. The spring of God’s new day has come!

In God’s Joy,

Pastor Seth



Belonging: An Invitation to Step Past the Surface

By Stephanie McArthur, Executive Director of Ministries

There is a quiet truth woven into every human heart: we long to belong. Long before we can define the word, we feel it. You can see it in a toddler who cries when separated from a parent, what experts call separation anxiety. Beneath the tears is something deeper than discomfort. It is the instinctive knowledge that we were not created to be alone.

Scripture affirms what our hearts already know. In Genesis 2:18, God declares, *“It is not good that the man should be alone.”* From the very beginning, belonging was part of God’s design. We were created for relationships, with Him and with one another.

As we grow, our longing to belong expands. We join sports teams, academic clubs, friend groups, and communities, hoping to find our place. Yet even when we are technically “in,” we can still feel on the fringe. The ache remains. The desire to be known, truly known, only deepens with age.

At times, the need to belong tempts us to reshape ourselves into a more acceptable version. We soften opinions, hide struggles, or amplify strengths, hoping to fit in. But belonging built on performance is fragile. The Apostle Paul reminds us in Galatians 1:10 that our goal is not to win the approval of people, but to live as servants of Christ. True belonging begins not with pretending, but with authenticity.

When my husband Kevin and I were first married, we set out to find a church home. Kevin grew up Catholic; I grew up moving between different churches every few years. What mattered most was not a particular style or program, but finding a place where we belonged.

I remember the moment I knew we had found it. At an Advent dinner, a couple simply sat down next to us and started talking. There was no agenda, no sales pitch, just a genuine, easy conversation. That simple act of hospitality grew into real friendship. It was belonging, unfolding naturally.

Years later, coming to Red Hill with our family stirred familiar questions: Will we belong here? Will we find community? Will our kids thrive? Transitions have a way of exposing our deepest fears. Yet God often uses uncomfortable seasons to reveal His faithfulness. In my own wrestling, my eyes were opened to see others

wrestling too. Moms overwhelmed with parenting and work. Individuals quietly questioning their faith. Longtime members carry a deep desire to be known but unsure how to say it aloud. Beneath polished Sunday smiles, many of us share the same longing.

The beauty is this: you are here.

If you are new to Red Hill, welcome. We want you to belong. We want you to be seen and known. We understand that walking into a Bible study where you know no one can feel intimidating. Staying for a patio conversation when your instinct is to head straight to the car takes courage. But sometimes belonging begins with simply staying five minutes longer.

If you have been part of this church for years, consider this a gentle challenge. Look for the unfamiliar face. Dedicate each Sunday to speaking with one person you have never met. Invite someone to lunch. Yes, it may feel awkward to introduce yourself to someone who has attended for decades. But that small act of humility might be the very thing God uses to knit hearts together.

In 1 Corinthians 12:27, Paul writes, “Now you are the body of Christ, and individually members of it.” Belonging in the Church is not about uniformity; it is about unity. Each person matters. Each story matters. Each presence is part of the whole.

Ultimately, our deepest belonging is found in Christ. Psalm 139 reminds us that we are fully known by God, every thought, every word, every fear, and still fully loved. When we rest in that truth, we are freed from striving. We no longer need to perform for acceptance; we can show up as our authentic selves.

If you are searching for a place to belong, or if you want to help create spaces for deeper connection beyond Sunday mornings, I would love to connect with you. True community forms when we open our homes, open our hearts, and step past surface-level conversations into something real.

Belonging does not happen by accident. It happens when we choose to see and be seen.

And that choice might just change everything.

To be connected into community, contact me at smcarthur@redhillschool.org

Created for Community: Serving, Gathering, Growing

By Stephanie McArthur, Executive Director of Ministries

These past few months have been a beautiful reminder that the Church is not simply a place we attend, it is a people we belong to. Scripture tells us, “For just as each of us has one body with many members... so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others” (Romans 12:4–5). We have seen this truth lived out in powerful ways.

Serving Together: Meal Packing for Mission of Hope

During our recent Meal Packing event supporting Mission of Hope, we witnessed what can happen when a community unites for a common purpose. On Thursday evening alone, 17,000 meals were packed to help serve families in Haiti. Church members, school families, Boy Scouts, Cub Scouts, and our youth group rotated through shifts, working side by side. With joyful hearts, and a little friendly competition, box after box was filled.

It was a living example of Galatians 6:2: “Carry each other’s burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.” What may have seemed like a simple task of scooping rice and sealing bags became something sacred, an act of love for neighbors we may never meet this side of heaven.



Fellowship Across Generations: Family Game Night

We also hosted our first Family Game Night, welcoming everyone from our youngest player at four years old to our oldest at ninety. Around tables filled with board games, laughter echoed through the room. New friendships were formed, new games were learned, and for a few hours, screens and busy schedules were set aside.

Acts 2:46 reminds us that the early believers gathered together with glad and sincere hearts. That evening

reflected that same spirit. Fellowship is not accidental, it requires intention. In a world that pulls us in countless directions, choosing to sit across from one another, share a meal, and engage face to face is a gift.



Beginning Lent Together: Soup Supper

As we stepped into the Lenten season, more than 100 people gathered for our Soup Supper, sharing over 15 different varieties of soup and time around the table. Lent invites us into prayer, reflection, and preparation as we journey toward the cross and the empty tomb.

Psalm 51:10 became our prayer: *“Create in me a clean heart, O God.” In fellowship and worship, we began preparing our hearts for Christ’s death and resurrection on Easter, remembering the depth of His love and sacrifice.*

Growing Deeper: Small Groups

This season has also marked the launch of our Small Group ministry. Beyond Sunday mornings, individuals and families are gathering to open God’s Word, ask honest questions, and walk in authenticity together.

Hebrews 10:24–25 encourages us: *“Let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together... but encouraging one another.” Small groups are becoming spaces where burdens are shared, prayers are lifted, and genuine connections are formed. We were never meant to navigate life alone.*

Looking Ahead: More Opportunities to Serve

In the coming months, we look forward to continuing to be the hands and feet of Christ through our upcoming First Responder Luncheon and our Military Packing event. We also invite you to join one of our Bible study offerings as we continue to grow together in faith and community.

From service projects to soup suppers, from board games to Bible studies, each gathering reflects a deeper truth: we are created for community. As 1 Corinthians 12:26 reminds us, *“If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it.” We belong to one another.*

If you are new or just beginning to connect, please know this: you are welcome here. We are truly grateful you have joined us. There is a place for you at the table, a role for you in the body, and a community ready to walk alongside you.



RHLC Builds Houses for Families in Mexico

By Dr. Ken Hays

Participation in our Mexico housebuilding ministry translates Christ's words "...as you have done to the least of these my brethren, you have done unto Me" into exemplary and fulfilling personal action.

Over a period of two days, our Red Hill group builds a badly needed 16'x20', three-room, weatherproof home with a loft for a poor Mexican family living in slum conditions just a few miles south of the border. Multiple rooms give the family needed privacy and dignity. The house is durable, efficiently designed, and serves the family for many years. A concrete slab floor, construction materials, and building plans are pre-arranged and provided by Baja Christian Ministries. They also arrange for our Red Hill group's sleeping accommodations and three of our meals, as well as providing help and advice with construction. Construction tasks include framing, siding, wiring, roofing, painting, and drywall - often occurring at the same time! Red Hill has sent groups to build these homes in Mexico annually for many years. Regardless of your construction skills, gender, or age, there is something for you to do!

Our groups have had great successes on our many past housebuilding efforts. The trip last spring was particularly moving. We carpool from our church parking lot to Tijuana. We always present the family with a new Bible. We thank them for allowing us to serve as Christ's hands. The little children are always excited, inspecting and exploring the house as it



goes up. Some tasks, such as painting and framing, or roofing and drywall, are worked simultaneously by sub-teams. The house recipients are typically overjoyed. Family members may be in tears and or speechless as they receive the keys to their new front door.

In recent years, we have also served communion to our group and to believers in the neighborhood, as well as a hot dog lunch for the local community on the first day of the build. There are usually lots of hungry neighbors, and it's a good way to meet some nice people.

This year's trip to Mexico is May 15th - 17th. As with our many trips in past years, this will be a unique and very fulfilling opportunity to demonstrate the Lord's love to a family in real need.

Contact Ken Hays at 714-289-0476 or focusonit@ca.rr.com if you can participate. Also, if you don't already have a passport, apply for one right away!"





Shot on moto g stylus 5G (2022)
Ray and Mel



Shot on moto g stylus 5G (2022)
Ray and Mel

May 18, 2024, 9:46 AM



“DiscipleU” Adult Class
Sunday Mornings, 9:15 to 10:00am
Christian Life Center (CLC)

“HisStory: The History of Christianity.”
(Class Begins on Sunday, April 12th.)
Teacher: Pastor Seth

Acts 17.6-7 And when they could not find them, they dragged Jason and some of the brothers before the city authorities, shouting, “These men who have turned the world upside down have come here also, 7 and Jason has received them, and they are all acting against the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, Jesus.”

As Christians, we believe that God has created history and has even entered into human history! From Genesis to Revelation, we have the story of God who created the world and the humans who would live and work in the world, the sinful rebellion of humanity against their creator, and God’s salvific mission to save and heal the world, beginning with Israel and ultimately fulfilled through Jesus Christ.

Jesus launched a movement within history that would continue His mission in the world—the church! As Jesus prepared to ascend back to the Father, Jesus told His followers...

Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in [b] the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” (Matthew 28.19-20).

The story of the church’s mission in carrying out Jesus’ command to make disciples until He returns is the history of Christianity. As theologian Paul Maier writes,

Christianity is the greatest success story in the history of the world. No other religion or institution or government comes even close to the number of its adherents, with some two and a quarter billion in the present generation alone. It has exerted a greater influence, changed more lives, educated more people, fostered more progress in the arts and sciences, inspired loftier achievements in culture, and had a more powerful role in helping the helpless than any other institution on earth. In the past two thousand years, it has indeed proven to be the greatest movement ever.¹

Through this course, we will follow the history of the church from the ministry of Jesus to the present day. Subjects to be explored will be:

- The Beginning: The Patient Growth of the Early Church (33-250 A.D.)
- Constantine, Councils, Creeds and Chaos (250-600 A.D.)
- The Church in the Middle Ages (600-1500 A.D.)
- The Reformation and the Reformers (1500-1600 A.D.)
- The Early English and American Christianity (1600-1800 A.D.)
- The Church in Modern Times (1800-1918 A.D.)
- Global Christianity (1918-Present A.D.)

Bring your Bibles as we examine the people, places, teachings, persecutions, cultural and political challenges, as well as the future challenges associated with the Christian movement throughout history.

¹ *Church History: The Basics*, Edward A. Engelbrecht, Ed. (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2016).

RHL Church & School 2026 First Communion

By Beth Stoffregen, Director of Youth and Family Ministry

On Sunday, January 25th, RHL Church and School welcomed a group of students and their families for a First Communion Class. This special learning opportunity was offered for children in 2nd grade and older who desired to learn more about the Sacrament of Holy Communion, as well as for those who had been baptized and were preparing to receive their First Communion. Led by Pastor Seth, the class gathered students from both our church congregation and our school community, creating a meaningful time of learning, reflection, and preparation.

Throughout the class, students and their families explored the significance of Holy Communion in the Lutheran faith. Together they discussed what Scripture teaches about the Lord's Supper, why this sacrament is such an important part of our worship life, and how Jesus comes to us with His gifts of grace, forgiveness, and strengthening of faith. Families were encouraged to participate in the conversation, ask questions, and grow in their understanding together. The class served not only as preparation for receiving the sacrament, but also as an opportunity for families to deepen their connection to Christ and to the worship life of our church.

The following Sunday, February 1st, these students received their First Holy Communion during the 10:15 am worship service. Surrounded by their families and the congregation. As a church family, we celebrate with them and give thanks to the Lord for the opportunity to walk alongside these young believers as they grow in faith.

Please join us in congratulating the following students who received their First Holy Communion:

Scarlett Chavez
Lilly Drumm

Charlotte Ninh
Calypso Sun

We pray that God will continue to bless these students and their families as they grow in their faith. May this milestone be the beginning of a lifelong journey of being nourished and strengthened at the Lord's Table.



Altar Guild - Always Planning and Always Preparing

By Patti Sullivan, Altar Guild Coordinator

Altar Guild members are committed and eager to take on new responsibilities and challenges this year. The month of January seemed to pass in the blink of an eye! It is also a time for the Altar Guild team to slow down for a minute after the busyness of the Advent and Christmas. It's a chance to take a deep breath and work at a bit slower and calmer pace. It also provides time to catch up with one another and talk about what has been going on in the lives of the Altar Guild members, and how they celebrated the holiday season with their families and friends. Though the first of the year offers a slightly slower pace, we continue to prepare for the Sunday services as well as for baptisms – and we have seen quite a few baptisms already this year! God is good!

As part of our ongoing efforts to ensure the Sanctuary is always ready for worship, we dedicate time each week to preparing for the Sunday services. This includes carefully cleaning and organizing the hymnals and bibles so that they are easily accessible and neatly arranged



for congregants. In addition, we polish the rails to maintain their appearance and uphold the reverence of the space. Our goal is to make sure every detail is attended to, creating an environment that is both welcoming and meticulously cared for. The ladies on the Altar Guild team do a wonderful job making sure it is. Jesus was the example of a servant. So, we try to follow his lead by being faithful servants too.

In February the year, as the Lenten journey begins, the Lenten focus is on Baptism. It's a reflection of the ancient church's practice of forty-day preparation. Baptism is and was the Sacrament of joining one's life to Jesus' death on the cross and His resurrection

form death. Part of the Altar Guild duties is to place the baptism font every Sunday in the center aisle as a focal point for the congregation to remember how through Baptism, we are God's people.

Beginning with Ash Wednesday through Easter Sunday, we are busy again preparing for the Holiest Season of the year. Beginning with Ash Wednesday, the start of the Lenten season, Red Hill's sanctuary will have a change of scenery. The paraments that were green and white for Epiphany are changed to purple.

Purple has long represented royalty and continues to do so today. You will also see our "old rugged cross" in the chancel area. The cross is also draped with

a purple linen to symbolize the pain and suffering leading up to the crucifixion of Jesus. The cross is both a visible symbol and a reminder of the beginning of Lent and a focus of what Lent is all about. The word Lent originally meant "spring" and is to be understood as a

holy "springtime of the soul" reflecting on baptism and its foundation in the death and resurrection of Jesus. It is a period of 40 days preceding the annual observance of the death and resurrection of Jesus, Good Friday and Easter. Lent is also a time of fasting, penitence and praying.

On the rugged cross, the letters INRI at the top of the cross is the abbreviation for the Latin phrase "Jesus the Nazarene, King of the Jews. It represents the inscription ordered by Pontius Pilate to be placed on the cross during Jesus' crucifixion as a charge against him. It is also written in Latin, Greek and Hebrew. We also oversee the altar candles and candelabras,

which have changed from red and gold to black. Black in the Christian tradition symbolizes death, mourning and the profound darkness of sin. It also represents the “curse of sin and darkness.” The color black is also a visual reminder of the “dust” from which humanity was created and to which it will return. Black also represents the absence of light and the spiritual darkness that existed before the light of Christ’s resurrection.

As we near Holy Week, we begin the task of preparing the Sanctuary for Palm Sunday, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and ultimately Easter Sunday.

Part of my duties as Altar Guild Coordinator is shopping for the plants and flowers that are used for Palm Sunday, the Springfest celebration and Easter Sunday. It is a task I look forward to and enjoy every year!

I must tell you, I don’t know anyone who could ask for a better volunteer position! You have probably figured out that I *really enjoy* plants, flowers and gardening. With the assistance of my faithful servant, brother-in-law, Dr. Ken Hays, who volunteers his time and truck to go to Home Depot with me and transport all the plants and flowers back to Red Hill, we set out every year to make the Sanctuary and surrounding areas beautiful and worthy of this Holy season. I want to once again thank Ken for his selfless and dedicated service. He always comes through and I am always appreciative.

The Altar Guild team will meet in the sanctuary on Saturday morning before Palm Sunday. This year, Palm Sunday and Springfest are on March 29th with one combined worship service at 10:15am. We will also be preparing the Easter garden in the sanctuary the Saturday before Easter, which falls this year on April 5th. Along with creating the Easter garden, we will place white Easter lilies on the altar where the red poinsettias were placed during Advent and Christmas. The altar candles and candelabras will also return to their original position of red and gold. The paraments will be changed to white. The “old rugged cross” will be changed from the black linen on Good Friday to the white linen draped on it for the celebration of Easter. This Holy season is so special and important in our lives, and we on the Altar Guild team painstakingly go about our duties to ensure that the Sanctuary and surrounding areas of Red Hill are beautifully reflected for this solemn time of year.

As the year continues through spring, summer, fall and
redhillchurch.org

winter there are so many things that consistently need tending to. One is how and when to restock or replace the items needed for year-round Sunday worship like the communion trays, plastic communion cups, wafers, and baptism candles and napkins. I have now learned when to let Donna Kunz know when we need the candle oil, wafers and communion cups and provide her with information on when and what to order. I’m pleased to say that I think I have got it down now! I occasionally make mistakes, but the good Lord has me covered.

As can happen in most volunteer services, this past year saw two dedicated members step down from the Altar Guild due to personal issues. I was sad to see these wonderful servants go, and I am grateful for all their past contributions. As always, the good Lord has since blessed the Altar Guild with three new members who found it in their hearts to be a part of the team. They are now Altar Guild members “in training” assisting in preparing the sanctuary, and getting ready for each Sunday service. The team is a wonderful group of faithful and dedicated servants.

When I accepted the role of Altar Guild Coordinator five years ago, I truly didn’t anticipate just how rewarding it would be. It has been a fulfilling journey working with the dedicated and talented members, their families, and the church staff. The Altar Guild volunteers are truly committed and creative servants who serve Red Hill Lutheran Church and School with joyful hearts.

As we know, Jesus was the example of what it means to be a faithful servant, and we do our very best to try to follow his lead by being faithful servants, too.

Writing this article for The Vine has given me a chance to dig deeper in God’s word, and share my faith, blessings and challenges as the Altar Guild Coordinator. I enjoy the creative outlet of putting my thoughts to paper and appreciate the opportunity to update you about Altar Guild, and keep you aware of what goes on “behind the scenes”. Have a blessed Holy Week!

Psalm 100:2 says “Serve the Lord with gladness. Matthew 20:28 says “Just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many.” In the book of Matthew 25:21 states, “His master replied, “Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.

Tea and Testimony

Recently, the women of Red Hill gathered for a beautiful and meaningful Tea and Testimony Luncheon, enjoying a proper English tea service and a special afternoon of fellowship. The room was filled with warmth and conversation as women of all ages came together around thoughtfully decorated tables created especially for the occasion. Guests were treated to a delightful spread catered by Jay's Catering, featuring freshly baked scones, delicate tea sandwiches, and an assortment of delicious desserts. The wonderful food and elegant setting helped create an atmosphere that made this gathering truly an event not to be missed.

During the luncheon, 5th grade Red Hill teacher Mia Gendreau shared a powerful and heartfelt testimony of God's faithfulness in her life. She reflected on the lesson of placing the "rocks" of our faith first—putting our trust in God before anything else—so that the

"sand" of life can fall into place around it. Mia also shared the remarkable story of moving her family, home, and entire life to Turkey to follow her husband's calling as a missionary. Through that journey, she experienced firsthand how God provides, leads, and remains faithful through every step of uncertainty and change.

Throughout the afternoon, women young and seasoned alike shared stories, encouragement, and laughter as they connected with one another over tea. The event was a beautiful reminder of the strength found in community and in hearing how God is at work in one another's lives. A special thank you to Carmen Gogosha for her incredible hard work and dedication in planning and organizing such a lovely and memorable event for the women of our church.



Creating Space and Discovering God's Gifts

By Isaiah Coughran, Director of Contemporary Worship



What in your life have you been intentional or territorial about lately? Anything? Or are you overwhelmed by the sheer amount of things you SHOULD prioritize, but feel too overwhelmed to actually prioritize something – anything and focus on it?

If you are on social media at all, you will find your feed filled with people prioritizing all sorts of things. Focusing on the self – what brings you life? How are you creating time for those things? Or, is it health



and as a result, diet and exercise have moved up your value ladder? Are you experiencing the benefits you'd hoped for? Or maybe it's family, and that is reflected in WHAT you do and the WAY you do it, and so you deliberately carve out time and heart for the people you love. All those things can be healthy things to focus on. And you should.

But what about spiritual priorities? Are you setting aside intentional time for that development? To build that muscle? Or do you just hope it happens to you? This time of Lent has been a good reflection on what Jesus told Mary in Luke 10; which was the one necessary thing – to create

space to hear from and encounter Jesus. In Pastor Seth's Lenten Sermon Series, Ashes to Light, he referenced those spiritual disciplines of Worship, Bible Study, Biblical Community, Prayer, and Service. Creating space for each of these has been such a gift in my walk of faith. There are some disciplines I like more than others, or feel more comfortable participating in, but all of them have shaped my walk. In this season of Lent, I have been keenly aware of Biblical Community. I have set aside intentional time to be with others. I pray for those times. Being together has given me a strong sense and experience of the love of God in a way that I have not experienced in Worship and Bible Study. Other times in my life, Worship and Bible Study has been where I experienced it the most.



My goal in this season is to be invested in the process of these spiritual disciplines and to trust God for the outcomes. There are gifts God continues to give in these spaces. My prayer for you (and for me) is to create space to discover those gifts that God is faithful to give.



Palm Sunday & Springfest: A Celebration for Our Church & Community

By Beth Stoffregen, Director of Youth and Family Ministry

Palm Sunday is always a joyful day in the life of the church, and we are excited to gather for our upcoming Palm Sunday Springfest Celebration on Sunday, March 29th. The day will begin with Palm Sunday Worship at 10:15 a.m., followed immediately by a pancake breakfast and then our Springfest celebration filled with fun, fellowship, and activities for all ages.

After worship, families and friends are invited to enjoy a delicious pancake breakfast, offering a wonderful opportunity to sit together, connect with others in our congregation, and welcome guests from the community. Following breakfast, the Springfest festivities will begin, creating a lively and welcoming environment where children and families can celebrate the joy of the season together.

Springfest will feature a wide variety of activities for everyone to enjoy. Children can participate in an egg hunt for all ages, meet animals at the petting zoo with pony rides, and take memorable pictures with the Easter Bunny. There will also be plenty of treats and attractions throughout the event, including cotton candy, popcorn, snow cones and several exciting inflatables for children to enjoy. With so many activities happening throughout the event, Springfest is a wonderful opportunity to invite friends, neighbors, and extended family to join in the celebration.



One of the things that makes events like Springfest so special is the spirit of service within our church and school community. Volunteers serve throughout the event by grilling and serving our pancake breakfast, welcoming families, helping guide egg hunts, and ensuring each attraction runs smoothly. Their presence allows children to safely enjoy each activity, keeps the event organized, and creates a warm and hospitable atmosphere for every guest who attends. Because of these faithful volunteers, families are able to relax, participate, and fully enjoy the celebration together.

Palm Sunday Springfest is more than just a fun event—it is an opportunity to gather as a community, celebrate the joy of the season, and share the welcoming spirit of our church with others. We invite you to come for worship, stay for breakfast, and enjoy a wonderful afternoon of fellowship and Springfest fun.

We look forward to celebrating with you on Palm Sunday, March 29th!



Mother's Day Origins in the United States

The origins of Mother's Day as celebrated in the United States date back to the 19th century. In the years before the Civil War, Ann Reeves Jarvis of West Virginia helped start "Mothers' Day Work Clubs" to teach local women how to properly care for their children.

These clubs later became a unifying force in a region of the country still divided over the Civil War. In 1868 Jarvis organized "Mothers' Friendship Day," at which mothers gathered with former Union and Confederate soldiers to promote reconciliation.

Another precursor to Mother's Day came from the abolitionist and suffragette Julia Ward Howe. In 1870 Howe wrote the "Mother's Day Proclamation," a call to action that asked mothers to unite in promoting world peace. In 1873 Howe campaigned for a "Mother's Peace Day" to be celebrated every June 2.

Other early Mother's Day pioneers include Juliet Calhoun Blakely, a temperance activist who inspired a local Mother's Day in Albion, Michigan, in the 1870s. The duo of Mary Towles Sasseen and Frank Hering, meanwhile, both worked to organize a Mothers' Day in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Some have even called Hering "the father of Mothers' Day."

Anna Jarvis Turns Mother's Day Into a National Holiday

The official Mother's Day holiday arose in the 1900s as a result of the efforts of Anna Jarvis, daughter of Ann Reeves Jarvis. Following her mother's 1905 death, Anna Jarvis conceived of Mother's Day as a way of honoring the sacrifices mothers made for their children.

After gaining financial backing from a Philadelphia department store owner named John Wanamaker, in May 1908 she organized the first official Mother's Day celebration at a Methodist church in Grafton, West Virginia. That same day also saw thousands of people attend a Mother's Day event at one of Wanamaker's retail stores in Philadelphia.

Following the success of her first Mother's Day, Jarvis—who remained unmarried and childless her whole life—resolved to see her holiday added to the national calendar. Arguing that American holidays were biased toward male achievements, she started a massive letter writing campaign to newspapers and prominent politicians urging the adoption of a special day honoring motherhood.

By 1912 many states, towns and churches had adopted Mother's Day as an annual holiday, and Jarvis had established the Mother's Day International Association to help promote her cause. Her persistence paid off in 1914 when President Woodrow Wilson signed a measure officially establishing the second Sunday in May as Mother's Day.

Article Title Mother's Day 2026

Author HISTORY.com Editors, Website Name History, URL <https://www.history.com/articles/mothers-day>

Date Accessed March 13, 2026, Publisher A&E Television Networks

Last Updated February 06, 2026, Original Published Date April 29, 2011

God's Helpers

*God could not be in every place
With loving hands to help erase
The teardrops from each baby's face,
And so He thought of mother.
He could not send us here alone
And leave us to a fate unknown;
Without providing for His own,
The outstretched arms of mother.
God could not watch us night and day
And kneel beside our crib to pray,
Or kiss our little aches away;
And so He sent us mother.
And when our childhood days began,
He simply could not take command.
That's why He placed our tiny hand
Securely into mother's.
The days of youth slipped quickly by,
Life's sun rose higher in the sky.
Full grown were we, yet ever nigh
To love us still, was mother.
And when life's span of years shall end,
I know that God will gladly send,
To welcome home her child again,
That ever-faithful mother.
-- George W. Wiseman*

VBS 2026: Rainforest Falls – Exploring the Nature of God

By Beth Stoffregen, VBS Director and Director of Youth and Family Ministry

Summer is just around the corner, and that means one of the most exciting weeks of the year is coming soon! Vacation Bible School 2026 will take place June 8th–12th, from 8:45am to 12:30pm, and this year’s theme invites children on an unforgettable adventure: Rainforest Falls... Exploring the Nature of God.

During this exciting week, children will journey deep into the rainforest as they explore who God is and discover just how much He loves them. Each day of VBS is designed to engage children through hands-on learning and joyful experiences that help bring the Bible to life. Participants will dive into memorable Bible activities, experience exciting Bible adventures, sing catchy songs, play team-building games, enjoy treetop treats, and create fun crafts with friends. Every day will conclude with a special Canopy Closing, where everyone gathers together to celebrate what they have learned and be encouraged to live out their faith.

Families may choose the half-day VBS program, which runs from 8:45 a.m.–12:30 p.m. with a registration fee of \$100, or they may select the full-day VBS camp option offered through RHL School. The full-day option includes childcare beginning at 7:30 a.m., participation in VBS throughout the morning, lunch time (students bring their own lunch), and an afternoon schedule similar to other RHLS full-day summer camps. Both options provide children with a safe, faith-filled environment where they can grow in their understanding of God while building friendships and making lasting memories.

VBS is truly the Very Best week of Summer, and it would not be possible without the many volunteers who help make the week meaningful and fun for every child who attends. We are excited to invite youth and adult volunteers to serve in a variety of ways throughout the week. Volunteers may serve as small group leaders guiding children between activity stations, helping with

crafts or games, supporting snack time, serve on the AV Team, or lead worship, helping to create the welcoming and energetic environment that makes VBS so special.

Serving at VBS is a wonderful opportunity to share God’s love with children while building relationships within our church and school community. Middle School and High School students are especially encouraged to participate and can receive service hours for their time helping throughout the week.

You won’t want to miss this incredible week of faith, fun, and friendship! To register your child or sign up to serve at VBS, simply scan the QR code on the event flyer included with this article or visit redhillchurch.org/youth-family/VBS2026.

“Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love.” - 1 John 4:8

If you have any questions or would like more information, please email Beth Stoffregen at beths@redhillchurch.org.

We look forward to an amazing week together at Rainforest Falls!



Faith and Faith Alone!

Tim Rivera, Student Ministry Coordinator

21 But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it— 22 the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: 23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, Romans 3:21-24 ESV



What a blessing it is to know that our Lord Jesus intercedes on our behalf! In His great love, He frees us from trying to achieve righteousness on our own. It's a gift—one that we could never earn for ourselves.

As I continue to study God's Word, I wrestle with the thought that we do not have anything to do with our faith—like, nothing at all! This revelation has left me feeling so shocked because the natural tendency is to ask, "Well, what do I need to do?" Our human tendency is to work our way into God's favor because we want a part in "earning" our faith. However, Paul reminds



us that everything we have—the good, the bad, and everything in between—has been embraced by Jesus Christ. We are justified by grace alone through faith in Him. And that is the good news, the gospel, and the greatest gift!

As we step into this new year, I am in awe of all that God has done—and continues to do—in the lives of students here at Red Hill Lutheran. We have seen students from the community come in and find a place where they truly belong—a place where they can hang with their friends, be seen, known, and loved.

This past January, our student ministry braved the cold mountains of San Bernardino at Forest Home. The theme for the weekend was: "If God is always with us and for us, what do we do when life appears to be against us?" Our students were deeply engaged and reminded of what Isaiah 30:21 says: "And your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying, 'This is the way, walk in it,' when you turn to the right or when you turn to the left." Even when students may not know where God is leading them or why certain things happen in life, they can trust and have faith that God is right there—guiding, sustaining, and supporting them.

We have so many exciting things on the horizon for the student ministry here at Red Hill Lutheran. In May, we will be promoting our 8th-grade students to high school, and our 5th-grade students will be welcomed into middle school. This summer, our goal is to build more community with our students and help them get together more frequently to enjoy a great time with friends. We have so much in store, like beach bonfires, pool parties, movie nights, backyard get-togethers, a lock-in, and much more!

Parents, we thank you for your willingness to allow us to invest in your students. We understand that raising preteens and teens is not always easy. One moment, they may seem uninterested in everything, and the next, they are hyper-focused on every detail... we understand! We want to be here to support you and your students in any way we can. Please let us know if there's anything we can do to help you navigate these seasons of life. We love you and are praying for you and your family!



the grapevine



Christmas Eve at Red Hill was a joyous evening celebrating the birth of Christ. During our 3:00 and 5:00pm Family Worship services, the rain kept us inside to sing Silent Night instead of going out to the Manger. The rain did not dampen the spirits of worshippers who had a great time enjoying the live nativity and participating in the story of Jesus' birth!

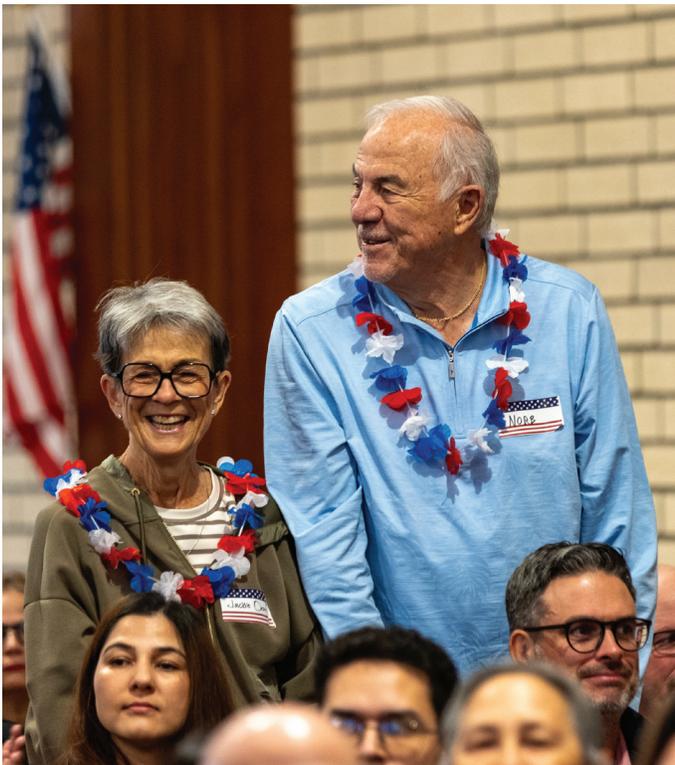


God Bless Our Grandparents!

This past February, Red Hill Lutheran School held its annual Grandparent/VIP Day. Over the years, this Kindergarten through 5th grade event has become very popular among school families. This year the Grandparents/VIPs had an amazing time being hosted in the classrooms and shown around by their students in an Open House format.

Admissions Director, Mrs. Lori Browne, along with the school office team: Mrs. Maggie Radmacher, Mrs. Liz Weber and Ms. Caroline Elias, coordinated this special patriotic event. Grandparents started their morning on the church patio with coffee, fruit and pastries while our RHLS Band played in the background. Grandparents loved the performance from our students with songs about America. When Grandparents RSVP'd for this event, they shared interesting life facts. Principal Marquardt honored over 100 of the guests by awarding them with gifts for designations of who has the most grandchildren, longest married, farthest travelled and who was wisest of all (which means oldest). We also recognized those who have served in the military, worked in education and nursing, and have been missionaries.

This event is a great opportunity for our school to reach families of our students who may not know much about our school, or church. It was truly enjoyed by all!





Robotics at RHLS

By Matthew Smith, Middle School Teacher

A few weeks ago, our robotics students put their learning into action by hosting an exciting Robotics Drag Race. Throughout the unit, students learned about mechanical power transmission, the inverse relationship between torque and speed, and foundational principles of coding. Working in teams, students were challenged to design, build, and program the fastest vehicle they could create.

The drag race event provided an authentic (and enthusiastic) audience as over 200 students gathered to watch each heat and cheer on the competitors. The event was a wonderful opportunity to celebrate creativity, problem-solving, and perseverance as students tested, adjusted, and improved their designs. After several thrilling races, Declan Drumm and Jack Vukovich crossed the finish line in first place. Congratulations to the winners, and to all of our robotics students for their innovative designs and for inspiring the next generation of engineers.

Events like the Robotics Drag Race remind us that creativity is a gift from God, reflected in the way we design, build, and solve problems. Scripture reminds us in Exodus 35:31–32 that God “has filled him with the Spirit of God, with wisdom, with understanding, with knowledge and with all kinds of skills — to make artistic designs...” We are grateful for opportunities that allow students to use their God-given creativity, work together toward a common goal, and celebrate the learning process along the way.



Probability Carnival

By Matthew Smith, Middle School Teacher

This past week, our pre-algebra students had the joy of hosting the Probability Carnival, a four-day celebration of creativity, collaboration, and mathematical thinking. Over 400 students from across RHL visited the carnival to play games that our pre-algebra students imagined, designed, built, and tested themselves. From games of chance involving dice and spinners to skill-based challenges, each game reflected the hard work and ingenuity of our students.



Before the carnival began, students studied probability concepts and calculated the likelihood of guests winning their games. During the event, they collected real data from hundreds of participants and later compared those results to their original probability models. This hands-on experience allowed students to see mathematics come alive in a meaningful way, reinforcing that math is not just something learned in a workbook but something that helps us understand the world around us. Most importantly, the Probability Carnival was a joyful

reminder of the gifts God has given our students: curiosity, creativity, perseverance, and the ability to work together in community. Watching students serve others through their learning and celebrate both success and unexpected outcomes was a powerful picture of learning in action. As Psalm 118:24 reminds us, “This is the day the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.” The carnival was truly an awesome and joyful celebration of learning and community!



Growing Together: A Season of Shared Impact

By Bailey Darley, Philanthropy Coordinator

When our church and school partner together, it is a lot like a well-tended garden. Each seed planted may seem small on its own, but when nurtured by many hands, it grows into something far greater than any one person could accomplish alone. This year, we have seen that garden flourish locally and globally because of the faithful partnership between our congregation and our students.

In January, we cast seeds far beyond our own borders by partnering with Mission of Hope. Together, we packed more than 55,000 meals that will feed children and families in Haiti and the Dominican Republic. The impact did not stop at packing meals. Our students took ownership of the mission in creative ways, hosting lemonade stands, fruit stands, and selling handmade bracelets. Through their initiative and the generosity of our church and school community, more than \$20,000 was raised. What began as simple ideas became a harvest of provision for thousands of children.

In February, our garden bloomed closer to home as we supported Sports Wish Inc., a nonprofit started by RHL students Connor Paisan and Parker Ahern. Their vision is simple yet powerful. They deliver Sports Wish Boxes to hospitals, bringing fan surprises and the spirit of the game to children who cannot be on the field. As a community, we rallied around these young leaders and their mission. It was a reminder that God often plants big callings in young hearts, and when church and school nurture those callings together, hope spreads into hospital rooms and beyond.



This spring, our partnership continues to extend its branches even further.

In March, we will unite with Lutherans around the world to support Lutheran World Relief. As part of a global body of believers, we are reminded that our garden is connected to fields across continents. Together, we will help provide essential resources and Christ-centered care to communities facing poverty and crisis.



In April, we will help purchase solar ovens to be sent to Eritrea through Persons Helping People. Current staff members Berhane and Caroline Elias previously served as missionaries in Eritrea and have witnessed how these ovens transform daily life. Cooking over open fires fills homes with harmful smoke. Solar ovens offer a safer and sustainable alternative. Through this partnership, we are cultivating health and dignity for families across the globe.

In May, we will focus locally as we support Orange County Rescue Mission. This faith-based life transformation program provides on-campus housing and comprehensive services for individuals and families experiencing homelessness. Here in our own community, we have the opportunity to water seeds of restoration and stability as we stand alongside those rebuilding their lives.

Throughout this year, one truth has become clear. When church and school partner together, we become collaborators in God's field. Students learn that generosity is not just a lesson but a lifestyle. Families see that small acts of faithfulness can grow into global impact. As a congregation, we witness how God multiplies what is offered in obedience.

Thank you for tending this garden with us. Because of your prayers and generosity, seeds are being planted in Haiti, hospital rooms, Eritrea, and right here in Orange County. By God's grace, the harvest is only just beginning.

8th Grade Washington, D.C. Trip

By Dave Brenner, 7th - 8th Grade History Teacher

As our country prepares for the United States Semiquincentennial, the 8th graders are preparing to visit our nation's capital for a week of visiting sites in Virginia and Washington D.C. this March. The Museum of the Bible, the National Cathedral, the Pentagon Memorial (and Pentagon Tour), the Washington Monument, the Capitol (with a tour), and the White House (this year we have been blessed with a White House Tour)—these are just a few of the places the RHLS 8th graders have the privilege of seeing on the trip. The lessons learned in the classroom about the founding of our great country from the colonial days to the ratifying of our Constitution come to life, and the students gain a greater understanding of how our nation had its foundation built on a strong faith in God. **Virginia:** The students sit in the very room where colonial legislators made laws at the House of Burgesses in Williamsburg.

The American Revolution Museum in Yorktown provides a glimpse into the lives of our soldiers during this war with their exhibits and the re-created Continental Army camp.



The students also walk the grounds and tour the home of our first president, George Washington, at Mount Vernon. This year the renovations at Mount Vernon have been completed, meaning we will have the full access tour. **Washington D.C.:** The students see the original Declaration of Independence and U.S. Constitution at the National Archives. The three branches of government take on new meaning as they see the White House in person, walk the halls of

Congress in the Capitol building, and see the building where the Landmark Supreme Court cases they studied were decided.

One of the most impactful parts of this trip is our visit to Arlington National Cemetery. The students get a glimpse of the sacrifice that has been made for our country by those who gave their lives while defending it. Four specially selected students will also have the distinct honor of placing a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier.



The students return home to Orange County with a renewed understanding of our nation's History, why America is the greatest country in the world, and how God's hand can be seen in all of it.



Red Hill ASB: Making a Joyful Noise in Leadership and Service

The 2026 school year launched with energy and purpose for the Red Hill ASB. Under the leadership of Ms. Deana Occhipinti, student leaders stepped into the new year determined not just to plan events, but to cultivate a culture of Christ-centered service across campus at Red Hill Lutheran School.

Their January began in an unforgettable way — not in a classroom, but at Disneyland. Through Disney’s Imagination Campus, ASB students participated in “Leadership the Disney Way,” an immersive experience that challenged them to think differently about influence, excellence, and intentional service. Walking through the park with fresh eyes, they discovered how vision, teamwork, and attention to detail can transform ordinary moments into extraordinary ones. More importantly, they returned ready to apply those lessons to their own campus.

Almost immediately, they put those leadership principles into action by hosting Lutheran Schools Week 2026. With the theme “Making a Joyful Noise,” the week became a vibrant expression of praise, service, worship, and community. Faith Families gathered to create colorful posters declaring their joyful praise, filling the campus with visible reminders of shared faith. Students dressed as community helpers and wrote heartfelt thank-you cards to first responders, turning gratitude into action.

Chapel overflowed with participation — Spirit Squad leading motions and Singspiration leading a special hymn. ,

Perhaps one of the most tangible expressions of joyful service came during the food drive benefiting OC Rescue Mission. What began as a simple invitation to bring two cans of food quickly became something far greater. By week’s end, the RHLS community had collected 569 cans — a powerful testament to what can happen when young leaders mobilize a school for a shared purpose. The celebration concluded with simple but meaningful reminders of faith as ASB distributed Christian- and music-themed temporary tattoos, reinforcing that our joy is rooted in Christ alone.

February brought new opportunities to serve. On Grandparent and VIP Day, ASB students stepped into the role of ambassadors with professionalism and warmth. They welcomed guests, served coffee and treats, handed out achievement awards, and guided visitors around campus. Their leadership was not loud or flashy — it was thoughtful, attentive, and gracious.

Later that month, they shifted gears to strengthen middle school community with a “Disco Bingo” social. The event blended fun and fellowship, complete with pizza, snacks, a lively photo booth, and prize baskets featuring Tustin Marketplace favorites, a cozy Movie



Night bundle, and even a Disney-themed day package. Laughter filled the room as students connected outside the classroom, building friendships that deepen the fabric of school life.

March turned the spotlight toward stories during Literacy Week. Five creative dress-up days celebrated beloved children’s books while exploring themes of individuality, bravery, classic literature, modern Christian parables, and the birthday of Dr. Seuss. The kickoff pep rally featured local Christian author Jeanna Young, author of *The Princess Parables*. She shared about faith and courage in storytelling and autographed books for students eager to take a signed copy home. The week culminated in D.E.A.R. Day — “Drop Everything And Read” — as the entire campus paused to read, and ASB students visited elementary classrooms to share stories, modeling both leadership and a love of literacy.

Behind the scenes, growth has been just as intentional. ASB continues its annual study of *Habitudes* by Tim Elmore, using the program’s social-emotional leadership principles to shape monthly Faith Family lessons for the entire K–8 community. The ASB Tech Team faithfully live-streams weekly chapel services and produces monthly CCQ and promotional videos, ensuring that communication, worship, and school spirit remain strong and connected.

This season of growth extended beyond campus as well. Ms. Occhipinti recently traveled to Fort Worth, Texas, to attend ACSI Educator Training for the Student Leadership Institute. Her hope is to bring this Christ-centered leadership framework to RHLS in the near future, further equipping students to lead with integrity, courage, and faith.

As Trimester 3 unfolds, one thing is clear: Red Hill ASB is doing far more than organizing events. They are shaping a community. Through praise, service, creativity, and intentional leadership, these students are truly making a joyful noise — one that reflects Christ in both word and action.



RHLS Performing Arts Department Spring 2026

The RHLS Performing Arts Department (PAD) has had a busy and fun year! Since our last Vine article, our students and ensembles have shared multiple performances with our community. In February, our kindergarten through 5th grade students shared a beautiful patriotic performance, choreographed by Ms. Deana Occhipinti and songs taught by Mr. Daniel Ujifusa, as part of our annual Grandparents/VIP Day celebration. At Grandparents Day, a handful of our 5th graders braved the weather to play folk tunes and patriotic tunes while the grandparents arrived and had coffee. Our very own 2nd Grade teacher, Mrs. Dawn Wright, led the congregation in our National Anthem. Spirit Squad directed by Ms. Deana Occhipinti led our school theme song “Love the Lord your God”.

This year, Singspiration and String Orchestra combined forces to lead worship and set the mood for the Ash Wednesday service. The students had the chance to learn arrangements of traditional hymns and participate in leading congregational worship.

The Performing Arts Department has been integrating the Habits of Mind, in drama and music classes, with creative, imaginative, and innovative lessons! Some highlights include Kindergarten and 1st grade using all 5 senses to learn about Beats and learning what Beats taste like by trying beet juice, as well as 4th and 5th grade participating in the “Musical Theatre Olympics.” They created fictional countries (complete with flags and slogans!) and competed in student-created singing, dancing, and acting events. Gold medals were awarded, Habits of Mind were practiced, and lots of fun was had by all.

Middle School Drama has been “brushing up their Shakespeare” — learning about Shakespeare’s life, diving into his sonnets, and exploring *Romeo and Juliet*. It’s been a fun and meaningful unit for them. RHLS String Orchestra is excited to participate in the upcoming Orange Lutheran Youth Music Invitational, where they will have the opportunity to play and work with a clinician and receive valuable feedback on their performance.



On March 2nd, RHLS ASB hosted a Literacy Week pep rally to encourage the love of reading with the RHL community. Our Spirit Squad and both middle school band electives worked together to spread school spirit at this fun and boisterous event! Spirit Squad cheered and danced to songs that were being performed by the concert bands. This collaboration is always a ton of fun for our department!

RHLS PAD students have many more opportunities still to come before the end of the year.

April 17 - “Good Kings Come in Small Packages” *featuring RHLS 3rd-5th graders*
(1:30pm @ Sanctuary)

April 24 - “A Barnyard Moosical” *featuring RHLS Kindergarten - 2nd graders*
(1:30pm @ Sanctuary)

April 28 - Middle School Performing Arts Showcase *featuring RHLS MS electives, Drama, Eagles Intermediate Band, Praise Band, and Wind Ensemble*
(6:30pm @ Sanctuary)

May 8 - Music in the Parks Festival Competition *featuring RHLS Ensembles Wind Ensemble, Eagles Intermediate Band, and Singspiration* (Morning Performances @ Placenta Presbyterian Church then Knott's Berry Farm)

May 21 - RHLS "Journey into the Unknown" Concert *featuring String Orchestra and Singspiration* 6:30pm @ CLC)

May 16 - Southern California Christian Schools Honor Ensembles Concert *featuring select 4th-8th grade instrumentalists from local private schools.* (11:00am @ Orange Lutheran High School)

It is such a blessing working with RHLS students. God is doing great things in their lives and we love to see them glorify Him through their elementary and middle school journey.

- Mr. Ben Hunter (Instrumental Music)
- Mr. Daniel Ujifusa (Choral Music/Classroom Music)
- Ms. Deana Occhipinti (Theatre Arts/Drama)
- Mr. Isaiah Coughran (Praise Band)
- Mrs. Noah Rivera (Praise Band)



Morning Muffins, Preschool Family Playdates, Outdoor Chapel, and Trike-a-Thon Excitement

By Jessica Hickey, Preschool Director

This fall and winter, our Preschool Ministry experienced an incredible outpouring of participation during our Preschool Morning Muffins gatherings. Families filled the CLC with laughter, conversation, and connection as parents and children shared breakfast together before the school day began. The overwhelming response reminded us how meaningful these simple moments of community can be for our youngest families.

These gatherings also served as a wonderful bridge into the Preschool Playdates hosted by our Youth and Family Ministry team. After building relationships over muffins and coffee, many families continued connecting during these playdates a few days later, creating opportunities for parents to meet one another while their children played and explored together. We are grateful for how these ministries work together to help families feel welcomed, supported, and connected within our church community.

Another exciting highlight this season has been our Outdoor Chapel gatherings on the Yard 2 playground. Led by Youth and Family Ministry Director Beth Stoffregen and Choral Music Teacher Mr. Ujifusa, these special chapel times have brought worship,

music, and prayer outside into God's beautiful creation. Hosting chapel in this space has created a joyful and relaxed environment where parents are able to join in, sing along, and experience these faith-filled moments alongside their children. It has become another meaningful way for families to engage with the preschool program and our broader church community.



Looking ahead, we are thrilled to share the excitement building around our Preschool Trike-a-Thon fundraiser on April 17th. This beloved event celebrates movement, fun, and community while supporting our preschool program.

This year we are introducing a **new** fundraising opportunity through advertisement banners that will be displayed on the black gate from April 6th through May 7th. Banner sales will run March 13th through March 27th, with three sponsorship levels available:

- Gold Sponsor – 6' x 2' banner – \$1,000
- Silver Sponsor – 4' x 2' banner – \$500
- Bronze Sponsor – 2' x 2' banner – \$250

All funds raised will go directly back into the preschool program to provide enhancements, resources, and enriching opportunities for our students.

We are so thankful for the continued support of our church family as we nurture faith, learning, and community among our youngest members. We invite and look forward to seeing many of you cheering on our little riders at the Preschool Trike-a-Thon this spring!



Winter Preschool Family Playdate: Growing Together in Community

By Brie Longoria, T.O.T.S. Early Childhood Ministry Coordinator

Itzel Mancilla, K.I.D.S. Ministry Coordinator

Each time we gather for a Preschool Family Playdate, we are reminded how special it is to see this event continue to grow. What began as a simple opportunity for preschool families to connect has expanded into something even more meaningful. Today, our playdates bring together school families, church families, and many who are part of both communities. Watching these relationships grow has been incredibly encouraging for our team, and each gathering feels a little bigger, a little louder, and a lot more joyful.

This past quarter, families gathered on January 24th for a morning filled with laughter, play, and warm conversation. Children raced between the swings and slides while parents enjoyed muffins and warm drinks. Just a few feet away, our sensory tables quickly became the center of creative exploration. Kids enthusiastically experimented with pretend “snow,” “hot chocolate,” and ice painting — mixing, pouring, and creating imaginative combinations. While the mess may not have been every parent’s favorite part of the morning, the children absolutely loved the chance to get their hands dirty and fully dive into the fun.

For Preschool Coordinators Brie and Katelyn, these playdates provide a wonderful opportunity to check in with families we already know and introduce ourselves to families who are new to our community. As the K.I.D.S. Ministry Coordinator, it is also exciting to see these gatherings as a glimpse of what awaits families as their children grow. The occasional visit to the “big kid” playground builds excitement for the adventures that lie ahead in K.I.D.S. Ministry. Whether we serve in T.O.T.S., K.I.D.S., or across all of Youth and Family Ministry, these playdates offer something truly meaningful: a chance to step outside the classroom, build relationships, and celebrate the vibrant life of our RHL community together.

RHL Preschool Family Winter Playdate



January 2026

Red Hill Lutheran School Presented Our Habits of Mind Journey at the National Blue Ribbon Schools of Excellence Conference

By Lisa Tarkoff, Assistant Principal

In December, Red Hill Lutheran School had the honor of presenting at the 26th Annual National Blue Ribbon Schools of Excellence Conference at Walt Disney World in Orlando, Florida. This four-day gathering brought together educational leaders from across the nation to exchange ideas, celebrate excellence, and explore innovative practices that shape schools today.

Representing RHLS were three of our educators: Mrs. Lisa Tarkoff, Assistant Principal and Middle School ELA teacher; Mrs. Carla Chun, Resource Program Director and GATE/Art teacher; and Mrs. Colette Hammer, 3rd Grade Teacher and Department Lead. These exemplary leaders shared Red Hill Lutheran School's journey with Arthur Costa's 16 Habits of Mind and demonstrated how these habits had strengthened our school culture, faith formation, and academic excellence.

Showcasing Excellence as a Blue Ribbon School
As both a National Blue Ribbon School and an International Habits of Mind School of Distinction, RHLS had remained committed to ongoing growth, reflection, and innovation. At the conference, our team presented "Cultivating a Culture of Thinking: Embedding Habits of Mind for Deep Learning and Schoolwide Growth."

Their session highlighted how RHLS had:

- Integrated the Habits of Mind into curriculum design, instruction, and assessment
- Developed a schoolwide culture where habits such as persistence, managing impulsivity, flexibility in thinking, and listening with empathy were practiced daily
- Connected the habits to Christian Character Traits, Bible curriculum, SEL, and service learning initiatives
- Strengthened student confidence, resilience, academic performance, and Christlike character
- Used staff development, family engagement, and recognition systems to keep the habits meaningful

and visible across grade levels

From kindergarten through middle school, students at RHLS had developed the thinking dispositions that prepared them to be reflective, responsible, and compassionate learners.

Three Educators, Three Perspectives, One Unified Mission

A Leadership Perspective – Mrs. Lisa Tarkoff
Mrs. Tarkoff shared the schoolwide vision behind our Habits of Mind implementation. She described how RHLS had built a cohesive system that included:

- A yearlong plan integrating habits with monthly character traits and Bible verses
- Schoolwide recognition programs such as Habit High Flyers
- Teacher professional development and reflection goals
- Clear communication with families to support habits at home
- Assessment tools and surveys showing growth in student ownership and resilience

She also shared anecdotes that highlighted how deeply the habits had become part of student life—such as young learners reminding their parents to "Communicate with Clarity and Precision."

A Classroom Perspective – Mrs. Colette Hammer
Mrs. Hammer demonstrated how the Habits of Mind were woven into daily classroom practice. She modeled strategies for:

- Introducing 1–2 habits each month
- Using icons, anchor charts, and reflection prompts to make thinking visible

Integrating habits into reading, writing, math, and science

Supporting student independence, emotional regulation, and academic risk-taking

Her examples showed how small instructional shifts had led to long-lasting growth in student confidence and character.

A Whole-Child and Resource Perspective – Mrs. Carla Chun

Mrs. Chun highlighted how the Habits of Mind supported all learners through:

- Universal Design for Learning strategies
- Cross-grade project-based learning
- Scaffolds that strengthened social-emotional and academic success
- Opportunities for students to demonstrate habits like persistence, collaboration, and responsible risk-taking

Her presentation demonstrated how the habits had helped RHLS create inclusive pathways where every student could thrive.

Why This Mattered

By presenting at this national conference, our RHLS team shared the meaningful work happening in our classrooms each day. Their session encouraged schools across the country to consider how intentional, research-based practices—rooted in both academic rigor and Christian character—could lead to transformational change.

We celebrated this opportunity for Red Hill Lutheran School to shine as a model of faith-filled education, academic distinction, and whole-child formation. We were grateful for the leadership of Mrs. Tarkoff, Mrs. Chun, and Mrs. Hammer, and we prayed that their presentation would inspire, encourage, and bless the many educators who attended.



Shining God’s Light at RHLS: Loving God with All Our Heart through Research-Based Instruction

Red Hill Lutheran School continues to live out our theme, “*Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength*” (Mark 12:30), through the ways our teachers, students, and programs reflect both academic excellence and wholehearted devotion to God. From summer learning experiences to classroom innovations, every endeavor is rooted in a deep love for God and a desire to serve His children with excellence.

UCI Summer Institute: Inspiring Educators Through Lifelong Learning

Our teachers embody what it means to love God with all their *minds*. This summer, two RHLS educators devoted their personal time to professional growth through the UCI Summer Institute, a four-week seminar for educators from preschool through university.

First-grade teacher Mrs. Jamie Hernandez shared, “From beginning to end, every moment was dedicated to ‘wildly’ exploring my own voice as a writer. Through director-led lessons and peer presentations, I gained strategies I could immediately apply in my classroom. By the end of the first week, every preconceived notion I held about writing—and about what defines ‘good’ writing—had been completely transformed.”

Kindergarten teacher Mrs. Kathleen Castro added, “I not only discovered so much about myself as a writer, but I also learned powerful strategies and activities, like Memory Snapshots and Object Pieces, that will inspire my students. Each day began with analyzing poetry, which deepened my appreciation for language and creativity. A highlight was a Zoom session with author Gretchen Bernabei, whose encouragement motivated me to bring more poetry into my classroom. I leave this experience feeling inspired, confident, and eager to share the magic of writing with my students.”

Their willingness to study and learn during their own time demonstrates how RHLS teachers truly love God with all their heart and mind—dedicating their gifts to His glory and the growth of their students.

Hosting UCI Summer Youth Program: Reflecting God’s Love

This was our second year partnering with the UCI Summer Youth Program, welcoming students from across Orange County to our campus for engaging classes in writing, math, and science. This year,

over one hundred students in grades 1–8 filled our classrooms with curiosity and creativity.

Our own teachers—including Ms. Alexis Grant, Mrs. Elizabeth Seigel, and Mrs. Lisa Tarkoff—collaborated with UCI educators to design rich, research-based learning experiences. Even though the program itself is secular, God’s love was unmistakably present in every hallway and classroom—through Christ-centered décor, faith-filled music, compassionate teachers, and the joyful witness of our student ambassadors. Every smile, word of encouragement, and act of patience reflected the love of Jesus to all who came through our doors.

Peer Partners in Action: Engaging Students Creatively

At RHLS, faith and scholarship go hand in hand. Through the Peer Partners Program, a yearlong collaborative partnership with the University of California, Irvine, some of our teachers meet monthly with university mentors and fellow educators to study innovative instructional practices and apply them directly in the classroom. These sessions provide opportunities for RHLS teachers to reflect, share ideas, and refine their craft—further evidence of how our faculty dedicate their own time and energy to ensure students receive the very best learning experiences.

One example of this collaboration is Mrs. Tarkoff’s middle school project connecting Universal Design for Learning with a novel study. Her students explored *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* while practicing the Habit of Mind: *Thinking and Communicating with Clarity and Precision*. Using the Literary 3x3 format—summarizing plot and theme in three lines with three words each—students rotated their Post-its around the room to reassemble and interpret one another’s work. This creative activity fostered collaboration, reflection, and joyful engagement with literature, aligning both with current educational research and our school’s mission to honor God through learning.

As Matthew 5:16 reminds us, “*Let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.*” At Red Hill Lutheran School, that light shines through the dedication of our teachers who study, prepare, and innovate out of love for God and for their students.

Memorial Day

On Monday, May 25th, we once again have the honor of observing Memorial Day. Memorial Day, originally called Decoration Day, is a day of solemn remembrance, remembering those who have died protecting our Country and fighting for our freedoms. On the first Decoration Day, General James Garfield made a speech at Arlington National Cemetery, and 5,000 participants decorated the graves of the 20,000 Union and Confederate soldiers buried there because of the Civil War.

The freedoms that we enjoy in America (and often take for granted), came at a great cost: The lives of dedicated men and women who put their country before self, and the good of the Nation before comfort and ease. Many in our own Red Hill family, are serving, and have served, our County with honor, and many have immediate family members and friends who fought bravely and selflessly in our Nation's battles. On this Memorial Day, we thank God for all of these brave men and women and pray for their families, who also endured great sacrifice.

Commenting on Memorial Day, theologian Ed Stetzer writes:

At times like this, I'm always struck by the teaching of Jesus where he said, "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:13). And, yes, I immediately connect that to Christ. In other words, on a day when we remember those who gave their lives I'm drawn to dwell on the fact that Christ laid down his life. So, thank you soldiers-- past and present-- for the freedoms you protect. And, thank you that because of those freedoms, we can tell the good news of the gospel of the perfect one who laid down His life.

Let us pause to give thanks for all of those brave men and women who gave the ultimate sacrifice for our freedoms, as well as their family members who supported, loved, and likewise sacrificed for our great country!

May God bless you and your loved ones this Memorial Day.



theyelkounis@gmail.com

Loved By God Ministries

PO Box 914



January 2026 Newsletter

Family Update

Hello everyone, we hope that you are having wonderful new year so far! We praise the Lord always for His constant faithfulness, protection, guidance, and love in our lives. The girls are doing well, the 3 oldest have been working hard with homeschooling, and learning to help daddy in the garden. We recently found some hedgehogs in the garden at night and in the photo, you can see Briella holding one of the babies, the girls were so happy to see them. Barto is working all the time, with gardening, his animals, all the garden projects in other villages, trying to find materials for construction projects, paperwork, and so much more. His online business course was supposed to be finished but many of the participants, from another area of Africa, were not able to do it in these last weeks with some political issues going on in their own countries, so they had to postpone everything by two weeks. Hopefully they will be able to finish everything soon, and he will be able to graduate from his courses and get all the materials to be able to start teaching on his own. I have been working hard on finishing all the end of the year bookwork and receipts, I was completely blown away by how much the Lord provided and how much you all gave to this mission. We are beyond grateful! Thank You Lord for everything You do! You are amazing, all powerful, all knowing, and You are an incredible provider. We love You Lord and long to always be in Your will. Amen!



This month has been very busy for us with a lot of paperwork mostly. We are renewing our Burkina Association papers, which happens every 5 years, and in that, we have had to travel to the capital city and other places many times every week to get everything in order. Our hope is all is done soon, then we will be able to open a new bank account at a specific bank that the Burkina government is having every association and other organizations do. Things are all new for everyone, so we are all learning things as they come along. One huge change that happened this month is America has banned all visas for the Burkinabe people to go to America, in doing this Burkina decided to retaliate and now Americans are no longer able to get visas to be in Burkina. We are incredibly blessed as a family that Barto has his American citizenship, and that the girls and I have Burkina nationality, expect for Bethany but we are in the process of finishing that up in the next week. Since we are dual citizens, we

don't have to apply for visas with either country, so we are good. But we have many missionary friends whose visas are up, and they need your prayers. We are all praying for a miracle for the Lord to bring the right people so that they can get a renewal on their papers and be able to continue to do their ministries, if not they will be leaving. We do not know how long all of this will last, but we do know that the Lord is always in control and has a plan. We must trust Him in all these situations.

“Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into the grace in which we now stand! And we boast in the hope of the glory of God.”

– Romans 5: 1-2

School/Gardening Projects Update



Things at the school are going well. We have not been able to be there a lot this month, with all the paperwork and other things that we have had to do, but we should be seeing everyone in these next few days. Our government school paperwork is in the next steps, and we are just waiting for things to be finished, it has taken us many years to get to this point and we are praying for it to finally be finished. The kids have been working hard on their studies, please be praying especially for our 6th graders, as they are in their exam year. Barto has been trying hard to find sand for months, to be able to finish up some different construction things at the school, but it has been very difficult to find. We think it is because there is a lot of new construction projects going on in the country for the government and the demand is high. He just got word this week that we will finally be able to get the sand we need, which is special for plastering. It's a huge blessing to see things coming together. I am always learning that patience is a very important virtue to have here!

We praise the Lord for water!!! We hit water again last week in the village of Rountenga, and it's a big amount of water! The people are overjoyed! We are so happy for all that God is doing and providing for. This month, God provided fully for the village of Boura, who we drilled a well for right after Christmas, to have a water tank, tower, solar water pump, and all the solar panels they need for a project! We now have 5 different garden projects going right now, and we have things coming together to have 3 more going soon. We would like to raise the money for the village of Rountenga to have the solar system and tower they need to do their own project as well. Details about that are down below. I am sharing some photos of different onion projects going on. When we go see these projects, the joy from these people is overflowing. We thank everyone who has been a part of these projects, we are so grateful for you all! Your end of the year receipts will be going out, if you have questions, please let us know!

“Give praise to the Lord, proclaim His name; make known among the nations what He has done, and proclaim that His name is exalted. Sing to the Lord, for He has done glorious things; let this be known to all the world.” -Isaiah 12:4-5

Ways to Help

- **Classroom sponsorship**- \$50 a month
- **Solar pump/Panels**- (For New Garden Project in the village of Rountenga)- \$2,800
- **Water tower** - (For new Garden project in the village of Rountenga)- \$700
- **Water Tank**- (For new Garden project in the village of Rountenga) - \$400

Prayer

--Our family to stay safe and healthy

--Finances to stay strong

-- Garden projects in each village

--Construction projects

--Security issues and terrorism in Burkina; The political issues in Burkina/safety for new president and military

--For the safety of our teachers, students, their families, and the villages we serve in

--For our students' hearts and the people in the village to be open to the gospel; relationship building

--Starting a Middle/High School in the future

--God's wisdom for all that He wants us to do

--School year to be fruitful and kids to stay healthy

--Different government changes that are happening towards non-profit organizations and associations

--Government paperwork to get done

– Visa situations for many missionary friends ***“We always thank God for all of You and continually mention you in our prayers.***

We remember before our God and Father your work produced by faith, your labor prompted by love and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.” - 1 Thess. 1:2-3

Keep the SON in your eyes,

The Yelkounis

theyelkounis@gmail.com

Loved By God Ministries—PO Box 914—McCook, NE 69001
** Make all checks payable to Loved By God Ministries

Pentecost—the *Power* of the Holy Spirit!

On Sunday, May 24th, we will celebrate the day of Pentecost which begins the season of Pentecost in our Church Year. Pentecost has often been referred to as the “birthday of church.” On the Day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit filled the disciples gathered together and God’s mission of healing this world through Jesus’ church was begun!

In the Old Testament era, Pentecost was originally an annual feast that followed the Feast of First Fruits, also called the “Feast of Weeks” (Leviticus 23:15-22). The name “Pentecost” was derived from the Greek word “pente” meaning “Fifty,” because it fell fifty days after Passover. Additionally, by the time of the New Testament era, Pentecost commemorated Moses’ giving of the Law on Mount Sinai.

As a festival within Judaism, many pilgrims from throughout the empire would come to Jerusalem to celebrate Pentecost. It was during this Pentecost festival that the disciples were gathered together in the upper room, waiting. *Waiting for what?* Throughout the Gospel of John, we read that Jesus promised the “comforter,” the “helper,” the Holy Spirit, whom He would send when He returned to the Father. For example,

“But when the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me. 27 And you also will bear witness, because you have been with me from the beginning. (John 15.26)

Also, in Acts 1.8, Jesus promised:

“But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”

When Alfred Nobel discovered an explosive element that was stronger than anything the world had known at the time, he asked a friend and Greek scholar for a

word that conveyed the meaning of explosive power. The Greek word was *dunamis*, and Nobel named his invention “dynamite.” *Dunamis* is the same word that Jesus used when He told His disciples in Acts 1.8 that they would receive power! On the Day of Pentecost the power came—the promised Holy Spirit filled the hearts and minds of the disciples and the church was born! And, as the old saying goes, “the world has never been the same.” As author and Pastor Charles Stanley writes:

What a difference the Spirit’s indwelling presence made in their lives; No longer were they fearful men who ran away; nor were they people looking out for their own interests. Now they were transformed into a cohesive group who “were continually devoting themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. And all those who had believed were together and had all things in common” (Acts 2.42, 44).¹



Consider: the Holy Spirit’s power transformed these first-century believers into bold witnesses (Just like Jesus said!) for the Gospel. Prior to Pentecost, Simon Peter couldn’t stand up for his faith when a teenage girl enquired of Peter if he was “with him,” if he

was a follower of Jesus. Peter famously denied three times that he knew Jesus! Yet, after the power of the Holy Spirit was unleashed on Pentecost, Peter stood up and boldly preached the gospel, resulting in 3,000 people being saved. Peter even refused to deny his faith and was crucified upside down, because he said he did not deserve to die in the manner of his Savior!

Saul of Tarsus was known as a persecutor of Christians; a man who wanted to wipe out this heretical movement of apostate Jews. After Pentecost, Saul became a believer on the Damascus Road, seeing a vision of the risen Jesus. God led Ananias to go and pray for him and Saul was then filled with the Holy Spirit. From that moment on, he went out and proclaimed Christ in

¹ Charles Stanley. “The Holy Spirit’s Presence.” *In Touch Ministries*.

the synagogues. The transformation was so total that his name was changed from Saul to Paul, the man the Holy Spirit spoke through to record most of the New Testament.

What we see from Pentecost is that the power of the Holy Spirit is for a purpose. It is not power to be crazy or power to do weird things. It is power to be a witness for Jesus; the power to courageously stand up for our faith; the power to live the life of a disciple of Jesus.

This was Luther's point:

I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ my Lord, or come to Him; but the Holy Ghost has called me through the Gospel, enlightened me by his gifts, and sanctified and preserved me in the true faith; in like manner as He calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian Church on earth, and preserves it in union with Jesus Christ in the true faith; in which Christian Church He daily forgives abundantly all my sins, and the sins of all believers, and will raise up me and all the dead at the last day, and will grant everlasting life to me and to all who believe in Christ. This is most certainly true. (*The Small Catechism, "The Explanation of the Third Article of the Apostle's Creed"*).

Through Baptism, we are "sealed by the Holy Spirit and marked with the cross of Christ forever." Since Pentecost, every believer receives the Holy Spirit through Baptism. While the disciples and others had been Jesus' followers before Pentecost, there had been no "body of Christ" to which they could belong. On Pentecost all that changed. Now, the Holy Spirit lived Jesus' life through them, and now all people of faith can abide in Jesus through His Spirit. If Jesus is the vine and we are the branches, then the Spirit is the "sap" equipping us, empowering us, for the Christian life. The Spirit seals us in Christ—proof of the promise that we are forever in God's presence (Ephesians 1.13-14).

Consider this: At one particular church, Red Hill Lutheran Church and School, we worship, study, connect, pray, serve, teach, and love one another, because on the Day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit filled the room, the hearts, and the souls of some people who were wondering what's next, and empowered them to

go and share the good news that Jesus has come to set the world right. Today, as we look into a future that only God knows, we too are given the power to go forward in faith—the power of the Holy Spirit—to live in and proclaim the good news of the Gospel. We do all of this because of the fulfilled promise of Pentecost.

May the Spirit of God continue to fill and empower Red Hill Lutheran Church and School, so that this community will know Jesus, and make Him known!

497 Come, Holy Ghost, God and Lord

1 Come, Holy Ghost, God and Lord,
With all Your graces now outpoured
On each believer's mind and heart;
Your fervent love to them impart.
Lord, by the brightness of Your light
In holy faith Your Church unite;
From ev'ry land and ev'ry tongue
This to Your praise, O Lord, our God, be sung:
Alleluia, alleluia!

2 Come, holy Light, guide divine,
Now cause the Word of life to shine.
Teach us to know our God aright
And call Him Father with delight.
From ev'ry error keep us free;
Let none but Christ our master be
That we in living faith abide,
In Him, our Lord, with all our might confide.
Alleluia, alleluia!

3 Come, holy Fire, comfort true,
Grant us the will Your work to do
And in Your service to abide;
Let trials turn us not aside.
Lord, by Your pow'r prepare each heart,
And to our weakness strength impart
That bravely here we may contend,
Through life and death to You, our Lord, ascend.
Alleluia, alleluia!

Dates to Remember

March 29th

10:15am Palm Sunday Worship followed by Springfest
Celebration

April 2nd, Maundy Thursday Services, 12:00 & 7:00pm

April 3rd, Good Friday Services, 12:00 & 7:00pm

April 6th, Easter Sunday Services, 8:00am & 10:15am

May 10th, Mother's Day

May 25th, Memorial Day, Campus Closed

Red Hill Lutheran Church and School

13200 Red Hill Avenue

Tustin, CA 92780

(714) 544-3131