



# FAITH&VALUES

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**NEWTON**

There is more going on at New Hope Moravian Church than the fact that the church celebrated its 31st anniversary Feb. 9.

With a relatively small congregation of 125, the church on Sandy Ford Road is active in supporting many charities in the community. The effect extends beyond the expectations of a church its size.

"But my biggest challenge in coming here 14 months ago is explaining to everyone what a Moravian is," said the Rev. Betty A. Helms.



**Helms**

Helms came to Newton after having spent most of her life in Winston-Salem, where most people, especially tourists coming to Old Salem, consider being Moravian as something of a lifestyle, like the Amish.

"Today, Moravians are not the descendants of people who came here from Germany," Helms said. "We are a Christian religion. We believe in the Holy Trinity. Many people have joined the Moravian Church from many walks of life and backgrounds like any other denomination."

Among the charities New Hope Moravian actively works with are Eastern Catawba Cooperative Chris

tian Ministry, The CornerTable soup kitchen and the Family Care Center. "We have gotten well-known for serving sloppy Joes at The Corner Table," Helms said, "and recently we raised over \$1,000 from a silent auction to give to the Family Care Center." Helms is considered a very hands-on pastor. That could be because she spent 35 years as a cosmetologist developing people skills. But more likely it's because she spent that same amount of time in the lay ministry of her church. It was in 2002 that she went to Alaska on a mission trip. "I didn't feel like I ever needed to be ordained," she said, "but God called me when I was in a town called Bethel and I was forced to listen."

But the challenge of becoming a pastor would be a steep climb for her. A high school grad, she had to go back to college and get a degree before she could enter seminary. All the while she still ran her beauty shop and cared for an ailing mother. But in 2012 she reached her goal — she was ordained. Helms' plan for her church is developing small groups to build a larger whole. "If we take Sunday school classes and build them up as small communities, the church grows," she said. New Hope had one Sunday School class when she arrived. Now it has three. She plans to expand that model to other parts of her church. "We look at Pastor Betty like our Energizer Bunny," said charter member

Malissa Bumgarner. "She has done great things with us just by being so involved."

Bumgarner, also from Winston-Salem and raised Moravian, came to Hickory when there was no Moravian church here. "I was comfortable with the Methodist Church and even some of the Presbyterians, but it wasn't my tradition," she said. She would soon connect with other Moravians in Catawba County and started a congregation of like-minded believers.

"We were just more comfortable worshipping God in the Moravian style," she said. "There wasn't anything wrong with the other churches here. It just wasn't what we were familiar with growing up."

Her husband, Mark, only a 30-year member of the church, is fond of saying these are the friendliest people you will ever meet. "If a project needs to be done," he said, "it's not just two or three people that do the work. Everyone gets involved."

Said Helms, "Not everyone might know what a Moravian is, but they are finding out who this congregation is. We are all about community and reaching out to others for Christ." The church is well-known for its Candle Tea bazaar, held on the first Saturday in December, and its chicken pot pies. New Hope Moravian Church is at 2897 Sandy Ford Road in Newton.

For more information, visit [www.newhopemoravian.org](http://www.newhopemoravian.org) or call 828-294-4802.