

Our History

New Hope Seventh-day Adventist Church

By Dr. Dahlia Pottinger

The history of New Hope Seventh-day Adventist Church is a testimony to God's faithfulness and the unwavering commitment of His people. What began as the vision of forty-four dedicated Seventh-day Adventists has grown into a thriving congregation that continues to impact Ellenwood, Georgia, and the surrounding communities through worship, evangelism, service, and love.

For more than four decades, New Hope has been built upon faith, sacrifice, prayer, and a steadfast belief that God would bless every step taken in His name. This history honors the pioneers, pastors, leaders, and members whose dedication transformed a dream into a vibrant church family.

Humble Beginnings

New Hope Seventh-day Adventist Church began with an enthusiastic group of forty-four Seventh-day Adventists from Boulevard, Decatur, West End, and Mount Olive Seventh-day Adventist churches. United by a shared burden to spread the love of Christ throughout the Conley area, these faithful believers envisioned establishing a new congregation where lives could be transformed through the gospel.

The idea originated with Patmah Davis, whose vision inspired the group to move forward. Together, they submitted a letter to the South Atlantic Conference expressing their desire to organize a new church.

While searching for a place to worship, Patmah Davis and Una Assam discovered Cedar Grove United Methodist Church on Bouldercrest Road. Pastor Martha Forrest graciously welcomed the group to use the church for Sabbath services, while Miriam Petty coordinated the arrangements. Charter member Roger Davis recalled Pastor Forrest's generosity in renting the facility at an affordable cost.

Foundation member Ethney Johnson fondly remembered that many early members affectionately referred to the church simply as "Martha's Church."

Jean Guthrie proposed the name **New Hope**, a name the members believed was inspired by the Holy Spirit. The congregation soon became known as the **New Hope Community Services Group**, reflecting both its mission and its desire to serve the surrounding community.

Without a permanent location for midweek services, several generous families opened their homes for youth meetings and prayer services. Harold and Norma Priestley, Roger and Patmah Davis, and Desiree Goodman regularly welcomed members into their homes. These gatherings not only reduced rental expenses but also fostered a deep sense of fellowship, intimacy, and spiritual unity that became one of New Hope's defining characteristics.

Although the New Hope Community Services Group had not yet received official recognition from the South Atlantic Conference, its members remained steadfast. Anchored by Christ's commission in Matthew 28:19–20 and led by dedicated lay leaders, they pressed forward in faith.

Without an assigned pastor, gifted leaders such as J. Michael Beale and Elder Byron Guthrie faithfully guided the congregation. The group also received invaluable pastoral support from Elder C. Dunbar Henri, Elder G. H. Taylor, Elder Sam Gooden, and Pastor R. E. Tottress, whom many regarded as New Hope's unofficial pastor. Pastor Tottress officiated the congregation's first baptism, first Communion service, first baby dedication, and first funeral, leaving an enduring mark on the church's formative years.

When the group requested official recognition from the South Atlantic Conference, their request was denied. Although deeply disappointed, the members refused to abandon the vision God had placed in their hearts.

Treasurer Desiree Goodman became one of the driving forces behind the effort to establish a permanent church home. From the very beginning, members faithfully set aside portions of their income for a future church building fund, believing that God would provide a place they could one day call their own.

Searching for a Permanent Home

Patmah Davis led the search for property, joined by Una Assam, Elizabeth Rice, Miriam Petty, and Desiree Goodman. Together, these determined women traveled countless miles throughout the area searching for suitable property. Una Assam later recalled driving through the darkness of Evans Mill with Pat Davis as they continued their search, refusing to give up despite repeated disappointments.

Then, one day, hope appeared unexpectedly.

As Desiree Goodman drove along Panthersville Road in DeKalb County, she noticed a **For Sale** sign on a wooded parcel of land. Nestled among mature trees sat approximately 5.4 acres containing a modest cottage and a metal Butler Building that some members described as resembling a welding shop.

The property captured the members' hearts immediately, but its price placed it well beyond their financial reach. Disappointed but undeterred, they continued searching elsewhere.

Nearly a year later, Desiree Goodman passed the property once again. To her surprise, the **For Sale** sign had disappeared—not because the property had been sold, but because it remained available. Even more encouraging, the asking price had been reduced.

Recognizing what they believed to be God's providence, New Hope members approached the elderly sisters who owned the property and successfully negotiated its purchase.

The congregation once again sought financial assistance from the South Atlantic Conference but was unable to secure funding.

Undeterred, the members turned to God in prayer and explored every possible option. When they met with a local bank, the manager proposed a solution that would require extraordinary faith.

If three qualified families were willing to use their homes as collateral, the church could qualify for the loan needed to purchase the property.

Without hesitation, Roger and Pat Davis, Una Assam, and John and Origa Lassiter accepted the challenge. Their willingness to risk their own homes demonstrated remarkable faith and unwavering commitment to God's work.

In 1991, New Hope purchased the property at **3979 Panthersville Road** for **\$100,000**.

Reflecting on that moment, Una Assam later said:

"Signing the loan papers was like the Bible. If the church defaulted on the loan, then the bank would take our home. We could not do it without the faithful members. The members were very faithful. It is very touching."

The faithful pioneers rejoiced. After years of prayer, sacrifice, and perseverance, New Hope finally had a place to call home.

Faith, Sacrifice, and Renovation

With the purchase of the property complete, the work had only just begun. Pat Davis once again assumed a leadership role, coordinating the renovation of the existing buildings that would serve as New Hope's temporary place of worship. Financial resources were limited, so members relied heavily on their own labor, determination, and faith.

Two structures stood on the property—a small cottage and a metal Butler Building. The cottage would provide space for ministry and Sabbath School, while the Butler Building would be transformed into a sanctuary. Before worship services could be held there, however, the building had to be brought up to code and undergo extensive renovations.

Roger Davis recalled that some members were initially reluctant to support the project because the Butler Building was a dilapidated eyesore requiring a complete transformation before it could become a suitable house of worship.

Despite the enormous challenge, the members embraced the task with enthusiasm. Nearly everyone participated. They cleaned the property, removed debris, hauled away discarded materials, and spent countless hours repairing and rebuilding the structure.

LaTonya Beale was among the many devoted volunteers who faithfully gave of her time and energy. Missilene Edwards vividly remembered discovering snakes hidden within the walls of the Fellowship Hall while the renovation work was underway. After overcoming their initial fear, the workers safely removed the snakes. Missilene Edwards and Minnie Rugless then painstakingly sealed the openings in the walls with tar before construction continued.

Reflecting on those early days, Una Assam said,

"Brother Donald Grant worked his life to build and restore the Fellowship Hall. Elder St. Aubyn Edwards and Aldon Stephens also worked tirelessly on the building. They even replaced the roof. When you look back, all you can say is, 'Thank You, God.'"

Missilene Edwards also remembered that the first task was removing the old scaffolding before meaningful work could begin. She credited Donald Grant, Sr. for installing much of the sheetrock and recognized Myke Antoine for completing all of the brickwork.

An important blessing came when Elder John Simmons joined New Hope as Associate Pastor in 1992. An experienced builder, he generously contributed his construction knowledge and devoted countless hours supervising the renovation of what would become the Fellowship Hall.

Construction became a labor of love. Members worked evenings, weekdays, and Sundays, sacrificing both their time and talents.

Those whose dedicated service left a lasting mark on the project included Myke Antoine, Patrick Archer, Eddie Davis, Roger Davis, Aldon Stephens, Elder St. Aubyn Edwards, Donald Grant, Eliad Johnson, John Lassiter, Monte Moore, Dennis Nooks, Leopold Rugless, Rajit Singh, Anthony Tobias, Owen Ennis, and Howard Woodburn.

Many others also made invaluable contributions. Byron and Jean Guthrie, Miriam Petty, Charlie and Barbara Henderson, Edna Jones, Yvonne Millington, Elizabeth Coby, Dalton and Wendy Eason, and numerous additional members faithfully supported the renovation effort in whatever way they could.

The women of New Hope worked alongside the men with equal dedication. Christine Demetrius, Wilhelmina Leach, and Ida Butcher—three senior citizens—spent long hours performing whatever tasks were needed. They were joined by Una Archer, Carolyn Blake, Irma Checkley, Valda Cohall, Missilene Edwards, Wilhelmina Foster, Dawn Grant, Origa Lassiter, Vivienne

McCatty, Carris Nooks, Beryl Palmes, Norma Priestley, Minnie Rugless, Eastlyn West, and many others.

While some members labored with tools, others ministered through hospitality. Faithful volunteers prepared meals that sustained the workers throughout the long days of construction, ensuring that everyone serving on weekdays and Sundays had food to enjoy together.

By God's grace, the extensive renovation of the Butler Building into the Fellowship Hall was completed without any serious injuries. Members from neighboring Seventh-day Adventist churches throughout the Atlanta area generously joined the effort, demonstrating the unity and fellowship shared throughout the conference.

Among those who assisted were Fred Buddy, Byron Guthrie, Andy Morgan, and Isaac Young from Belvedere; Mervyn Chapman, Cleopus Gilbert, and Eaton Nelson from First Lithonia; Clarret English, Dave Ennis, Carta Francis, and Valens Plummer from Decatur; Regina Parham from Atlanta Boulevard; Henry Floyd from Metropolitan; and James Gardner from Tri-City. Elder James Thomas also faithfully served as Associate Pastor during the ministries of both Dr. James Parham and Pastor David Jones.

The Dedication of the Fellowship Hall

Years of sacrifice culminated in a joyous weekend of worship and celebration.

The refurbished Fellowship Hall was dedicated under the theme **"ReNEWing Our Hope and Moving On By His Grace, In His Power, To His Glory."**

The celebration began on Friday evening, December 3, 1993, with a Communion and Consecration Service. On Sabbath morning, December 4, members and guests gathered for the **"Services of Victory and Gratitude,"** rejoicing over what God had accomplished.

The Sanctuary Choir provided inspiring music throughout the worship service. Missilene Edwards presented the announcements, while Dawn Grant shared the Children's Story.

Pastor Ralph Peay, President of the South Atlantic Conference, offered the Dedication Prayer. Jynean Palmer-Reid ministered in song with *Holy Ground*, and Elder Ward Sumpter delivered the sermon.

The congregation concluded the service by singing *To God Be the Glory*, led by Elder St. Aubyn Edwards, while Roger Davis, organist, and Eula Washington, pianist, filled the sanctuary with joyful music.

That afternoon, the celebration continued with a four-part **Praise in Song** musical program featuring participants from Berean, New Hope, West End, Decatur, Maranatha, and Belvedere Seventh-day Adventist Churches.

The newly renovated Fellowship Hall quickly became much more than a place of worship. It became the center of New Hope's growing ministry.

The congregation flourished. Visitors arrived from throughout metropolitan Atlanta, drawn by the church's vibrant worship, heartfelt fellowship, and unwavering commitment to sharing the love of Christ. Lively song services, Spirit-filled preaching, and genuine Christian fellowship became hallmarks of New Hope's identity.

Attendance frequently exceeded the available seating, requiring visitors to be seated in the choir loft. Meanwhile, the nearby Cottage remained busy with Sabbath School classes, planning meetings, outreach ministries, and fellowship meals. Marlene Stephens faithfully taught the children's Sabbath School there, helping to nurture the next generation of believers.

Over the years, the Cottage witnessed countless ministry meetings, outreach initiatives, prayer gatherings, fellowship dinners, and treasured memories that became woven into the fabric of New Hope's history.

Pastoral Leadership During the Early Years

As the congregation continued to mature, God blessed New Hope with faithful pastoral leadership.

The church gratefully recognizes the ministries of:

- Dr. R. E. Tottress (1985–1987), who served as the congregation's unofficial pastor during its formative years.
- Pastor James Parham (1987–1989).
- Pastor David M. Jones (1989–1994).
- Pastor Al Freeman (1994–1997).

During the construction and renovation years, the South Atlantic Conference also graciously assigned Pastor John Simmons, whose construction expertise proved invaluable to the successful completion of the Fellowship Hall renovations.

Following Pastor Freeman's ministry, Elder C. Dunbar Henri and his wife, Sister Lorraine Henri, served the congregation from 1997 to 1999. Pastor Henri provided calm, steady leadership during an important season in the church's development. His wisdom, pastoral care, and spiritual guidance left a lasting impression on the New Hope family and continue to be remembered with great appreciation.

Breaking Ground for a New Sanctuary

By 1999, New Hope Seventh-day Adventist Church had experienced remarkable growth. What began with forty-four believers had grown to a membership of 227 by March 2000. New

members, young families, and visitors were continually joining the congregation, creating an atmosphere of excitement and spiritual vitality.

The church's warm fellowship and vibrant worship attracted people from throughout metropolitan Atlanta. Lively song services, passionate preaching, meaningful Sabbath School classes, and genuine Christian love had become defining characteristics of New Hope. The church's motto, **"Small Enough to Share—Big Enough to Care,"** reflected the spirit of the congregation, but physically, the church had become too small.

The Fellowship Hall sanctuary was filled beyond capacity on many Sabbaths. Visitors frequently had to be seated in the choir loft, and Sabbath School classes overflowed into the Cottage. It became evident that New Hope had once again reached a pivotal moment in its history.

The congregation stepped forward in faith, believing God was leading them to construct a permanent sanctuary.

With the theme **"A Local Church with a Global Mission,"** New Hope hosted its Groundbreaking Weekend on March 4–5, 2000.

Senior Pastor Dr. Clinton A. Valley reflected on the significance of the occasion:

"From our humble beginnings as a community services group, we have now come proudly to break ground for our million-dollar church facility. Let me pause to salute the pioneers who, under God, had the vision to launch this bold initiative. Tribute must also be paid to the visionary leadership and support of the ministers who preceded me in this pastorate."

Building on the Faith of the Pioneers

Pat Davis, Chairperson of the Building Committee, challenged the congregation to remember how far God had brought them.

She reminded members that years earlier, when New Hope was only a Community Services Group, each member had been encouraged to set aside one dollar toward the dream of building a sanctuary. Those small acts of faith had grown into a movement that was now becoming reality.

She expressed gratitude for the foresight of the church's founders and for the faithful members who had consistently supported the building fund through systematic giving and personal sacrifice.

Many members made extraordinary financial commitments. Some designated portions of every paycheck toward the building project. Others invested savings, made pledges, or organized fundraising activities.

Ethney Johnson recalled the remarkable efforts of Sister Icylin Ellis, who held yard sales, sold holiday gift baskets throughout the year, marketed Avon products, and faithfully donated the proceeds to the Church Building Fund.

Others quietly added additional offerings each Sabbath, trusting that God would multiply every gift, regardless of its size.

A Historic Groundbreaking Weekend

The Groundbreaking Weekend was filled with worship, celebration, and thanksgiving.

The Sabbath School program, themed **"Building to God's Glory,"** was led by Superintendent Joyce Lewis. Participants included Redva Cox, Roger Davis, and Glenda Francis.

The Sabbath School lesson study was presented by Elder Darryl Howard, Youth Ministries and Communications Director for the South Atlantic Conference.

Arline Harvey welcomed guests, while Anthony Tobias provided special music.

During the Divine Worship service, Elder V. J. Mendinghall, President of the South Atlantic Conference, delivered the keynote message.

Stephene Demetrius welcomed the congregation and visitors.

Elder St. Aubyn Edwards led the Hymns of Praise and received the offering.

Sarah Osborne presented the Scripture reading and closing benediction.

Elder Kenroy Malcolm offered the Prayer of Intercession.

Jackie Wilson shared the Children's Story.

The New Hope Senior Choir lifted the congregation through inspiring musical selections.

The celebration continued that afternoon with an uplifting Praise Concert featuring Pauline Harvey, Dennis Arthurs, Cassandra Edwards, David Marcelle, the Youth Choir, the Children's Choir, the New Hope Ensemble, the New Hope Male Quartet, Dave Ennis, and the Hope Trio. Elder Eliad Johnson pronounced the benediction.

The day's festivities concluded with a lively social at Cedar Grove United Methodist Church Gymnasium. Members and guests enjoyed steel band music, flag drills, comedy performances, cultural presentations, food, fellowship, and entertainment that reflected the warmth and diversity of the New Hope family.

The celebration resumed on Sunday afternoon, March 5, with the official groundbreaking ceremony.

The program opened with a spirited song service led by Elder St. Aubyn Edwards, followed by the Presentation of Colors by the Pathfinder Club.

Elder Ward Sumpter, Executive Secretary of the Southern Union Conference, delivered the sermonette.

Several pastors who had played significant roles in New Hope's history participated in the service, including Elder V. J. Mendinghall, Elder David M. Jones, Elder Linwood Stone, Elder C. Dunbar Henri, Elder Melvin Preston, Elder R. Franklin, and Elder Clinton A. Valley.

Expressions of appreciation were offered by Pastor Clinton A. Valley, Ms. Vicki Molinari of Bank of America, architect Mr. J. Hone, construction manager Mr. D. Foster, and DeKalb County Commissioner Bill Brown.

Commissioner P. Sanford presented an official DeKalb County Proclamation recognizing the significance of the occasion.

Michelle Beale, David Marcelle, and Pauline Harvey enriched the service with special music before members gathered for refreshments, accompanied by the sounds of Tropical Steel Vibes.

Building Through Faith and Sacrifice

Constructing the new sanctuary proved to be both exciting and demanding.

Under the leadership of Dr. Valley, the congregation faced numerous challenges. During construction, tragedy struck when a construction worker accidentally fell from a rafter and lost his life. The heartbreaking accident deeply affected everyone involved.

Despite muddy conditions throughout much of the construction process, members faithfully continued to worship on the property. Parking became increasingly difficult, but neighboring Lovelife Christian Fellowship generously allowed New Hope members to use their parking lot each Sabbath—a kindness that the congregation remembers with gratitude.

Members continued making personal sacrifices. Families honored their building pledges despite financial challenges. Volunteers devoted countless hours to supporting the project, and every contribution, regardless of size, became part of the miracle God was unfolding.

Their perseverance reflected the same spirit that had characterized New Hope since its earliest days—a willingness to trust God completely and move forward in faith.

The Dedication of the Sanctuary

In 2001, after years of planning, fundraising, prayer, and construction, New Hope's beautiful new sanctuary was completed.

On June 24, 2001, the congregation gathered to dedicate the sanctuary to the glory of God.

Excitement filled the church as members admired the beautiful burgundy carpeting, cushioned pews, elegant lighting, and spacious sanctuary that God had provided.

The Fellowship Hall kitchen also received a complete renovation with new flooring, appliances, utensils, and supplies. Grace McCalla and her son, Marcel Sands, donated a new kitchen stove, while Heather Cox generously donated the floor tiles. Numerous members contributed furnishings, equipment, and supplies that transformed the facilities into a welcoming place for ministry and fellowship.

John and Origa Lassiter donated a complete set of new Seventh-day Adventist Hymnals for congregational worship.

The Senior Choir, directed by Pat Davis with Roger Davis serving as organist, praised God in newly acquired choir robes during the dedication celebration.

Smiles, tears, gratitude, and praise filled the sanctuary throughout the weekend.

Reflecting on the significance of the occasion, Dr. Valley observed that the new sanctuary would provide New Hope with greater opportunities to expand its religious and humanitarian ministries while improving the quality of life throughout the community.

For many members, the dedication represented far more than the completion of a building. It was the fulfillment of years of prayer, sacrifice, and unwavering faith in God's promises.

Elder St. Aubyn Edwards was serving as First Elder, having succeeded the beloved and hardworking Elder Delroy Myrie. Missilene Edwards faithfully served as Church Administrative Assistant during this historic season.

The completion of the sanctuary marked not the end of New Hope's journey, but the beginning of an exciting new chapter of ministry, outreach, and continued growth.

A Season of Continued Growth and Ministry

The dedication of New Hope's new sanctuary on June 24, 2001, marked the beginning of another exciting chapter in the church's history. With expanded worship space and improved facilities, the congregation was well-positioned to continue its mission of sharing the love of Christ throughout Ellenwood and the surrounding communities.

Following the dedication of the church, New Hope quickly became a place where families worshiped, celebrated, and grew together. On July 22, 2001, the church celebrated its first wedding as Kevin Taffe and Narrene Christie exchanged marriage vows before family, friends, and the congregation.

As the years passed, New Hope remained committed to vibrant worship, evangelism, Christian education, and community outreach. God continued to bless the congregation through faithful pastoral leadership and the dedication of countless members who gave sacrificially of their time, talents, and resources.

Pastor Kenneth J. Boswell (2003–2011)

Following the ministry of Dr. Clinton A. Valley, New Hope welcomed Pastor Kenneth J. Boswell, his wife Patricia, and their daughters, Tiffany and Lauren, into the church family. Pastor Boswell faithfully served as Senior Pastor from September 2003 through April 2011.

During the pastoral transition in the summer of 2003, Pastor Ronald Wright provided steady leadership as Interim Pastor until Pastor Boswell's arrival.

Pastor Boswell's ministry emphasized spiritual growth, evangelism, and strengthening the bonds of fellowship among the members. Under his leadership, New Hope continued to mature as a congregation while expanding its ministries and community presence.

Pastor Linwood Stone (2011–2017)

On May 14, 2011, New Hope welcomed Pastor Linwood Stone and his wife, Dr. Jennifer Stone.

Pastor Stone quickly became known for his warm spirit, practical preaching, and genuine love for people. In the church's 2013 directory, he expressed what a privilege it was to be part of the family of God and encouraged every member to actively share their faith and help others find their way to Jesus Christ.

Many members fondly remember one of Pastor Stone's favorite sayings. With a smile and a twinkle in his eye, he would often remind the congregation,

"Keep smiling—no one knows what you're up to...except God."

His joyful spirit, approachable personality, and biblical teaching left a lasting impression on the New Hope family.

Dr. Jennifer Stone likewise became deeply loved by the congregation. Her ministry of compassion, encouragement, and service extended far beyond the pulpit. Whether assisting in the kitchen following Elder St. Aubyn Edwards' repast, attending church banquets, weddings, graduations, anniversaries, picnics, or quietly learning members' names, she consistently demonstrated Christ's love through personal relationships and faithful service.

Even after their pastoral assignment concluded on April 22, 2017, Dr. Jennifer Stone continued to maintain close ties with the New Hope family and remains a cherished friend of the congregation.

Dr. Nathaniel Hollis (2017–2021)

On April 29, 2017, Dr. Nathaniel Hollis and his wife, Sister Jo Hollis, were installed as the next pastoral family of New Hope Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Dr. Hollis possessed a deep love for God's Word and an unmistakable passion for evangelism. His burden for souls was evident through his sermons, Revelation Seminars, literature distribution, and earnest prayers. He continually encouraged members to pray intentionally for family members, friends, neighbors, and those who had yet to experience a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

Sister Jo Hollis exemplified grace and dignity as First Lady. A distinguished educator, she faithfully stood beside her husband in ministry, sharing a warm smile, genuine hospitality, and loving embraces that touched countless lives.

Perhaps the greatest challenge of Dr. Hollis' ministry came unexpectedly in early 2020 with the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Faith Through the COVID-19 Pandemic

Like churches around the world, New Hope suddenly found itself navigating unprecedented circumstances.

In-person worship services were suspended as the congregation transitioned to online worship. The familiar rhythm of Sabbath fellowship changed dramatically, including the cherished monthly Sunday board meetings that often concluded with Beverly Constant, Norma Priestley, and the Hospitality Team serving delicious bowls of homemade cornmeal porridge.

The transition was not without challenges. The church faced limitations in technology, equipment, personnel training, and the production of engaging online worship experiences. Yet, despite these obstacles, New Hope refused to allow the pandemic to silence its ministry.

The Media Team courageously answered the call.

Darwin Dowdie, Joel Legall, David Marcelle, and the entire Media Ministry faithfully reported to the church each week, taking appropriate precautions while livestreaming worship services so members could remain spiritually connected during a season of isolation.

Many others also faithfully served online. Dr. Eliad Johnson, Elder Winston James, Dr. Violet Thompson, Verol Thompson, Elder Curland Francis, Garfield Morrison, and numerous Sabbath School teachers, worship leaders, musicians, and volunteers ensured that Bible study, worship, and fellowship continued while members sheltered in place.

Their dedication demonstrated that although the church building was temporarily closed, the ministry of New Hope remained very much alive.

Celebrating a Faithful Shepherd

After more than forty years of dedicated pastoral ministry, Dr. Nathaniel Hollis announced his retirement.

On December 11, 2021, the New Hope family honored Dr. and Sister Hollis with a memorable Pastor Appreciation and Retirement Celebration, expressing gratitude for their faithful leadership, spiritual guidance, and years of devoted service to both New Hope and the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

The congregation wished them God's richest blessings as they entered a well-deserved season of retirement.

Dr. Everton A. Ennis (2022)

Following Dr. Hollis' retirement, New Hope welcomed Dr. Everton A. Ennis and his wife, Sister Ingrid Ennis, who were installed on January 11, 2022.

Already recognized as an experienced pastor, conference speaker, conflict resolution consultant, and author of *From Holy Hell to Hallelujah Again*, Dr. Ennis brought a unique blend of pastoral care, leadership, and technological vision to New Hope.

Building upon the digital foundation established during the pandemic, Dr. Ennis expanded the church's online ministry by modernizing technology and introducing more interactive worship experiences that engaged both in-person and virtual congregations.

Under his leadership, New Hope's website and social media platforms—including Facebook, Instagram, and the church homepage—were redesigned to better serve members and reach the broader community.

Sister Ingrid Ennis made significant contributions through her professional expertise in business, technology, media production, livestreaming, and volunteer training. Her leadership strengthened the Media Ministry and enhanced the quality of New Hope's online presence.

Together, Dr. and Mrs. Ennis introduced a conversational café-style worship format that encouraged greater interaction between worshippers both inside the sanctuary and online.

Dr. Ennis also emphasized evangelism through his sermon series, **Experiencing Hope**, which resulted in five precious souls accepting Christ through baptism.

During his one-year tenure, he reignited the vision for the Family Life Center, renewing the congregation's commitment to this potentially transformative community outreach project.

On December 31, 2022, Dr. Ennis concluded his pastoral service after being elected General Vice President and Director of Public Affairs and Religious Liberty (PARL) for the South Atlantic Conference.

The New Hope family celebrated his new appointment with gratitude and prayed for God's continued blessings upon both Dr. and Mrs. Ennis as they entered this new chapter of ministry.

Paying Off the Mortgage: A Milestone of Faith

As New Hope entered a new season of ministry, another long-held dream was becoming reality—the complete payment of the church mortgage.

For many years, eliminating the church's debt remained a priority for the Church Board and congregation. During board meetings, Treasurer Melvin Constant faithfully presented financial reports that tracked the steady decline of the mortgage balance. These reports prompted thoughtful discussions among board members, whose recommendations ultimately accelerated the church's progress toward financial freedom.

One of the earliest recommendations was for the church to increase mortgage payments whenever possible. The church also recognized the financial advantages of refinancing the loan, and with the assistance of the South Atlantic Conference, that goal became a reality.

United in purpose, members increased their monthly contributions toward the mortgage. As the balance steadily decreased, the congregation continued to seek creative ways to eliminate the debt more quickly. Through careful financial stewardship, sacrificial giving, and God's continued blessings, New Hope reached an historic milestone—the mortgage was completely paid in full.

This achievement reflected decades of faithful stewardship and the unwavering commitment of generations of members who had prayed, sacrificed, and faithfully honored their financial commitments.

The church gratefully acknowledges the leadership of Dr. Nathaniel Hollis, Treasurer Melvin Constant, the Finance Team, the Church Board, and every member whose generosity made this accomplishment possible. Every additional offering, every special donation, and every personal sacrifice contributed to securing New Hope's financial future and expanding its ability to minister to the community.

Community Services: Serving Beyond the Church Walls

Throughout its history, New Hope has believed that ministry extends beyond Sabbath worship into the surrounding community.

The Community Services Department has faithfully served both church members and residents throughout DeKalb County for many years. This ministry began through the vision of Nellie

Cameron, who established the outreach program in the Cottage long before community service became widely recognized as one of the church's signature ministries.

The church is grateful for its longstanding partnership with the Atlanta Community Food Bank and numerous other donors whose support has enabled the ministry to assist families experiencing food insecurity and other hardships.

Under the dedicated leadership of Novlette Forrester, the Community Services Department has continued to grow and expand its impact. Numerous volunteers—including members of the Pathfinder Club, Master Guides, Pauline Cameron, Ornell Ramsay, Eastlyn West, Earle Allen, Percell Demetrius, Byron Townsend, Neil Harvey, Bernard D'Aguilar, David Patterson, and many others—have generously given their time and resources to serve those in need.

Building upon this legacy of service, New Hope launched the **New Hope Community Resource Center (NHCRC)** during the ministry of Dr. Everton Ennis.

Developed through the collaborative efforts of Pastor Ennis and the Community Services Team, the Resource Center was established to expand New Hope's outreach throughout DeKalb County. The vision includes food distribution, employment assistance, family support services, conflict resolution, educational seminars, recreational programming, and community development initiatives.

Plans continue to move forward for the construction of a dedicated Community and Family Life Center.

Remembering Pastor Melvin Preston

On January 28, 2023, New Hope welcomed Dr. Melvin Preston and his wife, Dr. Joetta Preston, as the church's new pastoral family.

Pastor Preston quickly endeared himself to the congregation through his comedic personality, heartfelt preaching, and genuine love for people. His ministry emphasized Family Life, evangelism, and helping individuals experience the abundant life available through Jesus Christ.

During the "**Empowered in Christ—Living Life at Its Highest Level**" Community Upliftment Revival, held April 13–27, 2024, and led by Pastor William Smith, approximately fifteen individuals accepted Christ through baptism. Among them was Pastor and Dr. Preston's beloved granddaughter, **Caidei Hayes**, making the occasion especially meaningful for their family and the entire congregation.

Only months later, New Hope experienced one of the most difficult moments in its history.

After a period of illness, Pastor Melvin Preston passed away on January 29, 2025.

The loss was deeply felt throughout the congregation. Members mourned the passing of a devoted pastor, loving husband, caring grandfather, faithful brother, and treasured friend.

On February 22, 2025, New Hope's sanctuary was filled to capacity as family, friends, colleagues, and members gathered to celebrate Pastor Preston's life and ministry.

His Celebration of Life service was held the following day, February 23, at Berean Seventh-day Adventist Church, where more than one thousand people attended in person while countless others participated online. During the service, the Praise Team's musical tribute moved the congregation to its feet in worship and thanksgiving for Pastor Preston's remarkable life.

Throughout this difficult season, the New Hope family surrounded First Lady Dr. Joetta Preston and her family with extraordinary love and support.

Under the leadership of Beverly Constant, the Hospitality Team lovingly prepared and served the repast, reflecting the compassion and unity that have long characterized New Hope.

Although the congregation's hearts were broken, members held firmly to the promise of Scripture and the blessed hope of Christ's soon return, trusting that one day they would joyfully be reunited with Pastor Preston.

Leadership During a Season of Transition

Following Pastor Preston's passing, First Elder Percell Demetrius faithfully provided spiritual leadership for the congregation while New Hope awaited the appointment of its next senior pastor.

First Elder Percell Demetrius faithfully serves New Hope with integrity, humility, and unwavering dedication. A respected spiritual leader, he is known for his steadfast faith, servant's heart, and commitment to advancing the work of the Lord.

Serving alongside him as Associate Head Elder, Dr. Dahlia Pottinger has faithfully dedicated many years of service to New Hope. Known for her dignity, warm smile, gracious spirit, and unwavering love for God's work, she has been a source of encouragement and inspiration to the congregation. Together, their faithful leadership and commitment continue to strengthen the spiritual life and mission of the New Hope church family.

During this period, Pastor William Winston, former President of the South Atlantic Conference, and his wife, Sister Eula Winston, accepted the call to serve as Interim Pastor and First Lady from February 8 through July 19, 2025.

Their ministry came at a time when the congregation needed healing, encouragement, and hope.

Through compassionate leadership, pastoral care, and heartfelt preaching, Pastor and Sister Winston helped guide the church through its season of grief while reminding members that God remained faithful.

The congregation also benefited from grief counseling and other supportive ministries that helped individuals and families navigate the difficult months following Pastor Preston's passing.

New Hope remains deeply grateful for the love, tenderness, and steady leadership Pastor and Sister Winston provided during one of the most challenging chapters in the church's history.

A New Chapter: Pastor Marvin G. Clarke, Sr.

Following several months of prayer and anticipation, the New Hope family rejoiced when the South Atlantic Conference announced the appointment of a permanent pastor.

On August 2, 2025, Pastor Marvin G. Clarke, Sr., his wife, Sister Olivia Clarke, and their children—Micaiah, Madison, Myles, and Marvin Jr. (MJ)—were officially installed during a joyful service led by Elder Merkita Mosely, Chief Financial Officer of the South Atlantic Conference.

Members filled the sanctuary to welcome their new pastoral family, while many others joined online. The congregation expressed its love and excitement through gifts, flowers, words of encouragement, and a fellowship luncheon celebrating the beginning of a new chapter in New Hope's history.

With more than two decades of pastoral experience, Pastor Clarke brought to New Hope a wealth of spiritual leadership, pastoral care, and administrative expertise. He holds degrees in Theology and Religion, along with specialized training in Marriage and Family Counseling, Clinical Chaplaincy, Crisis Intervention, and Trauma-Informed Grief Care.

His ministry reflects a holistic approach that combines sound biblical teaching with compassionate pastoral care. Through dynamic preaching, intentional discipleship, strategic leadership, and genuine concern for people, Pastor Clarke has encouraged members to deepen their relationship with Christ while strengthening their commitment to serving others.

"Operation Stretch"

Pastor Clarke introduced the 2026 ministry theme, **"Operation Stretch,"** challenging every member to grow spiritually, expand their faith, and reach beyond their comfort zones in service to God and the community.

The theme has inspired renewed enthusiasm for evangelism, discipleship, and outreach, encouraging the congregation to embrace new opportunities for ministry while remaining firmly rooted in biblical truth.

As part of this emphasis, Pastor Clarke invited several distinguished church leaders to participate in the May 2026 sermon series, **"The State of the Church—Reaching Further."**

Guest speakers included:

- Dr. Abraham Jules, President of the Atlantic Union Conference
- Elder Calvin B. Preston, President of the South Atlantic Conference
- Dr. Ron Smith, President of the Southern Union Conference
- Dr. Neil W. Reid, Vice President of the Georgia-Cumberland Conference

Their messages challenged and encouraged the congregation to continue advancing the mission of the church while remaining faithful to God's calling.

The Ministry of Sister Olivia Clarke

New Hope has also been richly blessed through the ministry of Sister Olivia Clarke.

A devoted woman of faith, she has inspired the congregation through her beautiful singing, thoughtful messages, and gracious spirit. Her Mother's Day sermon, **"Don't Run Out of Oil,"** deeply touched the congregation and remains one of the memorable messages shared during her time at New Hope.

In addition to supporting Children's Church, Sister Clarke faithfully participates in worship services through the ministry of music and consistently encourages members through her quiet example of Christian service.

A Shepherd Who Leads with Compassion

Pastor Clarke's ministry extends well beyond the pulpit.

He regularly visits members in hospitals and rehabilitation centers, prays with families in times of crisis, offers biblical counsel with love and wisdom, and remains actively involved in the life of the congregation. His approachable leadership style and genuine concern for people have strengthened relationships throughout the church family.

Under his leadership, New Hope has experienced continued membership growth through baptisms, membership transfers, and visitors who have chosen to unite with the congregation after experiencing its warm fellowship and vibrant worship.

Strengthening the Media Ministry

Recognizing the importance of digital ministry, Pastor Clarke has continued investing in New Hope's media capabilities.

Working alongside Media Ministry Leader Darwin Dowdie and the dedicated members of the Media Team, the church has made significant technological improvements that have enhanced both in-person and online worship experiences.

New cameras and upgraded sound equipment have improved livestream quality. Two generously donated television monitors replaced the aging projection system, providing greater visibility within the sanctuary. A new drum enclosure has also enhanced the worship environment while improving sound quality for both the congregation and online viewers.

These improvements have strengthened New Hope's ability to reach members, guests, and worshippers around the world.

The Hub

Communication and fellowship continue to flourish through **The Hub**, formerly known as the Café.

Under the leadership of Rochelle Dowdie and the Communication Team, The Hub has become a meaningful part of Sabbath worship. Held before Divine Worship and continuing as an after-service conversation with the pastor or guest speaker, it provides members and visitors with opportunities for discussion, encouragement, and spiritual reflection.

The Hub reflects New Hope's commitment to creating meaningful connections both inside and outside the sanctuary.

Evangelism: The Heartbeat of New Hope

From its earliest beginnings, evangelism has remained at the center of New Hope's mission.

Weekly Bible classes continue to strengthen members in their faith while introducing others to the teachings of Scripture. Revival meetings, evangelistic campaigns, Bible studies, and personal witnessing remain essential components of the church's ministry.

Under Pastor Clarke's leadership, Pastor E. L. Natufe conducted a powerful revival that inspired spiritual renewal throughout the congregation.

Since 2025, approximately twenty-seven individuals have accepted Christ, and nearly thirty people have been baptized during Pastor Clarke's first year of ministry.

Looking ahead, New Hope eagerly anticipates another revival, scheduled for July 11–18, 2026, under the leadership of Elder Paul Clemetson. Bible workers trained by the South Atlantic Conference will partner with the congregation in community outreach, continuing New Hope's longstanding commitment to sharing the gospel throughout Ellenwood and beyond.

Leadership That Endures

As New Hope celebrates its rich history, it also honors the faithful leaders who have helped shape the church over the years.

The congregation gratefully recognizes Elder Antega Townsend, New Hope's first female First Elder, who faithfully served in that capacity for more than twenty years. Her steadfast leadership, spiritual wisdom, and willingness to serve under multiple pastors and church administrations have left an enduring legacy.

Reflecting on her years of service, Elder Townsend simply stated,

"It was a pleasure to serve as an elder."

Today, Elder Percell Demetrius faithfully serves as First Elder, providing dedicated spiritual leadership alongside Pastor Clarke.

His wife, Stephene Demetrius, a veteran educator, has faithfully led the Education Department for many years, helping nurture the spiritual development of children, youth, and adults throughout the congregation.

Together, they exemplify the servant leadership that has long been a hallmark of New Hope Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Honoring Those Who Have Gone Before Us

Throughout its history, New Hope Seventh-day Adventist Church has been richly blessed by faithful men and women whose lives, ministries, and unwavering commitment helped shape the church into what it is today. While their earthly journeys have ended, their legacy of faith continues to inspire future generations.

As New Hope celebrates its twenty-fifth anniversary in this sanctuary, we pause to remember and honor those beloved members who entered their rest between 2001 and 2026. Their love for God, faithful service, and lasting contributions remain woven into the fabric of this church family.

The names mentioned above are by no means the entire list of loved ones we have lost. For a complete list of our beloved members who have passed away, please visit the church's website and view the 25th Anniversary Celebration *In Memoriam* tribute.

Among those who recently passed and remembered with gratitude are Kathleen Ennis, a devoted deaconess and faithful Community Services volunteer; Elaine Dunkley, an accomplished musician and dedicated deaconess; Ailsa Brathwaite, a faithful deaconess and

committed church member; and June Gordon, whose compassionate spirit and service in the Deaconess Ministry and Community Services touched many lives.

The congregation also remembers Donald Birch, Sr., who passed away on June 27, 2022. His joyful personality, generous heart, and faithful ministry left an indelible mark on New Hope.

Members fondly recall his vibrant leadership during song services, his famous sweet potato puddings and warm Jamaican toto, his enthusiastic Saturday evening domino games, and the spirited Sunday morning soccer scrimmages enjoyed by the Men of Hope. His love for fellowship and music enriched countless lives.

In recognition of his remarkable contribution to the church's music ministry, the annual Summer Concert Series was renamed the **Donald Birch, Sr. Summer Gospel Concert Series**, ensuring that his legacy continues to inspire future generations.

New Hope also lovingly remembers Lucille Francis, whose Christ-centered life, exemplary service as a deaconess, and unwavering faith continue to inspire those who knew her. Her compassion, quiet strength, and dedication to God's work exemplified Christian service.

The congregation likewise honors the memory of Brudy Francis, whose warm smile, gentle spirit, and faithful commitment to the church family will never be forgotten.

The legacy of Troy Russell lives on through his dedicated service in Sabbath School, Bible Class, and numerous other ministries that strengthened the spiritual life of New Hope.

The church also remembers beloved prayer warrior Wilhelmina Leach, whose faithful prayers encouraged countless members over many years.

The memories of Owen Ennis and Kaleal Ennis likewise remain treasured within the New Hope family, reminding us that faithful service leaves an enduring impact that extends far beyond a lifetime.

Although these cherished members are no longer with us, their influence continues to shape the ministry of New Hope. Their examples of faith, sacrifice, generosity, and devotion encourage the congregation to remain steadfast until that glorious day when Christ returns and His faithful children are reunited.

Worship Through Music

Music has always been central to worship at New Hope Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Under the leadership of Sister Crystal Clarke, the Music Department continues to inspire the congregation through a ministry that glorifies God and enriches every worship experience. The Praise Team faithfully prepares hearts for worship, while choirs, soloists, musicians, and instrumentalists contribute their gifts throughout the year.

Several musical traditions have become highlights of the church calendar, including the Roger Davis Concert, the Donald Birch, Sr. Summer Gospel Concert Series, and the Annual Christmas Cantata.

One particularly memorable event was the **He Is Risen Concert**, presented by internationally acclaimed lyric coloratura soprano Sister Ché Chin King. The concert filled the sanctuary with worshippers who gathered to celebrate the resurrection of Jesus Christ through sacred music.

Another unforgettable occasion occurred on May 2, 2026, when Pastor E. L. Natufe's Praise Team traveled from Alberta, Canada, to present a fundraising concert supporting the proposed New Hope Community and Family Life Center.

These musical events continue New Hope's rich tradition of worship through song while supporting the church's ongoing mission and outreach.

Health Ministry

New Hope recognizes that caring for the whole person is an important part of Christian ministry.

Under the leadership of Elder Dawnette Bowen, the Health Ministry continues to serve both the congregation and surrounding community through quarterly health initiatives designed to promote wellness and preventive care.

The ministry's **"Know Your Numbers"** program provides screenings for blood pressure, blood glucose, cholesterol, and Hemoglobin A1C following Divine Worship services. Physicians, nurse practitioners, nurses, and other healthcare professionals generously volunteer their expertise, offering guidance and education that encourage healthy lifestyles and early detection of medical concerns.

This ministry reflects New Hope's commitment to meeting both the spiritual and physical needs of the community.

Baby Dedications

One of the most joyful moments in the life of New Hope is the dedication of children to the Lord.

Families from throughout metropolitan Atlanta frequently request that their babies be dedicated at New Hope, making these services a meaningful outreach opportunity for the church.

During each dedication, parents, extended family members, church members, and friends gather to commit the child to God's care while pledging to nurture them in the Christian faith.

Each child receives a first Bible, an official Baby Dedication Certificate from New Hope Seventh-day Adventist Church, and special gifts from the Children's Sabbath School Lower Division and the Education Department.

Parents are encouraged to enroll their children in Sabbath School and become active participants in the life of the church family.

Baby dedications are typically conducted on the fourth Sabbath of each month and remain among the congregation's most cherished traditions.

Investing in the Next Generation

The future of New Hope rests in the hearts and hands of its children and youth.

For more than twenty-five years, the Pathfinder Club has remained a vibrant and active ministry, providing opportunities for spiritual growth, leadership development, service, and Christian fellowship.

The church is also blessed by its thriving Adventurer Club and Master Guide Ministry, whose dedicated leaders invest countless hours mentoring young people and preparing them for lives of faithful Christian service.

Another exciting ministry is the New Hope Drum Corps, led by Tre-Elliott Brutus. Through discipline, teamwork, and musical excellence, young people develop their talents while contributing to church celebrations and special community events.

These ministries continue New Hope's longstanding commitment to preparing future generations to know Christ, serve others, and lead with integrity.

Looking Toward the Future

Over the years, members have faithfully come and gone as God has led them into new chapters of life and ministry.

Among those fondly remembered are Sister Arline Harvey and Brother Devon Harvey, who relocated to Costa Rica after many years of faithful service. Although they now reside abroad, they continue to worship regularly through New Hope's online ministry and remain beloved members of the church family.

As New Hope reflects upon its remarkable journey, it celebrates far more than buildings, programs, or milestones. It celebrates the faithfulness of God.

This history tells the story of countless Revelation Seminars, evangelistic campaigns, baptisms, prayer ministries, Communion services, Bible Bowls, Pathfinder achievements, Community

Services outreach, Hunger Walks, Black History programs, children's ministries, Sabbath School classes, Bible studies, Adventist Youth meetings, Family Life programs, Women's Ministries, Men's Ministries, dedicated deacons and deaconesses, faithful ushers, memorable fellowship meals, and lifelong friendships formed through Christian fellowship.

Every ministry, every volunteer, every prayer, every offering, and every act of service has contributed to New Hope's continuing story.

From forty-four believers with a vision to a thriving congregation impacting lives throughout Ellenwood and beyond, New Hope Seventh-day Adventist Church stands as a testimony to what God can accomplish through faithful people who are willing to trust Him completely.

As New Hope Seventh-day Adventist Church continues to expand its mission and impact, we remain committed to the development of the New Hope Community and Family Life Center—a vision designed to strengthen community outreach, support families, and provide expanded ministry services throughout DeKalb County and beyond. We encourage our members, friends, and community partners to join us in this endeavor through prayerful support and generous financial contributions as we work together to bring this vision to completion.

The members of New Hope remain committed to sharing the love of Jesus Christ with their community and the world until He returns.

To God be the glory for the great things He has done, the greater things He is doing, and the greater things yet to come.

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