



HOPE CHURCH NEWS

"...A living hope..." | Peter 1:3

Volume 57, No. 1

January 2014

In This Issue

Season of Reconciliation.....2
 Caring for Creation.....3
 Adult Education.....3
 Ministry Highlight.....4
 Congregational Meeting.....5
 Health Ministry.....5
 Kids Hope USA.....6
 Missionary Update.....7
 Lectionary.....8
 Children's Ministry.....8
 Youth Ministry.....8
 Brim Bunch.....9
 Events & Announcements.....10
 Birthdays.....10
 And Finally.....11

Insert: January Calendar

The deadline for the February newsletter is **Sunday, January 19.**

Office Hours
Monday - Thursday:
9:00am - 5:00pm
Friday: Closed

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WALKING THE PATH OF RECONCILIATION

Season of Reconciliation 2014
January 12 - February 2



"If anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new! All this is from God, who reconciled us to God through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation." -II Corinthians 5:17-18

For more information on the Season of Reconciliation, turn to page 2.

Congregational Meeting: January 19

Our annual congregational meeting will take place on Sunday, January 19, from 12:15-2:00 p.m. in the Commons. We will begin with a shared meal and conversation around tables. The Consistory will provide a soup lunch.

- If your last name begins with A – O, please bring a salad.

- If your last name begins with P – Z, please bring bread to share. Transportation will be provided for residents of the Warm Friend and Freedom Village at 2:00 p.m. (as well as the usual bus run at 12:15 p.m.). Please plan to attend!

More information on page 5.

WALKING THE PATH OF RECONCILIATION

Season of Reconciliation 2014
January 12 - February 2

WORSHIP
Early Worship 8:30 a.m.
Liturgical Worship 11:00 a.m.

Worship during the Season of Reconciliation draws on our liturgy and the stories of our faith community to focus on reconciliation as one of the core themes of our faith. In the prayers and music, scripture and creeds of our liturgy, worship calls out in us our own need for reconciliation with God, others, and self, and then sends us to share that reconciling grace with others.

Witness to Reconciliation

A special part of worship in the Season of Reconciliation is the "Witness to Reconciliation", as people in our faith community share their own stories of places of reconciliation in their life of faith. As we hear stories shared, we foster both a gratitude for the way God's grace is at work in the people of Hope Church and a deeper awareness of our own laces of division, reconciliation and witness in our lives.

Worshipping with "In Harmony"

Sunday, January 26, 11:00 a.m.

In Harmony is an intergenerational choir of gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgendered and straight singers that focuses on the music of inclusion and reconciliation. The group's goal is to present music that enriches lives and affirms equality for all people while creating change by celebrating diversity through music and harmony. Founded in 2011, Director Marty Kiefer envisioned a community choir for anyone and everyone.

In Harmony will participate in worship and we will host them for Pizza Lunch and conversation following the service.

BOOK STUDY

Seminary intern, Paige Convis, will offer a four-week book study of, *The Violence of Love*, by Oscar Romero. This book is a collection of the writings and sermons of Romero who was the archbishop of El Salvador in 1980's. Romero is marked as a prophet, speaking out against oppression.

The group will be an opportunity to read, discuss and meditate on something from a different culture and to think about liberation both in Romero's context as well as our own. This book group will meet on Thursdays at 7:00 p.m. Look for a sign-up sheet in early January.

ADULT EDUCATION
Sundays, 9:40-10:40 a.m.
Commons I

January 12 – *Making Sense of Violence in the Old Testament*

Facilitated by Rachel Billings, Adjunct Instructor at Western Theological Seminary.

January 19 & 26 – *The Culture of Violence*

Facilitated by Chris Dorsey, Assistant Professor of Theology and Preaching at Western Theological Seminary.

February 2 – *Family Violence*

A discussion about violence in homes in our community, our state, and our country. Facilitated by Stephanie Kitchen from the Center for Women in Transition.

RESTORATIVE CIRCLES
FACILITATOR TRAINING I
Friday, January 31, 9:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.
Saturday, February 1, 9:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

The training will give a comprehensive overview of Restorative Circles and will provide more detailed information on each phase of a Restorative Circle. There will be opportunity to practice all three rounds of dialogue used in a Circle. Register online at www.HollandRestorativeCircles.org or call the Hope Church office at (616) 392-7947. Brochures with more information are available in the Gathering Area.

Caring for Creation News: There is a Way

Peter Boogaart, *Caring for Creation Coordinator*

People who think they know everything are very offensive to those of us who do! If you're laughing you get the point. Decision making isn't easy and rarely is there going to be an occasion when everyone agrees. Nevertheless, decisions are important and wrong decisions can be disastrous.

I write this having just begun a reading of James Gustave Speth's, *America The Possible: Manifesto For A New Economy*. Speth is a longtime activist and environmentalist; during his career he's been a significant contributor, including at the White House level. Speth, however, has had enough. We haven't stemmed the tide of environmental degradation and there doesn't seem to be any appetite for doing so either.

For Speth, "people who think they know everything" are the cheerleaders for American style capitalism and its fervent belief in constant growth; a faith which declines to acknowledge

any evidence to the contrary. The evidence, as he cites it, is substantial. We are in the process of exhausting the resources of our finite planet. Still, if you're inclined to be one of "those of us who do," why listen?

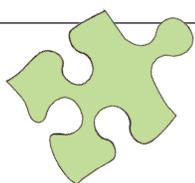
So the challenge becomes, "Listen, yes; but to whom?" In a political atmosphere of spin control and big money lobbying, who can you trust? I'd like to suggest that for us as Christians, we listen to our Bible. For me, the guide for listening comes from Deuteronomy: there's a way that leads to life and a way that leads to death--choose life.

Simply use your eyes and acknowledge what you see. If what you see is death littering the landscape, then you're going the wrong way and need to hear God's call to turn around. Certainly, in a place like Syria, littered landscape is an actual reality. What exasperates people in the environmental movement is the death they see everywhere: mass

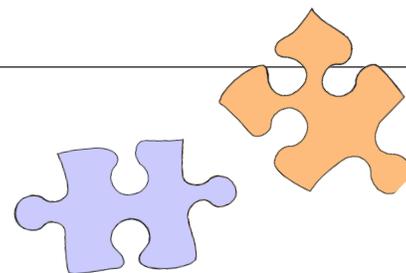


extinctions, desertification, ocean acidification, toxic discharges, and accelerating climate change. These are the sounds of a world groaning under the weight of destruction.

Despair is not an option, not for Christian people. We are the ones who know that groaning, loss, and death is not final; we know that from our own personal experience. We are the people who were lost and in God's grace, found again. Our acts of caring for creation can be an extension of the grace that was first shown to us, a way of turning to the path that leads to life.



ADULT EDUCATION
Sundays, 9:40-10:40 a.m., Room 106



Dwelling Together in the Word

A new small group Bible study will begin Sunday, January 12, during the education hour. All are invited to join this eight-week series of immersion in the stories of scripture through conversation, reflection, and prayer. Each week will follow a simple format that includes sharing, dialogue, and contemplation. Participants will be

asked to commit to each other in regular attendance. The intention is for there to be several eight-week sessions during the year.

The first group, facilitated by Curtis Gruenler, will meet January 12-March 2 from 9:40 a.m. to 10:40 a.m. We will use materials called "Seeing

the Word" that include beautiful images inspired by biblical texts (taken from the recent St. John's Bible). Passages for this first series will include the parable of the sower and the seed, the Creation, images of wisdom as a woman, and the Transfiguration. Come hungry to commune with God and each other.

ministry HIGHLIGHT

This series of highlights on ministries at Hope Church is intended to be sure our members are aware of how things happen and their opportunities to engage with the ministry of the church.

The Building & Grounds Ministry at Hope Church

The Building and Grounds Ministry is responsible for the care and maintenance of the physical facilities and the grounds of Hope Church. It oversees repair and replacement of systems and equipment, the purchase of expendable supplies, and the payment for utilities and services. This ministry takes seriously the commitment to be good stewards of our church resources, while remaining mindful of and maintaining the historical beauty of our place of worship.

Some of the things we do to support the other ministries of Hope Church:

- Run sound equipment for worship and sound and video equipment for Adult Ed.
- Arrange streaming of Sunday service to WHTC for broadcast, and recording of services so copies can be made available.
- Acquire and configure computers for church office staff, arrange web hosting and e-mail services, set up church Wi-Fi, and keep the phone system working.
- Arrange heating and cooling controls – provide energy conservation through programming to heat and cool only during times when spaces are used. We recently added the education wing to the programmable control system and replaced the old boiler.
- Arrange sprinkling, mowing, and leaf removal. For the past several years we've had Hope College students helping with fall garden maintenance through Hope's Community Day program. A special thank-you to David VanHeest and Doug Abell for all they do with the gardens.
- Arrange snow removal and plowing.
- Repair chimneys and vents, patch and replace roofs, tuck-point bricks, and fix leaks.
- Replace and clean carpets, patch and paint walls, fix tables, and keep the dishwasher working.
- Get signs and markers up, parking lot striped and sealed, bats out of the belfry and raccoons out of the ceiling.
- Arrange hangers, cables and hoists used for display of art we've all enjoyed in worship.

If you've any talents or interest in any of these areas that you'd like to share, we welcome you to join us. Contact any of the Building and Grounds Ministry members: Duane Kooyers (chair), David Hawley, Jonathan Brockmeier, Jane Schuyler, Ben Sikkink, and staff support from Laurie Beyer Braaksma.

The next Ministry Highlight will feature the Health Ministry.

January & February Greeters

The Outreach & Hospitality Ministry

The following list reflects the households assigned to greet prior to the 11am service in the upcoming months:

January Greeters

05 Michelle Bombe & Curt
Tofteland
12 Tom & Judy Boogaart
19 Bob & Judy Bos
26 Calvin & Barbara Bouma

February Greeters

02 Terry & Tracy Brower
09 Margaret & Leah Buckley
16 Joanne Brooks & Rose
Mary Cantor
23 David & Janice Chase

If you are unable to greet on your assigned Sunday, you are invited to either switch with someone or find your own substitute. You can communicate this change by marking the change on the Greeters Schedule poster in the Gathering Area, or by calling the office.

Congregational Meeting: January 19

Continued from page 1.

The meeting will include the first in a series of presentations on a Facilities Master Plan, a presentation and vote on the 2014 budget, as well as other important information about the coming year of ministry at Hope Church.

You are invited to think about these questions which will be at the heart of our conversation together on January 19. Keeping in mind our faith, our mission, and our ministry themes:

1. What have been some significant moments in ministry you want to celebrate from this past year? Where have you been engaged by God's Spirit through the ministry at Hope Church? What are some favorite highlights you want to lift up?
2. As you look to the year ahead, what are some ideas and opportunities you see for our ministry at Hope Church? Are there any challenges and concerns you want to share?

Our Faith: As followers of Jesus Christ, God calls us to Unity, Reconciliation, and Justice.

Belhar Confession, South Africa 1986

Our Mission: Hope Church is a congregation called to grow in faith; to pioneer; to be open; to lead in Christian action.

Hope Church Mission Statement, 2013

Our Themes: Provide provisions for the journey; welcome all; connect with and witness to the community; engender deep engagement.

Discerning our Future, 2012

Technology in Caregiving

Donita Robards, RN, Parish Nurse

If you're under the age of thirty, chances are you embrace the age of technology. After all, you were practically raised on it from the cradle. But while you are looking up football scores, holiday recipes, and music downloads, take a few moments to see how technology can help you and your loved ones stay safe and connected.

Most seniors have a goal to remain independent in their own homes for as long as possible. Poor visual acuity, impaired hearing, poor mobility and cognitive deficits can make that a challenge. Technology can help prolong the need for placement. There are many products available that may serve your needs.

Medication dispensers that remind the senior to take their meds through

beeps or flashing lights may be an effective way to make medication administration simpler and safe for a person who forgets to take their meds. If a traditional medication container is not working, this could be the way to go. Some require the user to be able to hear the beeps or see the flashing lights. There is an expense to these, but they're much cheaper than assisted living.

Guardian and Lifeline are two companies that provide alert buttons in case your senior has a fall. It can be a comfort to know that help will be on its way in the event of a crisis. Electronic mats can also be placed at the side of the bed in case of a fall.

One of the newest and most helpful forms of technology today is a portable GPS system. If your loved



one wanders off, the GPS can help track them.

Other forms of technology are available to help keep the caregiver informed and updated. Apps for health care records, portal service through primary care physician offices, etcetera, help keep records available and help you stay in communication with your loved one's physician.

For many of us, technology is a struggle to learn and keep up with, but it is important to consider the benefits of its use.

January is National Mentoring Month

Anne Duinkerken & Barbara Joldersma, Kids Hope USA Co-Directors



Mentor, Dave Schmitt, and his student take a study break to pose for a picture.

Along with others in a variety of programs across the nation, we wish to recognize the contributions of our mentors this January. We also wish to recognize the prayer partners and substitute mentors, without whose support, our mentors would not be able to make the impact they do in the lives of our Vanderbilt students.

The Hope Church Kids Hope program currently has 18 committed mentors who are supported by 18 faithful prayer partners who are praying just for them and the child they mentor. We also have nine substitute mentors who help provide continuity by meeting with Kids Hope students when their personal mentor is unable to be there. Rounding out the program is a group of seven dedicated unassigned prayer partners who pray for the Hope Church Kids Hope program as a whole.

Our Kids Hope mentors are Jonathan Brownson, Paige Convis, Jean Cook, Linda Cook, Peggy DeHaan, Helen DeWeerd, Anne Duinkerken, Anne Heath Wiersma, Kate Irvin-Garcia, Lynn Japinga, Rachelle Oppenhuizen, Terry Pott, Anna Ritsema, Barb Roe, Vicki Rumpsa, Barb Schmitt, Dave Schmitt and Marlin VanderWilt.

Substitute mentors are Sharon Arendshorst, Claudia Berry, Margaret Boelkins, Don Buteyn, Barbara Joldersma, Marilee Nieuwsma, Nancy Rock, Jane Schuyler, and Gordon Wiersma.

Prayer Partners who are assigned to a specific mentor and child are Ann Anderson, Randy Braaksma, Jan Fike, Carole Hintz, Shannon Kalmink, Norma Killilea, Stephanie Krom, Char Laman, Earl Laman, Judy Mastenbrook, Rachelle Oppenhuizen, Nancy Rock, Stan Rock, Jill Russell, Jane Schuyler,

Dorothy Sherburne, Eleanor VanDyke and Eloise VanHeest.

Prayer Partners who pray for this ministry as a whole are Joanne Brooks, Suzanne Buteyn, Ruth Hoekstra-Telgenhof, Kari Miller-Fenwood, Karen Mulder, Jan Smith and Nancy VandeWater.

We are grateful for each member of our Kids Hope team and very glad to be part of an organization which provides one out of every five mentors in the State of Michigan. We are also eager to serve the three children who remain on our waiting list. If you have reached a point in your life where mentoring now seems like a possibility, please contact Anne Duinkerken or Barb Joldersma. We will happily provide you with the tools and training you need to join this ministry to at-risk children.

Dave and Char Alexander, Serving in Taiwan

Reformed Church in America Missionary Information, rca.org/alexander

Charlene Bos and David Alexander met in Taiwan in 1976 while serving as RCA volunteers. They were married four years later, and returned to Taiwan in 1982 as career missionaries. Currently, Char teaches English at Chang Jung Christian University, which is associated with the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan. Dave teaches practical theology and ministry skills to ministerial trainees at Tainan Theological College and Seminary and offers courses in the lay training division there. The Alexanders have two children, Kate and Grant.

Below are two of Dave and Char's weekly updates from their blog. More entries can be found at www.rca.org/alexanderwebpage.

December 5 - VIP Treatment

University students don't just go to class. In America they are often involved in varsity sports; in Taiwan they often hold contests. Several months ago a group of Char's students at Chang Jung Christian University got involved in organizing one, and she asked them to keep her informed on the date and time so that she could attend. Last week she had VIP status at a singing contest. Several of her current and former students had been in preliminary rounds, and 5 or 6 had made it into the "final 15" who had a "sing-off" on Thursday night. Char stayed late at school to be in the audience. After promising to be there, she discovered that she was to be treated as a VIP (which, thankfully, meant that she got free admission and

a front-row seat, but didn't have to be a judge.)

She heard marvelous performances of popular songs from many eras, sung in English, by all of the finalists. Seeing how the judges discerned the highest quality among them, giving prizes to the top 3 finishers, also pleased her. The top two positions were taken by former and current students, whose amazing singing voices she had not had the opportunity to hear in class. After everything else, one of the songs from the contest has continued to haunt her, and she's trying to get it out of her head.

December 6 - What Would You call Love?

Last spring Dave led a Bible discussion group at Chin-li University (where he teaches a few hours a week). The focus was on selected gospel stories. This term's group, using biblical proverbs & parables alongside Taiwan folk wisdom sayings, just finished. He has begun thinking ahead to the spring term, and love is on his mind.

He asked students at the last session what to name the group he'll propose to the university administration for next semester. It will include love poetry, songs, psychology and stories (a lot of which will come from the Bible). Before discussion began this week, he asked what people thought: "Love Time, Love Talk, Love Stories...". At the end of the session, over lunch, he asked again, and one woman said, "Just call it 'Love.'" Apparently that'll be attractive enough.



RCA Missionaries, Dave and Char Alexander



Dave Alexander outside the Tainan Theological College and Seminary in Taiwan



Char Alexander



Dave and Char with their children, Kate and Grant

At Home With the Word

Daily Bible Readings from the Revised Common Lectionary

December 30-January 5

Monday	Isaiah 26:1-9
Tuesday	John 8:12-19
Wednesday	Psalm 8
Thursday	Psalm 72
Friday	Genesis 28:10-22
Saturday	Exodus 3:1-5
Sunday	John 1:1-18

January 6-12

Monday	Matthew 2:1-12 <i>Epiphany</i>
Tuesday	Ephesians 3:14-21
Wednesday	Ephesians 4:7, 11-16
Thursday	Acts 9:1-9
Friday	Acts 9:10-19
Saturday	Acts 9:19-31
Sunday	Matthew 12:15-21 <i>Baptism of the Lord</i>

January 13-19

Monday	Genesis 35:1-15
Tuesday	Jeremiah 1:4-10
Wednesday	Matthew 12:15-21
Thursday	Galatians 1:6-12
Friday	Psalm 40:1-11
Saturday	Luke 5:1-11
Sunday	John 1:29-42

January 20-26

Monday	Psalm 40:6-17
Tuesday	Isaiah 53:1-12
Wednesday	Matthew 9:14-17
Thursday	1 Samuel 1:1-20
Friday	Psalm 27:1-6
Saturday	Luke 5:27-32
Sunday	1 Corinthians 1:10-18

January 27-February 2

Monday	Psalm 27:7-14
Tuesday	Judges 7:12-22
Wednesday	Luke 1:67-79
Thursday	Deut. 16:18-20
Friday	Deut. 24:17-25:4
Saturday	Psalm 15
Sunday	Micah 6:1-8

Children's Ministry

Jocelyn Van Heest, Children's Ministry Director

Nursery

Thank you to the youth interns and adults who staffed the nursery this past fall. There are many children who are finding joy in seeing their friends in the nursery each week. We are in need of adult volunteers to help in the nursery for the next few months. It is a wonderful way to get to know the children of Hope Church and their families. Adults of all ages can share their gifts with our young ones. The children love readers, laps to sit in, and someone to give them special attention. How about a parent and their teenager? Sign up with a friend if you would feel more comfortable. There are always youth to help with the lifting and chasing.

Sign up on the sheet by the nursery or contact Jocelyn in the church office with any questions. Thanks for considering being a part of this nurturing ministry. Come enjoy the youngest members of Hope Church!

Epiphany Sunday

On January 5, the 4th and 5th graders will take part in the 11:00 a.m. worship service. They will meet at 10:00 a.m. for rehearsal. All the children will meet together for a time of response to the story and to prepare for the Epiphany Party after the 11:00 a.m. service. The Church School class will not meet on January 6 but will resume on the 13th.

Youth Ministry

Anne Duinkerken, Youth Ministry Director

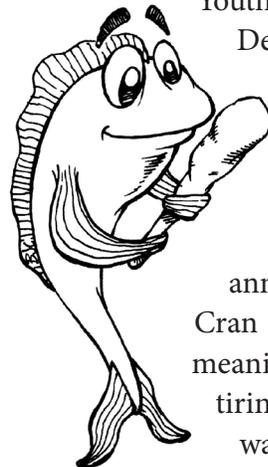
The weekend of January 4 and 5, both Fish Club and High Hopes will meet with the Tri-Youth for an Epiphany Retreat at Grace Episcopal Church.

High Hopes

The highlight of the fall was the annual High Hopes Progressive Dinner on Sunday, December 15. The group started out at the MacLean's for appetizers, moved to the Accardo's for dinner, then to Doug Abell and David VanHeest's for amazing desserts. Thank you to all of our hosts!

Fish Club

Fish Club enjoyed bowling and a Christmas party with the Tri-Youth on Saturday,



December 7. The group will go to Cran Hill Ranch January 17-19 for their annual retreat. Cran Hill is always a meaningful, fun, and tiring (in a good way) time.

Upcoming events include sledding at Teusinks' Farm on January 12 and "Unshowered" on January 19. The group also looks forward to their annual retreat at Cran Hill Ranch January 24-26.



Brim Bunch to Honor Vern and Lois Boersma

Judy Parr



The married couple who currently hold title to the longest membership in Hope Church, 142 years between them, are Vern and Lois Boersma. The Boersmas were among the couples who formed the Mr. and Mrs. Club in 1951.

Organized shortly before Christmas, the club declared its first project to be conducting a Christmas carol sing for shut-ins. That was the first

of many activities that combined socializing and service. The group met twice a month during the school year and once a month in the summer. Whether holding a “hard times party” at the De Witt Hatchery in Zeeland (in 1953) or preparing popular and festive New Year’s Eve dinners, they formed a friendly group that thrived during the 1950s.

By the mid-1960s, enthusiasm for the Mr. and Mrs. Club had waned, but some wanted to form a group similar in purpose but open not only to couples but also to singles and those whose spouses had died. A few years later such a group was formed.

Lois and Vern Boersma tell how the new group started and received the name Brim Bunch: “We had a start-up dinner in the spring and Eleanor Hopkins was in charge of table decorations. Because many of the group were now drinking decaf coffee, she used one-pound Brim coffee cans filled with daffodils. ‘Brim Bunch’ was thought to be a silly, fun

name,” they said. “No one anticipated that it would be considered an odd choice or that Brim coffee would cease to be. The group decided to meet every other month or five times a year.”

How many original Mr. and Mrs. Club members now belong to the Brim Bunch? The answer: Vern and Lois Boersma, Joanne Brooks, Peggy DeHaan, Dwight Ferris, Ruth Green, Clarence and Eleanor Hopkins, and Loren and Elsie Howard.

For many years, Vern and Lois Boersma have been recognized as the leaders of the Brim Bunch. They have presided over many a meeting and helped to organize the programs, set up the table decorations, prepare the food, and clean up afterwards. For many Brim Bunch meetings they are the first to arrive and the last to leave. As they “retire” from leadership of the organization in February, Brim Bunch will honor them for their many years of loving and hospitable leadership and service.

A Note from our Seminary Intern

Friends,

It has been my joy this past semester... to be fed by many of you. I would like to thank those of you who have hosted me for “Guess Who’s Coming to Dinner.” The gift of food, hospitality, conversation, game playing and art and craft making was more than I could have imagined; for this I am very grateful!

As you know, my focus the past semester has been on pastoral care. I would like to share the opening to my

theology of pastoral care with you:

Pastoral Care is like a dance. There is beauty, there is brokenness. There are times when we are gliding across the floor with beauty and grace. Then there are the times when our feet hurt from all the work, we grow weary of experiencing the brokenness of the human plight. Pastoral Care is like a dance.

Thank you for the opportunity to enter into that dance of care with Hope Church. It has been a blessing

for me to offer support to you and learn from you.

In the new semester my focus is on small group leadership. So look for several opportunities to support me in my learning as I dive into the area of small group leadership! I am looking forward to engaging the people of Hope Church in this new way!

Blessings in this New Year!

Peace,
Paige

Events and Announcements

Coffee Time at Resthaven

The next Coffee Time will be at Resthaven–Maplewoods on Tuesday, January 14 at 10:30 a.m. This is a caring outreach and fellowship opportunity for residents and their friends at different locations to meet with the pastors and other congregation members and staff. Mark your calendar, and come for an hour !

Hope Church Readers

Hope Church Readers will meet on Wednesday, January 15 at 1:00 p.m. in Commons II. The book for discussion is, *The Outside World*, by Tova Mirvis, a fascinating look at modern Orthodox Jewry. Rita Snow will lead, and visitors are welcome.

Pizza Sunday

The next Pizza Sunday will take place on January 26 at 12:15 p.m. Hosts are needed for 2014! Please sign up in the Gathering Area.

Rhonda Edgington at “Free at Three”

On Sunday, January 26, at 3:00 p.m., Rhonda Sider Edgington will be performing in the local series “Free at Three” at First Reformed Church in Holland. Rhonda will be playing with hornist, Greg Bassett, who recently played in the Hope Church Advent Organ Recital. The duo will perform works by a variety of performers. If all goes according to plan, there will even be the premier of a work written by a local composer for organ and marimba. Stay tuned for more details!

Cran Hill Ranch - Save the Date!

July 18 - 20, 2014. Mark your calendar now for a fun-filled weekend at Cran Hill Camp with your church family.

2013 Giving Update from the Stewardship and Finance Ministry

Our giving through 12/18/13 is \$600,297. Our giving goal for the year is \$686,165. We received \$51,663 in house the week of December 14 (Praise the Lord!). After these checks are posted we will need \$34,205 in order to meet our year-end goal. Let's finish this year strong! The final date to turn in offerings for 2013 is December 31, 2013. Thank you for your faithful support.

Cook Book Auction Results

A silent auction of old Hope Church cook books was held over the last several weeks. There were books from 1896, 1904, 1926, 1935, 1942, and 1977. The books were donated by Marty LaBarge and the proceeds from the auction came to a total of \$140! This money will go to the Hope Church Women's Circles Fund. Winners included John and Stephanie Beyer, Char Laman, Tom Eggleston of St. Francis Church, Lauren Janes, Sharon Hopkins, and Jan Smith.

Flowers for Worship

We are blessed to be able to express the beauty of God's nature in our worship services. If you would like to be a part of the flower ministry, please sign up in the Gathering Area on the flower calendar on the main bulletin board, or call Joyce Teusink. Celebrate a special occasion in your family, or give flowers in honor or memory of a loved one. A short note will be included in the bulletin for your celebration or memorial. We have florists who assist us for a fee, or you can deliver your own arrangement. Call Joyce Teusink with questions or for more details. Thank you for making our worship service even more vibrant!

January Birthdays

01	Robert Hanna Care Group 8
03	Bob Bos Care Group 10
12	Alma Thomas Care Group 12
17	Vern Boersma Care Group 2
19	Dwight Ferris Care Group 9
25	Winifred Hollenbach Care Group 10
28	Dorothy Robinson Care Group 7

If you are 75+ years old and would like to be listed in the birthday column, please contact the church office.

and finally...

Thank you!

The saying goes that you can't say "thank you" too often, and that's what it feels like to me about my sabbatical. I have tried to make a point of thanking you, my Hope Church congregation, before, during, and after my sabbatical this past Fall, for the simple reason that I truly am grateful!

The sabbatical was a marvelous gift of time and space for me to explore, learn, rejuvenate, and enjoy, and throughout that time I was always aware of what a rare opportunity it was. Your generosity as a congregation in providing that time is something that many people who I talk to beyond Hope Church respond to with admiration: 'Wow! – your congregation does that for you? That's amazing.' And I agree. So, as I was saying:

Thank you!

As I think about how to describe what I did on my sabbatical (which could sound like an obligatory "What I Did On My Summer Vacation" elementary school assignment), I realize it's a bit of a challenge to do. There is the obvious list of reading that I did, working through a dozen or so theology texts by theologians Rene Girard and James Alison; the language study I started on as I began to learn Spanish, which was both fun and humbling; the travel I did, going to France with my wife Anne to

explore some research possibilities for her and visiting our daughter Anna who is in graduate school in Paris; and a much enjoyed season of slower pace for family life including breakfast together on Sunday and no meetings in the evenings! And as important as all those specifics are, it is many of the intangibles that I am reflecting on and greatly appreciating.

Having the space to read, think, and explore in an extended "chunk" of time that the daily work of being a pastor does not often afford, was a wonderful spark for my theological, creative, spiritual life. Exploring new answers to old questions and old answers to new questions, finding surprising insights and wrestling with unexpected wonderings as I consider what I believe and who I am called to be, being amazed by the remarkable wisdom God has given to others for me to benefit from while also being affirmed in the gifts and passions I have to explore and express – these are all things that have been cultivated in me during this time.

And what those intangibles mean for me is that I would like to think that it is not only generous of this congregation to grant sabbatical time to its Pastors, but also wise. Wise because you are a congregation that I can bring those sabbatical experiences back to and see what sort of life-giving sparks it connects to in you personally and as a church body as we discern

God's call to faithful and fruitful ways of ministry.

But despite this effort at eloquence about my sabbatical, there are those practical minds among you that still might be asking: "Fine, but what did you *do*?!" And for such and all inquiring minds and hearts, please stay tuned for an Adult Ed series during Lent (March 16-April 13) that Curtis Gruenler (Hope College English Professor and Hope Church Elder) and I will be leading that will explore the theology of Rene Girard and James Alison. And if you want a little teaser for that, here are a few thoughts for you to play around with until then:

- think about sin as less about defect and more about bondage
- think about atonement as less about transaction and more about liberation
- think about faith as less about believing in God and more about undergoing God
- think about life as less about being good and more about being yourself.

More about all that in March (and probably in a few sermons along the way!).

Oh, and did I mention:

Thank you!

Peace,
Pastor Gordon

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Hope Church News

January 2014



THE ROAD LESS TRAVELED

 HOPE CHURCH

A group of young adults and community members exploring the intersection of faith and life with open hearts and minds

February 18
7:00 p.m. *Conversation, Worship & Communion*

May 2-4, 2014 *Service trip to Chicago*

