



HOPE CHURCH

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

Hope Church News

Volume 56, No. 4

April 2013

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The deadline for the May Newsletter is Tuesday, April 16

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

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Stay Connected with Hope Church Online

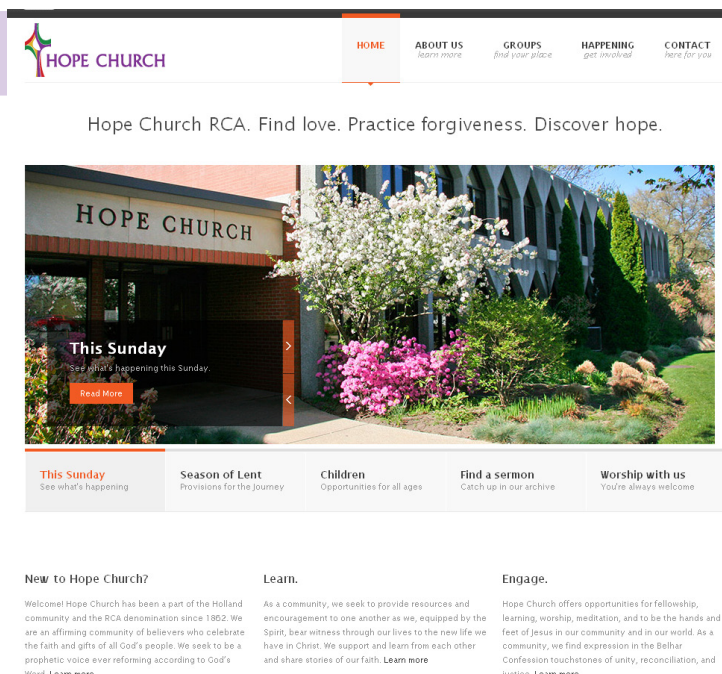
If you are reading this newsletter, chances are you are looking to stay connected to Hope Church. Maybe you want the latest from the Health Ministry, to check on the time for your next Circle meeting, or to see who is celebrating a birthday; there is a lot to keep up with! We are an active congregation, living out the message of Hope every day. Hope Church members and staff recognize that it is important to be connected with each other and informed on recent events, and have worked hard to provide a variety of tools to easily do just that.

There are now multiple ways to stay informed on Hope Church happenings. The following information will provide a summary of three different *online* options: the Hope Church website, Facebook page, and Life of Hope email subscription.

1 Hope Church Website www.hopechurchrca.org

Last April, we asked for your suggestions for updating the Hope Church website. We launched the new site over the winter. Key features include the "This Sunday" page which includes an updated schedule for the upcoming Sunday; the "Happening" page which features links to recent events and the church calendar; and the "Archives" page which contains downloads of sermon manuscripts and audio as well as newsletters.

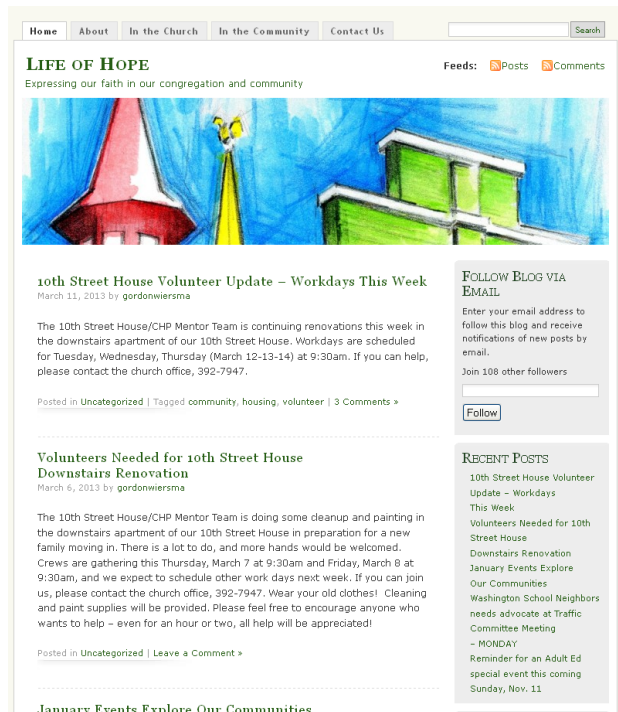
Many new pictures have been added, and we will continue to update photos throughout the year. We won't identify the people in the photographs used on the website except in the staff directory. If you do not want pictures of yourself or your children to be displayed on the website, please contact Angie at (616) 392-7947 or agriffore@hopechurchrca.org.



Stay Connected continued on page 2

Stay Connected with Hope Church Online

Continued from page 1



Life of Hope Email Subscription 2

lifeofhopechurch.wordpress.com

The Life of Hope email subscription will continue to be utilized for spreading the word on volunteer opportunities, whether in the community or at Hope Church. You can leave comments and search for posts related to specific topics such as housing, environment, and emergency response. Please contact the church office with the information you would like posted.

Sign up to receive these email alerts by going to the homepage and typing your email address into the email subscription box on the right side of the page. You will receive notification via email of new posts and always be up to date with current volunteer opportunities.

3 Hope Church Facebook Page

www.facebook.com/hopechurchholland

If you're on Facebook, be sure to "like" the Hope Church page. If you have not yet joined this growing rank of connected Hope Church members and friends, you can still access the Hope Church page and view quick, up-to-date information on what is happening at the church.

The Facebook page provides an interactive means to connect with not only the church, but also other members and friends. Members can create posts, write comments, RSVP to events, and post articles.

As of this printing, the Hope Church Facebook page has 120 users who "like" our page and follow our content. How many more will there be by the end of April?



How will you stay connected?

From worship and events, to educational classes and volunteer opportunities, you will find it all! Try all three of these options and discover which works best for you. Of course, we'll also continue to use the congregational email list to let you know about important events in the life of the church. We hope you will stay connected with Hope Church as we continue to provide provisions for the journey, welcome all, connect with and witness to the community, and engender deep engagement with one another.

Adult Education | Sundays | 9:40 am | Commons I

April 7 *Post Resurrection Appearances of Jesus*

Three presenters will lead us in a morning of scripture and reflection on Post Resurrection Appearances of Jesus through a variety of artistic works. Marlin VanderWilt will guide us in reflection through art and scripture, and Keith Derrick will guide us in reflection through poetry and scripture. The morning will conclude with a Bible Study led by Jim Brownson.

April 14 through May 19 *Christianity: the First Three Thousand Years, Part I*

Last spring we focused on the history of the Reformed Church of America and the history of Hope Church. This spring we will go back further in time to learn about the early history of Christianity.

We will watch and discuss the first half of a DVD series produced by the British Broadcasting Company and directed by Diarmaid MacCulloch, Professor of History of the Church and Fellow at St. Cross College Oxford. In the first six sessions of a series that will be continued in 2013-14, we will learn about the spread of Christianity from Jerusalem to Asia, Africa, and Europe and about the pros and cons of the relationship of the church with imperial powers. MacCulloch combines church history with travelogue—enriched by music, architecture, and visual arts—in presenting his tour of the early history of Christianity. Each of the discussion leaders is a member of the greater Consistory of Hope Church.

April 14 *The First Christianity (Part I)* with Judy Parr

Rooted in Judaism and influenced by Greek and Roman cultures, the first Christians helped to spread their faith far beyond the Mediterranean world.

April 21 *The First Christianity (Part II)* with Don Luidens

What if the center of early Christianity had not been Rome? Syria, Baghdad, and Constantinople were places where early Christian communities thrived. As Christianity spread, its leaders struggled to define the nature of Jesus Christ.

April 28 *Catholicism: The Unpredictable Rise of Rome (Part I)* with Don Luidens

Though the first Christians were persecuted by Rome, the Roman Emperor Constantine converted to Christianity, and that faith became the official religion of the Roman Empire.

Information regarding adult education classes offered in May will be available in the May newsletter and online.

New Member Class

On Sunday, April 7, a New Member Class will begin for people who are exploring possible membership at Hope Church. The class will meet on three Sunday mornings (April 7, 14, and 21) at 9:40 a.m. Additionally, a meal and meeting with the Board of Elders for those wishing to join Hope Church will occur on May 5 after the 11:00 a.m. worship service. Public reception will take place during the 10:00 a.m. worship service on June 2 (please note the summer worship hours). If you would like more information, please contact Pastor Jill Russell, Pastor Gordon Wiersma, or the church office. Please know that attending the New Members Classes only indicates your possible interest in joining our fellowship, not your actual decision to do so.

Ministry Highlight

The Community Ministry at Hope Church

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

The Community Ministry informs, engages, and supports Hope Church members as we live our mission statement, specifically “to be a servant to the human community.”

Our focus is to encourage Christian action and mission: to unleash the gifts that Hope Church can give to others and relationships that can be formed outside of Hope Church. We aim not only to spread the Word, but to make our world a more loving and caring place. In collaboration with the Board of Deacons and the Reconciliation Ministry, the Community Ministry manages benevolent giving on behalf of our congregation, in addition to planning events and ongoing programs.

Our community giving is typically to local ecumenical and cooperative agencies that address needs for food, housing, health care, education, and more, including, for example:

- Good Samaritan Ministries and Community Action House for housing, hunger, and other issues related to economic well-being and independence (The 10th Street House, part of the Community Housing Partnership providing transitional homes, is also under the Community Ministry umbrella.)
- The Holland Community Health Center, Free Health Clinic, and Lakeshore Parish Nurse Program for health care
- Center for Women in Transition for domestic violence prevention
- Special Education Ministries and Camp Sunshine for support of those with disabilities
- The CASA after-school tutoring program (and our own Kids Hope mentoring program) for education

The Community Ministry is Hope Church’s liaison to the Neighborhood Connections program, which often provides updates through the newsletter and is just beginning its second year as a new approach to community engagement.

The Community Ministry also provides an organizational home for the Caring for Creation Task Force at Hope Church. That team informs and engages members about ways to engage with our environment and consume more responsibly to nurture and enhance God’s creation.

Opportunities for participation with the Community Ministry occur throughout the year, with the high point being the Think Hope auction event in May (see article on page 5). Watch the newsletter and website for announcements of volunteer activities. The Community Ministry is also interested to hear from members about their own community-building work, which informs us, helps us set priorities among all of the many choices that must be made, and occasionally enables us to support a special event or project. Contact any of the Community Ministry members: Doug Abell, Peter Boogaart, Kathy Brownson, Judy Bultman, David DeBlock, Teresa Housel, Lois Maassen (chair), David Myers, and Anne Saliers.

Look for the next Ministry Highlight in the May newsletter.



Restorative Circle Facilitator List

If you would like to call
a Restorative Circle,
please contact one of the
following facilitators.

Jill Russell
jrussell@hopechurchrca.org
616-392-7947

Sharon Arendshorst

Judy Boogaart

Anne Duinkerken

Ann McKnight

Rachelle Oppenhuizen

Randy Smit

Curt L. Tofteland

Reconciliation Ministry

The Reconciliation ministry is planning to share a regular column in the Hope Church News. Coming out of the Season of Reconciliation this year, we heard people expressing to us how valuable this season has become in the life of our congregation. The themes of reconciliation, restoration, forgiveness, peacemaking, and justice fill the Scriptures from start to finish. The work of reconciliation is a lifelong commitment. We hope this column will encourage you in your day to day efforts to join with Christ in the ministry of reconciliation.

One practical tool of reconciliation we offer as a ministry within Hope Church is the Restorative Circle process. If you would ever like to call a circle to address a conflict you can contact any of the trained facilitators in our church who are listed in the side bar of this column. They would be happy to work with you to address that issue whether it is a conflict in your family, your workplace, your neighborhood or within the life of our church.

Gearing Up for Think Hope

By now we hope you've marked your calendar to attend the Think Hope event on Saturday, May 18. Like previous years, the event will include a silent auction of items that reflect the creativity and talents of our members. Past-year items have included knitted scarves, hand-sewn grocery bags, nurtured garden plants, babysitting and carpentry services, original artwork, and signed first-edition copies of members' books. The possibilities are as unlimited as our creative energy! It's time to start crafting now; watch for announcements of logistics to deliver auction items to the church.



Proceeds from this year's auction will support our participation in Neighborhood Connections, the program through which we are engaging in our proximate community to build relationships, pool resources, and solve problems. Hope Church has just begun the second year of a three-year commitment to this program, developed with Good Samaritan Ministries.

This year's event will differ from previous years by including a variety show assembled by some of the many talented members of our church community. Assorted hors d'oeuvres will accompany the auction, and dessert will be served during the variety show.

Tickets for the event will go on sale in the Gathering Area on Sunday mornings or through the church office in late April; again, watch for future communications for specific logistics. Plan to join us for an event that is fun fellowship, way-better-than-average church food, and a celebration of our members and their gifts!

Children's Ministry

Teacher Appreciation Reception

This year the Christian Education Ministry will host a Teacher Appreciation reception after the 11:00 a.m. service on April 28th. The reception will recognize our teachers, youth leaders, and children and worship leaders. After pizza lunch, we hope that everyone will extend their sincere thanks to those who have taught and led our adults, youth and children with a creative, faithful, and willing spirit. All leaders, teachers, youth interns, and music leaders will be honored for their service to Hope Church. Hope Church values our educational opportunities and we ask everyone to stay for this short reception to share in the celebration. There will be cake! The children's musical will follow.

Thank you sentiments – One way to show our thanks is to sign or write a short note on the banner that is available in the Gathering Area on the Sundays prior to the reception. There will be a list of each Children in Worship storyteller and doorkeeper, Church School teacher, music leader, and youth leader; and you may write a word of appreciation to them individually or as a whole. Please spend a few minutes to show your support and appreciation. Of course you may thank them in person at the reception or send a personal note to them as well.

Children Visit with Scott and Claire Rumpsas

The children had a wonderful time having a Skype visit with the Rumpsas who are living in Kenya. What a wonderful connection the children made with the Rumpsas over the computer. Scott and Claire and the children were able to see and talk to each other and learn many things about everyday life in Kenya and how the Rumpsas are working to help make life better for our world neighbors. The children's offerings are designated to help people have cleaner, healthier water and some of their money will be sent to Kenya to help the Rumpsas with their work. The children were especially interested in the everyday life of the Kenyan children and the size of the spiders and snakes there. We continue to keep the Rumpsas in our prayers.

Youth Ministry

On Sunday, March 3, High Hopes and Fish Club students met at Grace Episcopal Church for a "move-a-thon". The group spent six hours worshiping, playing, eating, and of course, dancing. The "move-a-thon" raised over \$700 for Helen DeVos Children's Hospital.

High Hopes

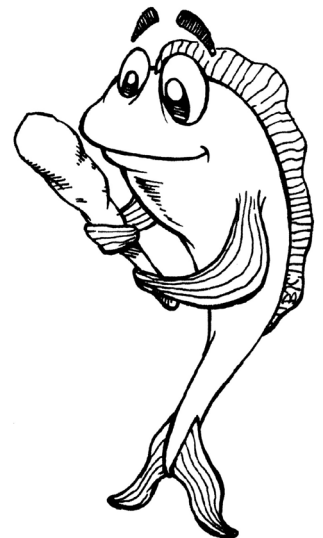
High Hopes had a great night of cooking on March 10 when students prepared spaghetti and meatballs and turkey tetrazzini. This delicious feast was donated to the Community Kitchen, enough to feed 200!

High Hopes will gather for another "Unplugged" event on Sunday, April 14 at 6:30 p.m. This will be a time to catch up with one another, eat food, and share devotions and communion together.

On Sunday, April 21, High Hopes will meet for "Unshowered". This group meets on the third Sunday of the each month during the Sunday School hour. All high-schoolers (showered or not) are welcome to come share some breakfast and participate in a Bible Study.

Fish Club

Mark your calendars, Fish Club will meet on Sunday, April 14 at 5:00 p.m. for music night. Students will share music they appreciate and then talk about how and why they make the choices they do. The night will also be a time to share devotions focusing on the theme, "Provisions for the Journey".



Fish Club will also be participating in the annual CROP Walk on Sunday, April 28. Fish Clubbers will be walking on Sunday with the youth from First Presbyterian Church and Grace Episcopal Church. Hope Church members and friends may be asked to be a sponsor, please consider giving to this wonderful cause! If you would like to be a sponsor, please contact Anne Duinkerken in the office at (616) 392-7947.



New Neighborhood Connectors

Greetings, Friends and Stakeholders of the Washington School Neighborhood:

We are Kallie and Andrew Spidahl, the neighborhood connectors for the Washington School neighborhood for the 2013 year. We have met many of you, either near or far, and we look forward to speaking with you face-to-face in the weeks to come. One of our hopes this year is to become a familiar face in the community and at each congregation here in the Washington School Neighborhood.

Looking forward to the next time,
Kallie and Andrew

Program Year Coming to an End

Our program year is nearing its conclusion. Students at Vanderbilt Charter Academy began their Spring Break on March 29 and will not be returning to school until April 8. Since our last day of mentoring is May 3, that means Hope Church mentors will be meeting with their students no more than four more times before the end of the school year. Please pray with us that these sessions will be rewarding for both our Kids Hope students and their mentors. We pray that each will end the year together on a high note; one that recognizes the gifts that each has brought to their weekly visits. At times, we know that the weekly sessions have not brought the visible progress for which our mentors hope, but we trust that seeds have been planted and that faithfulness to the relationship has been observed. Pray with us that in time, our Kids Hope students will demonstrate that their caring relationships with our mentors and prayer partners have borne fruit.

-Anne Duinkerken and Barbara Joldersma, Co-Directors

Jubilate Choir Prepares Musical, *100% Chance of Rain*

Despite a winter of great snowfall, the Jubilate Choir (grades 2-7) is now in the final weeks of musical preparation for their musical, *100% Chance of Rain*, by Walter Horsley. Explore the story of Noah in song as it includes wonderful characters and dialogue detailing why God flooded the earth; why Noah built an ark; and resulting with God's wonderful promise and sign of the rainbow.

The musical presentation will be on **Sunday, April 28 following Pizza Sunday lunch at 12:55 p.m.** Mark your calendars for this great production!

Singers and parents, please note the rehearsal schedule:

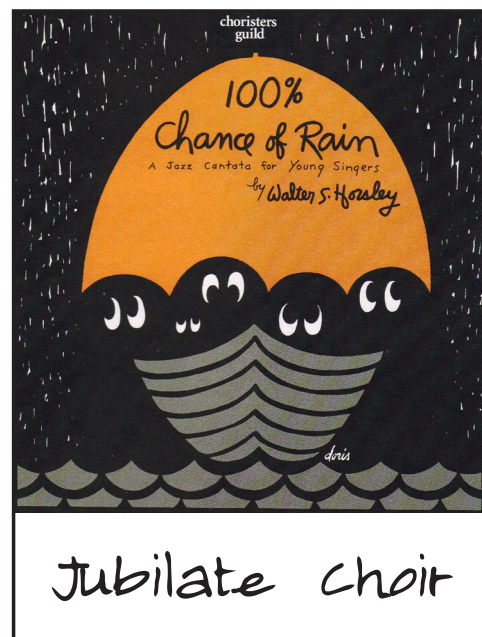
Sunday, April 7, 12:30-2 p.m. (lunch will be provided for the singers)

Saturday, April 13, 1-3:30 p.m. Rehearsal and work day for set and props

Sunday, April 21, 12:30-2 p.m. (lunch will be provided for the singers)

Saturday, April 27, 1-3 p.m. Dress Rehearsal

Sunday, April 28, 12:55 p.m. Performance



Holland/Zeeland Area CROP Hunger Walk 2013

Saturday, April 27

Location: Holland
Christian High School
Registration: 8:00 a.m.
Walk: 8:30 a.m.



Sunday, April 28

Location: Beechwood Reformed Church
Registration: 1:30 p.m., Walk: 2:00 p.m.

The Walk is 2-10 miles.

Incentive Challenge: A gift of \$10 will be given to the Walk for each walker who raises at least \$10! Our goal is 1000 walkers each raising at least \$10 for a gift of \$10,000! Thanks to our generous donors!

Look for the sign up table in the Gathering area March 31st, April 7th, 14th, and 21st. Contact Judy Bultman for further information.

Summer Musicians

We have opportunities for guest musicians to sing/play for our summer worship services. This is a wonderful way to share the gift of music in worship with our congregation. This is also a way to include your musically gifted family members or friends in our worship at Hope Church. For additional details, please contact Organist and Assistant Director of Music, Rhonda Edgington, for guidelines and available dates.

As the Chancel Choir finishes their season in early June, a summer choir will be formed to sing for communion worship services. The summer choir rehearses 45 minutes prior to the particular Sunday service and prepares an easy anthem and selected communion music. This is a great opportunity to sing in a choir just a few Sundays a year. Summer Choir dates are as follows: June 16, July 14, and August 11. Please contact Brian Carder, Director of Music for further details or if you have a favorite choral anthem request!

Bread for the World

Hope Church has joined the mission of Bread for the World as its 545th U.S. Covenant Church member. Bread for the World is a collective Christian voice urging our nation's leaders to end hunger at home and abroad, through legislation and policy. A number of Hope Church members are individual members of Bread for the World, and as a congregation Hope Church is joining with Bread for the World by advocating for hunger relief and economic justice with our government leaders. Look for and participate in our Offering of Letters this month at the Deacons' table on Sunday, April 28.

A Concert for the Young & Young at Heart

Attention, parents, grandparents, and music lovers! Rhonda Edgington will be presenting a special concert geared towards young music lovers, but appealing to all who enjoy music and the organ.

On Sunday, April 14 at 3:30 p.m., the big screen will again appear in the sanctuary of Hope Church, to show in vivid detail just what all happens up there at the organ - a close-up play by play of the organist hard at work, controlling the sounds, playing with her hands on three different keyboards, and even using her feet to push buttons and play another keyboard!

Rhonda will present a concert full of music selected for young listeners: the organ transcription of Prokofiev's "Peter and the Wolf", and other animal-themed selections. Doing the narration will be Miss Eileen (aka Eileen Jenkins), a perennial favorite at Herrick Public Library's story time. Rhonda will keep the program short - in keeping with short attention spans - and has plans to end the afternoon with a rousing rendition of "The Pipes on the Organ go Toot-Toot-Toot" (sung to the tune of "The Wheels on the Bus"), led by Miss Eileen, and sung by young and old alike. Rhonda will also give a brief explanation of how the organ works.

Feel free to invite friends, grandchildren, neighbors, and anyone you think may be interested. For questions, or to help with the concert, please contact Rhonda by calling the Church office at (616) 392-7947. Looking forward to seeing you all there!

Hope Church Softball Team

Hope Church Softball is on the horizon! The season will begin in May - people of all skill levels are welcome to participate. This is a great way to enjoy fellowship at Hope Church and get some exercise at the same time! If you'd like to learn more about it, contact Bob Jerow.

Hope Church Readers

Hope Church Readers will meet in the Commons on Wednesday, April 17 at 1:00 p.m. The book to be discussed is *Joan of Arc* by Mary Gordon. Charlotte Leaske will lead the discussion. Visitors are always welcome.

Coffee Time

The next Coffee Time will be at Maple Woods on 32nd Street on Tuesday, April 9, 9:30-10:30 a.m. Two or three staff members, Congregational Care Ministry representatives, and any other congregation members who would like to attend are all welcome. Mark your calendar, and come for an hour!

Brim Bunch

On Thursday, April 18 at 6:00 p.m. in the Commons, Brim Bunch will have a pot luck dinner. The dinner will feature Travis Williams, a member of the Macatawa Greenway project. His particular interest is the quality of Lake Macatawa water. Recent research by the Hope College Science Department and further investigation by the Macatawa Greenway members have revealed some new sources of pollution in Lake Macatawa. Mr. Williams, who is also Director of the Outdoor Discovery Center, is an enthusiastic speaker whose presentation you will not want to miss.

Members are asked to bring a casserole, salad, or dessert for eight hearty eaters. Those lacking cooking facilities may donate \$8.00. Telephone callers will take reservations and all reservations must be in by Monday, April 14th. If you are not called, please contact Lois Boersma.

Everyone is welcome. If you are newly retired, not-so-newly retired, or an empty nester, you are invited to come and enjoy an excellent meal, fellowship around the tables, and an exciting program.

At Home With the Word

Daily Bible Readings from the Revised Common Lectionary

April 1-7

Monday	Acts 5:27-32
Tuesday	Psalms 118:14-29
Wednesday	Psalms 150
Thursday	Revelation 1:4-8
Friday	John 20:19-23
Saturday	John 20:24-31
Sunday	Second Sunday of Easter

April 8-14

Monday	Acts 9:1-9
Tuesday	Acts 9:10-20
Wednesday	Psalms 30
Thursday	Revelation 5:11-14
Friday	John 21:1-14
Saturday	John 21:15-19
Sunday	Third Sunday of Easter

April 15-21

Monday	Acts 9:36-38
Tuesday	Acts 9:39-43
Wednesday	Psalms 23
Thursday	Revelation 7:9-12
Friday	Revelation 7:13-17
Saturday	John 10:22-30
Sunday	Fourth Sunday of Easter

April 22-28

Monday	Acts 11:1-10
Tuesday	Acts 11:11-18
Wednesday	Psalms 148
Thursday	Revelation 21:1-4
Friday	Revelation 21:5-6
Saturday	John 13:31-35
Sunday	Fifth Sunday of Easter

April 29-May 5

Monday	Acts 16:9-15
Tuesday	Psalms 67
Wednesday	Revelation 21:10, 22-27
Thursday	Revelation 22:1-5
Friday	John 14:23-29
Saturday	John 5:1-9
Sunday	Sixth Sunday of Easter

Hope Church Members Honored

Two Hope Church members were recently recognized for their outstanding work in the community. Their passion and committed leadership are inspiring and we are thrilled to see their years of service and leadership recognized.



Dr. Jane Dickie, a professor emerita of psychology at Hope College, was one of 18 women from West Michigan honored as “Michigan Makers – Women Who Inspire”. Jane was a member of the Hope College faculty from 1972 until retiring in 2012. She established and served as the first director of the college’s women’s studies program. Her involvement in the community includes serving as vice president of the Board of the Center for Women in Transition, as vice president of the consistory of Hope Church and as a member of the Board of Room for All.



Peter Boogaart received the Outstanding Earth Steward Award from Michigan Interfaith Power and Light for his passion for the earth and dedication to combating environmental issues. Peter has been the coordinator for the Caring for Creation task force at Hope Church for ten years. Peter also serves as chairperson for West Michigan Creation Care, a past board member of West Michigan Environmental Action Council, and an advocate for the city of Holland’s Community Energy Plan.

April Birthdays

- 03 Char Laman
Care Group: 7
- 04 Barbara Boer
Care Group: 1
- 09 Gerard VanHeest
Care Group: 4

If you are 75+ years old and would like to be listed in the birthday column, please contact the church office at (616) 392-7947 or office@hopechurchrca.org

Thank You

Dear Friends,

Thank you for your kind condolences and words of hope on the death of my father. Your messages were especially helpful as we grieved so far from home. We were especially grateful to Gordon and Jill whose phone calls bridged the distance, providing comfort and encouragement in a time of sadness.

*May the peace of Christ be with you,
Beverly and Gary Zell*

April is National Volunteer Month

There are many people who give their time and talent to Hope Church in various ways. Individuals of all ages volunteer in the Nursery, Church School, Children in Worship, Adult Education, Fish Club, High Hopes, Kids Hope USA, WTS Community Kitchen, Lakeshore Habitat for Humanity, 10th Street House, church office assistance (such as assembling this newsletter!), Consistory/ministries work, gardening, fellowship events, and a multitude of unseen tasks. These volunteers make a huge impact on the children, youth, and adults of the congregation and the Holland community. Thank you to all who give so generously of themselves to the life and mission of Hope Church.

-Laurie Beyer Braaksma, Church Administrator

Deacons' Fund

As you opened your box of yearly giving envelopes this month you probably noticed a special envelope for April designated for the Deacons' Fund. These envelopes are inserted in the box 6 times a year to encourage member contributions to the Deacons' Fund. The Deacons' Fund is maintained to provide temporary monetary assistance to Hope Church members and/or others from whom requests for emergency assistance are received. Confidentiality and accountability are maintained in this fund and the Deacons receive a periodic report of dispersed funds without listing the names of the persons receiving assistance. Any funds donated to the Deacons' Fund will be credited to the donor's contribution record. The Deacons want to encourage Hope Church members to support this fund with their gifts and also remember that this fund is available if there is an emergency assistance need. If you have any questions about this fund, please contact our pastors or the Senior Deacon, Joyce Teusink.

and finally...

I've become aware recently of just how American I am. I proclaim that I am first and foremost a child of God (and in fact that IS who I am at the core). I like to think that I am shaped by the Spirit of God in me more than I am shaped by the American culture that swirls around me. But I had a moment of self-revelation recently that caught me up short. See if you can relate. Someone challenges you about something you believe or something you have done. What is your first reaction? I can tell you some of mine: "How dare you? What right do you have to question me in this way? Who made you God? This is none of your business!" This might not be what I say out loud. But those are some of the things I want to say! Each one of these quotes comes straight out of the American play book where the assumption is that we are all individuals. The assumption is that unless the thing in question is against the law, we do not owe an explanation to anyone for anything we think or say or believe.

And then I remember again who I really am. I am a child of God. I belong to the body of Christ and that means that what I say and believe and do matters to the other members of the body. Even if the challenge coming my way feels unfair and unjust, I am obligated to engage in the conversation. 1 Peter chapter 3 verses 8-16 speaks some soothing words to calm my stubborn, individualistic American self. Here are a few excerpts that I keep coming back to:

"Finally, all of you, have unity of spirit, sympathy, love for one another, a tender heart, and a humble mind. Do not repay evil for evil or abuse for abuse; but on the contrary, repay with a blessing....Now who will harm you if you are eager to do what is good? But even if you do suffer for doing what is right you are blessed. Do not fear what they fear, and do not be intimidated, but in your hearts sanctify Christ as Lord. Always be ready to make your defense to anyone who demands from you an accounting for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and reverence." 1 Peter 3.8-9a and 13-16a

This last line is in fact a promise I have made in my ordination vows. But it is not just for those of us who are ordained as ministers within the RCA. All of us are included in the claims of this passage. I like the language of this promise: to give an account for the hope that is in me. I don't need to justify myself. I don't need to prove my opponent wrong. I just need to bear witness to the hope that is in me. That is what Jesus did throughout his ministry. This is what the disciples after him were called upon to do. And we stand with them in a long line of believers who have promised to do the same. I don't like being called to account any more than the next person. But I am working to live into the vision of this passage. And I hope that the next time someone challenges me, the quotes that spontaneously come to mind bear a little more resemblance to 1 Peter chapter 3.

In the peace of Christ,
Pastor Jill



Hope Church News

April 2013



Haiti Reflections

“Our recent trip to Haiti was a sobering event. We occasionally laughed and joked and relaxed-but mostly we were awed and silenced and reflective as we spent five days with the Haitians. The reality of their difficult lives was stunning. The glimmer of the hope in the oases we spent time in was wonderful to see.”

Larry and Karen Mulder

Hope Church members, Kari Miller-Fenwood, Ben Sikkink, and Larry and Karen Mulder, recently visited Haiti where they worked with the Hope House ministry led by Mallory Neptune. Hope House supports an orphanage, school, and community development as an expression of Christ's love for the people of Haiti.

More writings, photos, and original artwork reflecting on this trip to Haiti have been published in a brochure that can be viewed on the Hope Church website. Printed copies are available in the Gathering Area.