



HOPE CHURCH NEWS

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

Volume 59, No. 1

January 2016

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Inserts:

- *January Calendar*
- *Lectionary*
- *Restorative Circles Facilitator List*

The deadline for the February newsletter is **Monday, January 18.**

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

Hope Church, RCA
77 West 11th Street
Holland, MI 49423
(616) 392-7947
HopeChurchRCA.org



HUMANITY UNCHAINED



Season of Reconciliation 2016 January 17 - February 7

More information on page 2.

Congregational Meeting: January 24

Our annual congregational meeting will take place on Sunday, January 24, 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 bread to share.

- If your last name begins with P – Z, please bring a salad.

Transportation will be provided for residents of the Warm Friend, Freedom Village, and Appledorn 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 3.

Season of Reconciliation 2016 January 17 - February 7

Adult Education
Sundays, 9:40-10:40 am

There will be no Adult Education on January 3.

January 10 - *Lorilyn Wiering, Founder of the Red Cord Community*

Red Cord Community (RCC) provides soul care for anti-human trafficking advocates. Through holistic nurture, RCC empowers advocates of the marginalized and traumatized to become and remain participants in transformative community. *There will also be an interactive art installation from RCC, "Red Ribbons", installed at Hope Church in January.*

January 17 - *Charisse Mitchell, Executive Director of CWIT*

Hope Church has a long history supporting the Center for Women in Transition, both through financial support and the service of members on its board and as volunteers. Charisse Mitchell, the executive director of CWIT, will talk about violence against women in our community and how we, as individuals and a church community, can be part of the solution.

January 24 - *Curt Tofteland, Shakespeare Behind Bars*

Shakespeare Behind Bars is a program which offers theatrical encounters with personal and social issues to incarcerated and post-incarcerated adults and juveniles, allowing them to develop life skills that will ensure their successful reintegration into society.

January 31 - *Doug Tjapkes, Director of Humanity for Prisoners*

Humanity for Prisoners provides personal attention and advocacy for Michigan prisoners in a holistic effort focusing on the human virtue of all men and women regardless of their status in the criminal justice system.

February 7 - *Sue Fleming and Reconciliation Ministry*

During the first half of this session, Sue Fleming will speak about her jail workshop ministry. The second half will be a summary session led by Reconciliation Ministry members. We will tie together the themes of the season with compelling issues surrounding the topics and questions to push our congregation through the rest of the year.

Book Study

Wednesdays, 6:30-8:00 pm -light supper provided
January 20, 27 & and February 3

On Jan. 20, we will discuss the book "Just Mercy" by Bryan Stevenson. On Jan. 27, we will view a TEDTalk by Bryan Stevenson on the systemic injustice of the prison industry. On Feb. 3, we will have a speaker discuss the local situation of those impacted by the prison system. Copies of the book will be available at the beginning of January (\$10) along with a sign up for the group in the gathering area.

Worship

Early Worship 8:30 am
Liturgical Worship 11 am

Witness to Reconciliation

Each Sunday at the 11 am service throughout the Season of Reconciliation, a member of our congregation is asked to speak to the notion of personal reconciliation in their own lives. Each will be given a few minutes during our time in worship. These stories have proven over the course of the years to be some of the most memorable and powerful aspects of the season of reconciliation.

Art

Artist Joel Tanis will be with Hope Church on January 24, 31, and February 7 to lead us in a creative process and create a collage together. On January 24, Joel will work with Early Worship at 8:30 am, 6th-12th grade Youth at a special all youth ed. hour at 9:40 am, and worship at 11:00 am. On January 31, Joel will work with Adult Education at 9:40 am, Children in Worship classes at 11:15 am, and those present at Pizza Sunday at 12:15 pm. The collage will be presented during 11:00 am worship on February 7.

Restorative Circles Facilitator Training

Thursday, February 4, 9am- 4pm
Friday, February 5, 9am- 4pm

Training for Restorative Circles has been a part of the Season of Reconciliation for the past 4 years. The mission of restorative circles melds easily with the message of reconciliation that is central to the season. Training Dates will be February 4th and 5th, 2016. Further information will be posted in the bulletin. Any questions can be directed to Jill Russell or Ann McKnight.

More information on page 8.

Congregational Meeting: January 24

Continued from page 1.

The meeting will include a presentation and vote on the 2016 budget, as well as other important information about the coming year of ministry at Hope Church. There will also be an update on the Living Hope Renovation Project.

You are invited to think about these questions which will be at the heart of our conversation together on January 24. 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 of 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.

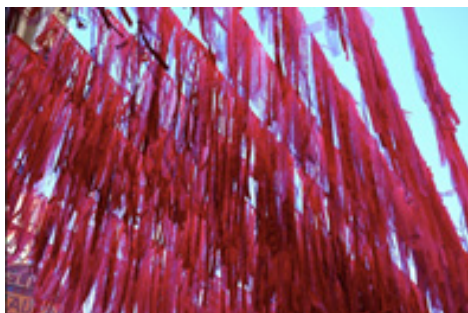
Hope Church Mission Statement, 2013

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

Discerning our Future, 2012

Red Ribbons Display

Community Ministry



Starting January 4 through January 28, Hope Church will have the "Red Ribbons" installation displayed in the ramps to the sanctuary, in the gathering area, and the commons.

Red Cord Community
We Pray Your Prayer

Originally created for ArtPrize 2014, this interactive installation was created with the collaboration of

individuals from West Michigan and beyond. Approximately 5,000 ribbons contain prayers for survivors of sexual abuse, human trafficking and patriarchy, in general, and for their front-line advocates.

Will you pray our prayer? Read through some prayer ribbons. Does one choose you? Take it and tie it around your wrist, or place it where you where you will see it often. Each time you see it, pray that prayer again.

We're waiting to pray yours! What is the prayer that rises within you? Are you a survivor, or do you know someone who is? Take a blank ribbon, write your prayer, or just the first name of the survivor/advocate and add it to the installation.

Red Cord Community provides **contemplative, compassionate, and creative soul-care in community** for anti-human trafficking advocates. We offer soul-care retreats, spiritual direction and consultation for individuals and organizations. We are based in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

For more information about hosting the prayer ribbons, scheduling a retreats or exploring spiritual direction, please contact us:

Lorilyn Wiering, Founder and Executive Director
info@redcordcommunity.org
616/206-0877
Website: redcordcommunity.org
Find us on facebook!

Washington School Neighbors

Andrew Spidahl, Neighborhood Connector



Washington School Neighbors

"We do not think ourselves into new ways of living,
we live ourselves into new ways of thinking."

-Richard Rohr, O.S.F.

The first month of our calendar year is often a time for new things. A new year brings new hopes, new resolutions, and quite possibly new lives. We long to see things change for the better. One of the tenants of community building that we talk about in our Washington School Neighborhood is economic development. How can we help the neighborhood with new things to grow stronger in this way?

Two marvelous assets we share in WSN are quite a number of kids and many generous folks who wish to see them succeed. Through engagement at our garden plot on 10th St. we have developed a compost business for young people. We're starting small – we currently have two teams of kids who are publicizing and carrying out weekly compost collection (fruits and veggie scraps, egg shells, coffee grounds...). They are working for tips, and the compost gets collected and used to enrich the community garden plots. Beyond helping these kids earn some spending money and helping enrich the soil, my hope is that the participants might get a taste for entrepreneurial ventures, a sense of ecological responsibility, and make lasting connections with a cross section of the many different people that make up our neighborhood.

I'm hopeful that this small effort might grow in such a way that it helps us all to "live ourselves into new ways of thinking," as Richard Rohr might say.

WashingtonSchoolNeighbors.com

Facebook.com/WashingtonSchoolNeighbors

Living Hope Renovation Project Achieves Milestone

Lois Maassen, Project Team Leader

It took longer than we'd planned and involved some rework to keep the project scope and budget in line, but we did it! The Living Hope Design Team is pleased that at its December meeting, Consistory approved moving ahead with the next phase of the renovation project. The phase just completed, Design and Development, detailed exactly how the construction and improvements will be done; the next phase, Construction Documents, describes that fully for skilled trades and suppliers for bidding.

Also in November and December, we received Holland Historic Commission approval for three parts of our project: the chapel built within the courtyard, the canopy over the east entrance, and the ramp connecting the Gathering Area to the narthex.

You can see the current state of the project before and after worship on two Sundays, January 17 and 24. Members of the team will be on hand to share drawings and answer your questions. A brief update on the project will be a part of the Congregational Meeting on January 24.

Living Hope Renovation Open House Sundays:

January 17 and 24

9:30 am - 12:30 pm

Kids Hope

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



January is National Mentoring Month! Along with others in a variety of programs across the nation, we wish to recognize the contributions of our mentors this January, but 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 make in the lives of our Vanderbilt students.

Currently we have 13 committed mentors who are supported by 14 faithful prayer partners who are praying just for them and the child they mentor. We also have 11 substitute mentors who help us provide continuity by meeting with Kids Hope children when their personal mentor is unable to be there. Rounding out our program is a group of 8 dedicated unassigned prayer partners who pray for the Hope Church Kids Hope program as a whole.

Our Kids Hope mentors are Barb Blauw, Vern Boersma, Linda Cook, Peggy DeHaan, Clare Heyboer, Norma Killilea, Barb Knoops, Tim Pennings, Terry Pott, Vicki Rumpsa, Barb Schmitt, Dave Schmitt and Chad Stanley.

Substitute mentors are Sharon Arendshorst, Dave Boelkins, Anne Duinkerken, Carole Hintz, Barbara Joldersma, Marilee Nieuwsma, Rachele Oppenhuizen, Jane Schuyler, David Van Doorne, Marlin VanderWilt and Gordon Wiersma.

Prayer Partners who are assigned to a specific mentor and child are Ann Anderson, Josh Bochniak, Randy Braaksma, Mary Buys, Jan Fike, Carole Hintz, Maggie Hollis, Stephanie Krom, Earl Laman, Judy Mastenbrook, Rachele Oppenhuizen, Stan & Nancy Rock and Loretta Smith.

Prayer Partners who pray for this ministry as a whole are JoAnne Brooks, Suzanne Buteyn, Helen DeWeerd, Ruth Hoekstra-Telgenhof, Char Laman, Kari Miller Fenwood, Jill Russell and Dorothy Sherburne.

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. If you have reached a point in your life where you would to actively participate in this ministry, 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.

Youth Ministry

Beth Carroll, Youth Ministry Director

We are gearing up for the second semester! Even though it still feels like October outside, Fish Club and High Hopes have some fun and meaningful activities set up for winter. First up is one of our favorites activities of the year, winter retreats. Each retreat is held at Cran Hill Ranch, in our favorite lodge, the stone house. There will be horseback riding, a hayride, and sledding. We will have to see if the weather brings us some snow or if we will have to settle for mud sledding, which seems to be becoming an unfortunate tradition these past couple of years. Along with all of the fun and laughter will be a time of devotions, sharing and Bible Study where we take time to listen to God and each other. Fish Club's winter retreat is January 15-17 and High Hopes is January 29-31. Please keep us in prayer as we hope for safety, fun, and engagement with God and each other.

Then, after the retreats, we look forward in excited anticipation to the next few months. On the docket are trips to Skyzone, service events with Pancakes R Us and the Crop Walk, and of course our regular get togethers where we play games, eat lots of snacks, and share in devotionals. For those of you with youth in Fish Club or High Hopes, expect to receive your new schedules in the mail soon!



Children's Ministry: It's an EPIPHANY Celebration

Jocelyn Van Heest, Children's Ministry Director

The children will share a time of preparation and celebration on this Epiphany Sunday, January 3. The children will hear stories and learn more about the importance of this special day. During the 11AM worship service, the 4th and 5th graders will participate in the service in the sanctuary and then continue worship with the other children. The preschoolers through 5th graders will meet together during Children in Worship to continue the celebration. The congregation will join them after the service to share some epiphany cake!

There will be no church school on January 3. Church school will resume on January 10.

Updated Photo Directory and Telephone Directory Available

The Hope Church 2015 Photo Directory (pictures were taken in September) is now available! You can pick up your household's copy at the table in the gathering area - directories are labeled with each household's name.

In addition to printed directories, an online directory will soon be available. Taking into consideration the privacy of Hope Church members, all photos and information will be password protected.

The 2016 Telephone Directory will also be available beginning in early January. You can pick up a copy in the gathering area or in the Hope Church office.

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.

Community Ministry

Anne Saliers, Community Ministry member

Community Ministry is looking for volunteers to serve on the Washington School Neighbors Board, participate on the Caring for Creation Task Force, help run the 2016 Think Hope Spring fundraiser, and serve on Community Ministry. If you are interested in volunteering for one of these roles or want more information, contact Lois Maassen, chair of Community Ministry.

On January 10 and 17, during Adult Education, Community Ministry will bring attention to two organizations in our area that work to end domestic and sexual violence. Lorilyn Wiering, founder of Red Cord Community, will speak January 10 on how the organization provides care for anti human trafficking advocates. An exhibit of Red Ribbons will be in the Gathering Area. On January 17, Charisse Mitchell, executive director of the Center for Women in Transition, will speak. Our own Jane Dickie currently serves as board president.

Community Ministry informs, engages and supports Hope Church members in living our mission statement "to be a servant of the human community."

Our focus is to encourage Christian action and mission in our community. We manage 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, healthcare, education and more. For example:

- Good Samaritan Ministries, Community Action House, Lakeshore Habitat for Humanity and Jubilee Ministries for housing, hunger, economic well-being and independence
- 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
- Kids Hope mentoring program and CASA after-school tutoring program for education

Community Ministry is Hope Church's liaison to Washington School Neighbors. It was launched through Good Samaritan's Neighborhood Connections program, which seeks to build community, safety, and engagement. See updates and learn more at WashingtonSchoolNeighbors.com.

Community Ministry is also home to Hope Church's Caring for Creation Task Force, connecting spirituality and the environment. It provides ways to learn about and engage with our environment in community. They also provide resources so that we can consume and recycle more responsibly to nurture and enhance God's creation.

Community Ministry wants to hear about your community-building work, which informs us, helps us set priorities and accomplish our mission for Hope Church. Contact any of the Community Ministry members: Doug Abell, Joe Arevalo, Judy Bultman, David DeBlock, Lois Maassen (chair), David Myers, Anne Saliers and Gordon Wiersma.

The next Ministry Highlight will feature the Outreach and Hospitality Ministry.

Events and Announcements

Epiphany Sunday: Jan. 3

There will be no Early Worship, Church School, or Adult Education.

White Gift Offering Epiphany Sunday, Jan. 3

For this year's offering, please bring soap bars for 500 hygiene kits that Maple Avenue Ministries will be assembling on January 18, a day of service in honor of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. These gifts will be brought forward during the offering. Soap bars can also be dropped off in the gathering area on January 10 and January 17.

Circle 1 will meet **January 6th, 9:30 a.m.** at Freedom Village in the Michigan Room.

Circle 2 will not be meeting during the months of January or February.

Circle 4 will meet on **Wednesday, Jan. 13 at 7:00 pm.** Lisa Topp will host the meeting and Loretta Smith will lead the lesson discussion.

Coffee Time at Resthaven - 40th St.

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. The next Coffee Time will be at Resthaven - 40th St. **on Tuesday, January 12, 2016, at 10:30 a.m.** Mark your calendar, and come for an hour, all are welcome!

Hope Church Readers

Hope Church Readers will be meeting on **Wednesday, January 20, at 1 PM** in the Commons to discuss Marilynne Robinson's newest book, LILA. Jackie Heisler will be leading the review and discussion. Guests and new members are welcome.

Pizza Sunday

The next Pizza Sunday is scheduled for **January 31.** Pizza Sunday hosts

and salad providers are needed for 2016; please sign up on the Fellowship bulletin board in the Gathering Area.

2016 Offering Envelopes

Envelopes for 2016 offerings are now available for pick-up in the Gathering Area. They are displayed alphabetically and we request that you pick up envelopes for your entire family. If you are unable to be in worship and need your envelopes mailed, please call the church office. Special envelopes for the initial offering and for contributions to the Deacons Fund are enclosed, as well as envelopes for special holiday offerings. You are encouraged to use your envelopes as this saves time when the offering is counted and recorded.

Financial Update as of 12/30/15:

Income - YTD - \$578,878

Income - Budget - \$653,787

Income Shortfall - \$74,909

Flowers for Worship

We are blessed to be able to express the beauty of God's creation 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!

Home Energy Retrofit Results - January 19

Living Sustainably Along the Lakeshore presents "Home Energy Retrofit Results - Less Energy, More Comfort" as part of a educational series. The event will take place

Tuesday, January 19 from 7:00 pm - 8:30 pm in the Herrick District Library Auditorium. For more information, please visit: www.hope.edu/sustainability-institute.

Restorative Circle Facilitator Training: February 4 and 5, 9am-4pm



This two day training is for anyone who is eager to support the creation of strong communities, families, work environments and congregations. You will learn how to communicate and collaborate during times of conflict or even just around different points of view. You will develop skills that can be put to practice immediately in informal ways and will also learn how to facilitate a formal restorative circle as well. For more information and to register go to <https://hrcircles.wordpress.com/> or call the church office at 616-392-7947.

Haiti Mission Trip - April 4-11, 2016

Informational packets about this trip are available at the Welcome Station in the Gathering Area, or contact Ben Sikkink. The deadline for signing up for the trip is January 31, 2016. However, if you need a passport or need to get the recommended immunizations, those processes should be started soon. The work projects that we will do will likely focus on the new 'Forever Orphanage' that Hope Church is supporting through the Living Hope Campaign. Specific tasks will be chosen to match the physical capabilities and skill levels of the group so all are welcome. If needed, financial assistance to help pay the costs of the trip is available through the Family Mission Trip Fund of the church.

JANUARY BIRTHDAYS

- 03 Bob Bos
855 Millbridge Avenue
Holland, MI 49423
Care Group 10
- 12 Alma Thomas
1975 South Shore Drive
Holland, MI 49423
Care Group 12
- 17 Vern Boersma
94 E. 29th Street
Holland, MI 49423
Care Group 2
- 25 Winifred Hollenbach
5 E. 8th Street, #631
Holland, MI 49423
Care Group 10
- 28 Dorothy Robinson
c/o Mrs. Peggy DiMauro
251 Castlewood Circle
Hyannis, MA 02601
Care Group 7

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

Directory Update

Pat Bloem
15457 Winchester Circle
Grand Haven, MI 49417

Dan De Graaf
411 Ida Red Parkway D-2
Holland, MI 49423E

Daniel Moreno
4750 Blue Grass Rd., Apt. G9
Mt. Pleasant, MI 48858

Alma Thomas
c/o Martin
4567 Audubon Rd
Holland, MI 49423

Lila Vohlken
616-396-5131

Thank Yous

Dear Hope Church members,

I miss you so much and am so grateful for the Hope Church News. Thank you!

*Lots of love,
Ruth Vrieling*

Connect with the Life of Hope Volunteer Blog

Communications Task Force

[Home](#) [About](#) [In the Church](#) [In the](#)

LIFE OF HOPE

Expressing our faith in our congregation and c



The New Year is a great time to sign up to receive email alerts for the Life of Hope Volunteer Blog. If you have not yet joined this growing rank of connected Hope Church members and friends, you can sign up today by going to

lifeofhopechurch.wordpress.com

On the homepage, type your email address into the email subscription box on the right side of the page. You will receive an email each time

there is a new post so that you can stay connected to opportunities to volunteer both in the community and in the ministry at Hope Church.

And don't forget to use the blog to promote volunteer opportunities. Just contact the church office with the information you would like posted including the email contact for those interested in helping.

Workshop: Ways to Help Children Face and Overcome Fears

Ann Anderson, Health Ministry Member



I attended this workshop at APCE (Association of Presbyterian Church Educators) last winter. It had such good ideas and information that I felt I needed to take it a second time. It was about children and their fears and how to use the fears in Bible Stories (like the fear of ridicule in the Noah story as he built an ark on dry land), along with relevant books, and crafts to help a child process their fear/fears.

Upon my return to Hope Church I shared the above details and said how great it would be if this presenter could share her workshop in Holland. Since APCE is in Chicago in January 2016, perhaps she would be willing to come early and do a presentation? With her consent, Hope Church began partnering with Western Seminary's continuing education program, JOURNEY, to promote this program.

Hope you will plan to attend!

PRESENTER: Candace A. Vander Weide, commissioned Lay Pastor at Grace Presbyterian Church in Orlando, Florida.

WHY: Learn effective strategies to help children face and overcome fears resulting from death, divorce, trauma, bullying and other events.

FOR WHOM: Parents, teachers, counselors, children's ministry volunteers and directors, medical professionals.

WHEN: Monday, January 25, 2016

TIME: 7-9 pm (registration starts at 6:30 PM)

WHERE: Hope Church -- 77 W 11th Street Holland

COST: Free registration

REGISTRATION: <http://journey.westernsem.edu/event/ways-to-help-children-face-and-overcome-fears/>
-- or call 392-8555, x 133

Sponsored by the Health Ministry and Christian Education Ministry of Hope Church in conjunction with Western Theological Seminary Journey Program

health ministry tidbits

Beginning January there is a new opportunity for you! The monthly Blood Pressure Clinic will now expand to a time to consult with the Parish Nurse about any questions or concerns- such as medications, physical concerns, how to communicate with your Doctor, coping recommendations and emotional support. There will also be additional staff available if it's just a blood pressure check that you need-so you won't have to wait!

This will begin on Sunday, January 24th from 12 noon to 1 pm.
Regular nurse hours will continue on Thursdays from 2-4 pm .

and finally

By the time you read this, I will have been back from sabbatical for six weeks or more. As I make my way around church life, people have been eager to hear about my sabbatical time. You may remember that I was focused on the ministry of reconciliation during my sabbatical. There are four ways that I spent my time: developing resources, gaining experience, reading new material, and engaging in practices of renewal.

Many of you know of my interest and involvement in developing and promoting the use of restorative circles to address conflict or facilitate understanding around places of difference. One of the gifts of my sabbatical time was freedom to develop resources for this work. I created a power point presentation for introducing this work and had the chance to share the presentation with a regional gathering of the Great Lakes Association of Orthodontists (this came at the invitation of Greg Oppenhuizen who is the president of this organization). I also created a video orientation as way to introduce this work to a congregation who asked me to design and lead a congregation-wide restorative circle in November. The gift of time to develop these resources and gain more experience in how to best utilize the principles and practices of restorative circles to address conflict within a large community (versus the more typical use of a circle within a family or neighborhood or work place or school) was a blessing! There is no better way to learn than to experiment and try new things. If you're interested in learning more about this work you can check out the Holland Restorative Circles website and find the orientation video I created during sabbatical as well as a great Tedx talk Ann McKnight shared a couple of years ago now. The cultivating of these resources is a great help in trying to make this work more widely available.

My reading took me into several directions trying to learn from diverse sources who have been thinking about the church's ministry of reconciliation from a couple of points of view. My reading touched theology, biblical studies, as well as an anthology of essays from people who are both scholars and practitioners in the fields of peacemaking and social justice (these are actually rather distinct areas of inquiry and practitioners in these two fields aren't always connected to one another). At first I intended to read broadly but ultimately decided to read deeply – several of the resources I found took time to digest and integrate (I'm still working on that in fact!) I was grateful to learn from the adult education committee that my offer to lead a Sunday morning education series to share some of what I learned will be considered for the fall schedule as they had already slotted the winter/spring offerings. I am glad for the extra time to keep thinking about how to best share the insights I have been discovering. The series will combine some of the biblical and theological grounding for the ministry of reconciliation as well as some very practical tools for living into this calling. I have come to think of the ministry of reconciliation in terms of a way of life. There is not a single idea or single tool but rather a reorientation of mind and heart and action that is required to truly become ambassadors for Christ in this ministry of reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:18-20).

My sabbatical also included time for retreat and space for renewal. I retreated to the woods of the Catskills with two clergy friends who have lived in spiritual community with me for the entire twenty years of my pastoral ministry to date. They were a great sounding board for some the reading and reflection I was doing and also a place where I gained some important insight into a place of personal reconciliation I have been working on for some time with a member of my extended family. The time I spent with the Iona community in residence at the Abbey on the island of Iona was also a rich experience of worship, communal life, and new connections. I knew that I would feel a kinship with this community who has had peacemaking and social justice as well as the renewal of worship at the center of their life. I was surprised by how deep that spirit of kinship ran for me. I felt as if I had found a spiritual home there and have continued to use their liturgy of Morning Prayer to guide my morning prayers. In fact developing a discipline of morning and evening prayer was and continues to be one of the practices for renewal that came out of my sabbatical as well as daily exercise and healthful eating. I know that being spiritually grounded and physically strong and healthy is an asset in ministry that cannot be overstated and my sabbatical was a great opportunity to hit reset around those commitments.

So I return to ministry among you inspired and renewed. The fact that our worship and programmatic life will be turning toward the Season of Reconciliation in January only fuels that sense of inspiration and renewal. I look forward to seeing what unfolds for us in this season ahead!

Grace and Peace,

~Pastor Jill



Hope Church News

January 2016



City-wide Service Project: January 18

Community Ministry and Reconciliation Ministry

To honor Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Maple Avenue Ministries will host a day of service on Monday, January 18 that will leverage the strength of local citizens to help tackle local problems and advance King's dream of opportunity for all. The annual event honors Dr. King's legacy and is an opportunity for Americans to renew their personal vows of citizenship through service to others.

Maple Avenue is asking residents and students of the City of Holland

to serve as volunteers on the annual Martin Luther King, Jr. holiday. Volunteers will assemble hygiene kits for the homeless and distribute them to local agencies, joining hundreds of thousands of Americans across the country in volunteer service. In order to volunteer, simply arrive at Maple Avenue Ministries (427 Maple Avenue) starting at 8:00 am.

As a community partner of Maple Avenue Ministries, Hope Church has been asked to collect items for

these hygiene kits. We have been specifically asked to collect soap bars. They are seeking to make 500 hygiene kits to distribute. **Hope Church members are invited to bring soap bars for our White Gift Offering on Epiphany Sunday, January 3. Soap bars can also be dropped off in the gathering area on January 10 and January 17.**

Please email the Maple Avenue Ministries church office at 427mam@gmail.com with any questions.