



# SALT & LIGHT

a hope church publication

AUTUMN 2019



NONPROFIT ORG.  
U.S. POSTAGE  
PAID  
HOLLAND, MI 49423  
PERMIT NO. 607

Hope Church  
77 West 11th Street  
Holland MI 49423





## CONTENTS

Fall Programs Launch September 8	2
Nurturing The Faith Of Children	3
Learning Through Adult Education	4
Wednesday evening Series	5
Peace Camp Weaves in and Through Us	6
Exploring New Formats at Early Worship	6
Browse the Hope Church Library	7
Kids Hope USA	8
A Primer on Pain	10
Connecting with One Another	12
Taking your garden into Fall	14
The Power of Gratitude	15
Poetry Corner: Come to the Waters	16

## OUR FAITH

Hope Church is called by God and equipped by the Holy Spirit to be a witness to the unity, reconciliation and justice given in the saving grace of Jesus Christ. These touchstones drawn from the Belhar Confession give voice to the historic Christian faith in our time and place.

## CONTACT US

Hope Church, RCA  
77 West 11<sup>th</sup> Street  
616 392 7947  
HopeChurchRCA.org

*Many thanks to the brilliant and talented Michael Kolk and Lois Maassen for the beautiful redesigned newsletter!*



## Fall Programs Launch on September 8

Pick up a brochure in the Gathering Area or go to [HopeChurchRCA.org](http://HopeChurchRCA.org) to learn more about ways to engage this fall.

### Worship

Early Worship begins at 8:30 a.m. in the Chapel. This service offers informal and interactive worship, and encourages people of all ages to participate through music, story, art, drama, and the celebration of weekly Holy Communion.

Worship in the sanctuary begins at 11:00 a.m. with Pastor Jill Russell preaching and Pastor Gordon Wiersma as liturgist. Communion will be celebrated. Children will be led from the sanctuary during the service to participate in Children in Worship.

### Church Picnic

Join us on 11th Street after the 11:00 a.m. worship service for the annual kick-off picnic. Lunch will be provided with a suggested donation of \$5 per person or \$10 per household.

There will be activities for children and time to share in fellowship. All are invited to attend, and we welcome visitors to join us as our guests.



## Nurturing the Faith of Children

The Children's Ministry strives to offer many opportunities to nurture your child's faith. Both Children in Worship and Church School begin again on September 8. Make Christian Education a priority in your family's life. Take advantage of the many adult choices while your child learns how to connect with the other children, their teachers, the community, and to God.

In **Church School** throughout the year, stories are presented and enriched with music, art, personal reflection, and interaction with the teachers and the other children. Children ages three through fifth grade gather together in Room 204 at 9:40 to begin their fellowship as they grow in faith, build community, and celebrate the faith of God. Through a variety of activities and learning styles, the children will learn to connect the story to their own lives and to respond to the story. The teachers love spending time and developing a relationship with your children. Together with your children, they are able to make connections between the Bible stories they hear and the way we are asked to live our lives.

In **Children in Worship**, children age three through fifth graders worship in their centers using the same order of worship being followed in the sanctuary. They Approach God through greetings and songs of praise;

hear God's Word through storytelling and Bible reading; Respond to God through wondering, reflection, or working with the stories or art materials; give Thanks to God through prayer, sharing of gifts, and the sharing of a feast; and Go in God's Name. The story for each worship center is printed in each week's bulletin so each member of Hope Church is aware of what the children are hearing and responding to, as well as to let the children know that they are an important part of our congregation. Visitors are always welcome. Remember the children worshipping in their centers in your prayers as you worship.

Hope Church offers both Church School and Children in Worship each Sunday as complementary programs. Children in Worship includes the young in our liturgical tradition, while Church School presents additional stories, often presented to introduce a theme, to give perspective to a sequence of events, and to relate them to how we live in our world.

### You are invited to join in nurturing our children

Each program year, over 390 hours of volunteer service are needed for our Sunday morning children's ministry. Currently there are seven adults using their gifts to nurture the children of Hope Church during this time. The

children and these leaders need your support and participation in leadership. It is an amazing experience to watch children grow in faith, to be challenged by inquiring and curious minds, and to watch your own faith grow as a result. You can be involved as a Children in Worship leader (specific training is offered) or doorkeeper.

If you have been a storyteller in the past come see the Children in Worship centers now! *There can be great flexibility in scheduling and any amount of commitment will be a great service to our children's ministry.* Everyone has something to share with the children of Hope Church. If you can hold a child on your lap, sing a song, portray a character, or help with crafts, we can use your help. If you have an interest in being part of a teaching team, participating in worshipping with the children, or helping with the nursery, contact Jocelyn Van Heest, at the church or by email at [jvanheest@hopechurchrca.org](mailto:jvanheest@hopechurchrca.org). Thank you for your prayerful consideration.

Continue to pray for our children and especially for your Prayer Pal from the Children's Sabbath as they start a new year of school. If you would like more information about what your Prayer Pal is doing at church or an introduction to them, please see Jocelyn Van Heest for assistance.





## Learning through Adult Education

The Adult Education group plans and coordinates educational opportunities for adults using as much as possible the talents and resources of the congregation. Such opportunities are intended for spiritual formation through biblical study and critical examination of cultural, social and moral issues from a Christian perspective. Here's what's planned for this fall, all in Commons 1 from 9:40 to 10:40 a.m.

**September 8, 15, 22**

***Faith Meets Life: Doctor of Ministry Reflections and Connections* by Rev. Dr. Gordon Wiersma**

Over the past three and a half years, Pastor Gordon completed a Doctor of Ministry degree at McCormick Theological Seminary in Chicago. The DMin program involved courses in current theological, congregational and

cultural studies, and a final thesis project designed to connect his theological research with the ongoing ministry of Hope Church. Gordon's theological focus has been on exploring salvation/atonement as a restorative and creative act of God (in contrast to more prevalent views of salvation/atonement which emphasize punishment and violence), a theology grounded in the work of theologians Rene Girard and James Alison. This theology was the basis for Gordon developing resources for Hope Church worship and education which reflect this restorative and creative understanding of salvation/atonement. Over the three sessions of this "Faith Meets Life" offering, Pastor Gordon will reflect on the personal and pastoral impact of the DMin program, explore resources he has developed for Hope Church, and offer ideas on how to carry this work forward in the life of Hope Church.

**September 29 and October 6**

***Climate Change as Seen through the Lens of the Film "The Reluctant Radical"***

This documentary film follows activist Ken Ward as he confronts his fears and puts himself in the direct path of the fossil fuel industry in an effort to combat climate change. It reveals both the personal costs and the fulfillment that come from following one's moral calling—even if that means breaking the law. Peter Boogaart will introduce and lead discussion of a thirty-minute segment of the film each week. Peter Boogaart is an original member of Hope Church's Creation Care Ministry, a leader in the Macatawa Creation Care group, and an active participant with the Holland Citizens' Climate Lobby chapter.



## October 13

### Accessibility Ministry

Terry DeYoung, RCA Coordinator for Disability Concerns, will talk about why Hope Church renamed this ministry from Disabilities Awareness to Accessibility Ministry. We will discuss creative new ways for all of us to shift our thinking and move forward. The Disability Housing Task Force will also update us on recent developments and introduce Hope Church's Accessibility brochure, developed by the Accessibility Ministry and the Congregational Care and Health Ministry.

## October 20 and 27

### Finding Meaning Through Suffering

Daryl and Sara Van Tongeren together have written *The Courage to Suffer*, a book to be published by Templeton Press in March 2020. The book's purpose is to help people who are enduring persistent suffering. Daryl, an Associate Professor of Psychology at Hope College, is a social psychologist who studies meaning in life, religion, and virtues. Sara is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker and Psychotherapist with a private practice in Holland. Through discussion and interaction, they plan to share with us some useful insights about suffering, meaning, and God.

- **October 20**

#### *What Suffering Is and How It Affects Our Faith*

They will explain what suffering is, why it poses a problem, and how it can cause spiritual struggles, leading some people closer to God, while others may feel more distant from God.

- **October 27**

#### *Turning Questions into Meaning*

They will tell us how to incorporate some of life's deeper existential questions to help us to develop meaning and to experience flourishing, regardless of what life holds.

## November 3

### Reconfiguring Our Pastoral Leadership

Over the past 2 years Hope Church has been blessed to have three full time pastors in leadership for our congregation. This session will explore how the roles of our pastors have evolved over that time, and we will discuss how pastoral leadership can best be configured moving forward to serve our congregation and community

## November 10

### The Last Shall Be First: A Conversation with Matt Scogin

Hope College President Matt Scogin will share his perspective on Christian leadership and how God led him back to Hope College. There will be ample time for his responses to our questions.

## November 17 and 24

### Science, Politics and Religion

With the leadership of Paul Heusinkveld, a Hope Church member with a career in the U.S. Department of State, we will explore an occasion he will present to us about when science, politics, and religion clashed.

- **November 17**

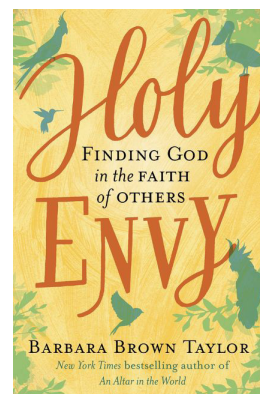
#### *An Incident of Significant Conflict*

Paul will describe an experience drawn from his service in the U.S. Foreign Service while living in the Middle East—an incident he inadvertently stumbled upon that has major consequences and implications for all of us.

- **November 24**

#### *Exploring the Incident's Moral Dilemmas*

Paul will summarize the incident and set the stage for exploring the related moral dilemmas and considerations for us individually and as a church. We will discuss the tough moral choices and offer possible avenues of response.



## Wednesday Evening Series: Holy Envy

How do we live faithfully as Christians in what is often now termed a “post-Christian” culture? That’s a challenge many theologians are addressing, and many Hope Church folks have expressed an interest in engaging.

An important aspect of this challenge is how Christians can interact with other religions. A number of recent initiatives in our community, of which Hope Church has been a part, have taken an appreciative approach to such interaction, seeking places of resonance and understanding. Theologian Barbara Brown Taylor delves into this appreciative approach in her new book, *Holy Envy*. The subtitle of the book, *Finding God in the Faith of Others*, points to her conviction that faithful people of diverse religions can bless one another through their faith content and practice. Coming from the viewpoint of the Christian faith, Taylor will help us to explore together how God can enrich us through the light found in other faiths.

Join in this event on Wednesday evenings, October 9, 16, 23, and 30, from 5:45 to 7:30 p.m. We'll share a dinner before our discussion.





## Exploring New Formats at Early Worship

*By Judith Boogaart, Early Worship Ministry member*

In the fall of 2018, Early Worship encountered the scriptures through the lens of the saints—from past centuries and from Hope Church's past—for a meaningful and challenging look at how Christians follow Christ. In February of 2019, the services featured a rich exploration of writers, music, art, and scripture during Black History month.

As the fall season begins, the Ministry has decided to continue to

explore different avenues of worship. From a matins-style morning prayers format, to an in-depth look at one of the books of the Bible for a season, to an old-fashioned hymn sing now and then, worshipers are invited to engage with God and the scriptures and to fellowship with each other in various ways.

If you are on the Hope Church email list, you already receive the "Praying towards Sunday" emails. Going

forward, they will also include information about what's happening at Early Worship that week (sign up for the emails through the church office).

Two things will not change: Early Worship will still meet in the beautiful Hope Church chapel at 8:30 on Sunday mornings, and celebration of the Lord's Supper will happen every week as it has done since Early Worship began. You are invited to participate!

## Peace Camp Weaves in and through Us

Peace Camp 2019 was an energy-packed week of experiencing how peace weaves in and through us as we connect into the community and the world. Originated through First Presbyterian Church, the partnerships have grown each year with Hope Church, Grace Episcopal Church, and ACTS (a wonderful ministry to Holland's core city children and families), welcoming Lakeshore Women for Peace, Boys & Girls Club and HOSA (Holland Openly Secular Alliance) as campers, volunteers, and financial supporters.

Each day the children learned and practiced tools they can use as they interact with the world to bring peace to themselves and others. Activities included learning about famous peacemakers, mindfulness exercises, singing, playing games, communing with nature, art projects (peace rocks, clay sculpting, making dreamcatchers, string art), sharing our concerns, and making new friends. A highlight of the week was weaving strips of fabric on which the campers wrote or drew something unique about themselves. As each piece of cloth was woven through the loose warp, it

brought strength to the art piece symbolizing what we can do together as we grow in a community of peace.







## Browse the Hope Church Library

*By Christian Education Ministry*

### Is what's displayed on the Gathering Area shelves everything in the library collection?

In the interest of space and promoting higher-interest materials, not everything in the library collection will be permanently displayed. The Christian Education Ministry will coordinate the collection, and rotate this display periodically, adding books read in church book groups or studies, for example, or to coincide with special events or seasonal topics.

### How does the lending work?

The books in our church library are available to take home and read, browse in the Gathering Area, or for sharing with others. There is not a check out system but if you can, please return the books when you have finished enjoying them.

### What if I want to donate books to the library?

The Christian Education Ministry welcomes individual donations of current books (at this point, this is preferred to larger collections). Do note that if we determine not to add any donated books to our collection, we may pass them on to other

worthwhile causes. Even if you don't have books to donate, we welcome recommended titles or other suggestions you might have for the library!

### Who should I contact about donations or recommendations, or anything else related to the library?

If you want to donate books, or have any questions or suggestions, please contact any Christian Education Ministry member or church staff members associated with Christian Ed (Gordon Van Heest, Beth Carroll, and Jocelyn Van Heest).

Happy Reading!



# Kids Hope USA: 260, 21-12, 16 & 8, 3, 1

By Vicki Rumpsa, Kids Hope USA Director



Just numbers? No way! I didn't spend time looking through old Kids Hope records for nothing. What I did was look at all the Mentor lists of the last 16 years and recorded the number of Mentors who have volunteered for our Hope Church's Kids Hope Program each year and then added them up: **260**. Yes 260! Some of those Mentors served more than one year, but even taking that into consideration, close to 150 of you have mentored a child at Vanderbilt Academy. In addition to Mentors, the lists had the names of Prayer Partners for each Mentor as well as Substitute Mentors. Add these to the number of those who have served as Mentors and you get a pretty big number. What it shows is that Hope Church has supported Kids Hope with an amazing number of volunteers and that is a blessing! And we continue to do so...

This past year we had **12** wonderful Mentors go to Vanderbilt Academy 1 day a week from October to May to mentor a student there. This group included 1 returning new Mentor, a new Mentor from another church, and 1 new Prayer Partner. One of our current Mentors will be entering his sixth year of mentoring; other current Mentors have served for multiple years, and most of them are planning to mentor this year, too. This group had a powerful influence on the young lives of the students they mentored. It's a wonderful thing what 1 hour a week will do. For them I am so thankful!

We did not, though, have enough Mentors last year to cover the kids

that Vanderbilt recommended to us last year. Third Church was able to provide **21** Mentors, which was wonderful: Together we could serve more children. Midyear there were new requests where a Mentor could not be found, and it is those students who now hope for a Mentor this year. As a competitive person, I find the numbers







21-12 don't sit well with me. While I am thankful for Third Church coming up with more Mentors, I think Hope Church can do better. Third Church has the luxury of Kids Hope being a fairly new program for them, and thus members of their church are signing up for the first time. We have hundreds of you who have served in 1 capacity or another for the Kids Hope Program, and because of that I am optimistic that some of you will consider returning to volunteer this year and increase our participation numbers.

**16 & 8:** What are those numbers about? I took the number 260 and divided it by the number of years our church has been a part of Kids Hope. I found that we average providing **16** Mentors on any given year. Last year we were 4 below our average, and this year, with 1 Mentor stepping down and 3 moving



up to the Kids Hope Next Program, we will have **8** mentors to begin the school year. What that means is that I need 8 new or returning Mentors to join our group of 8 so that we can get back to our average of **16** Mentors.

One absolutely fantastic thing is that Karen Pearson of Hope Church is the new Director of Kids Hope USA and has already contacted me about the possibility of mentoring this year. Karen was a Mentor before so she has already been trained and will only need a refresher on mentoring and information on anything new. Then she's ready to be assigned a student and work out her time for mentoring with her student's teacher. This last part is important for you to know, as you and the teacher work out the time for mentoring so that *it fits your schedule* as well as the schedule of the child.

The same goes for you if you have already been a mentor in the past. It's a simple process and you'll be ready to go! if you are new to mentoring, there are training videos you watch online at your convenience, and then you and I work out a time to go over anything else you need to know. It is as easy as that and again we make it so *it fits your schedule*.

If you cannot spare 1 hour a week there are **3** other opportunities you can sign up for that support our Kids Hope Program:

1. Special Events Helper for 1 or 2 special events throughout the school year. One event will be in the Fall at our church.
2. Baker/Maker to provide cookies or food for special events
3. Substitute Mentor who will be trained but does not want the commitment of mentoring every week.

So there you have it. My article in numbers. The next step is yours. I ask that you pray about it. If you feel called to be a part of Kids Hope this year, I hope you will sign up. There will be 4 sign-up sheets on the Kids Hope Bulletin Board in the Gathering



Area, and I will be around to answer any questions you may have.

**1 Child, 1 Hour, 1 Church, 1 School.** This is the Kids Hope promise. Will you be the 1 to answer the call?





# A Primer on Pain

---

*By Don Topp, Hope Church member*

I want to begin by telling you the story of “Job,” a fictional patient who combines various patients seen over the past year or more; his name is chosen not by accident. Job is a 35-year-old, married, male who has been trying to manage widespread chronic pain for the past year or more. He is on temporary disability from his blue-collar manufacturing job. He is taking fairly high doses of an opioid medication (7.5-325 mg) four times per day (but he acknowledges he takes up to 6 per day); this means he is taking somewhere between 30 and 45 mg per day

why he is always home and notice that he does not attend their school or community involvement activities. He reports feeling guilty, ashamed, and depressed because of this. Other extended family members and some friends nod politely; he reads a condescending look on their faces as a sign of disapproval and disappointment.

A publication of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, published in September 2018, estimated that 20.4 percent (50.0 million) of the US population had chronic pain, and that 8.0 percent (19.6 million) had high impact chronic pain—meaning that pain limited at least one major life activity. Chronic pain has been linked with restricted mobility, opioid dependency, anxiety, depression, and reduced quality of life. Further, it is estimated there are costs of \$560 billion annually in domains of medical expenses, lost productivity, and disability claims. Chronic pain is the number one reason for disability claims. Pain affects more Americans than diabetes, heart disease, and cancer combined. These are just some of the statistics that are easily available through a cursory on-line search.

---

## 20.4%

of the U.S. population  
had chronic pain in 2018  
(50,000,000 people)

---

of narcotic medication per day. In addition, he is taking 300 mg, three times per day, of another medication that is supposed to be effective for his type of pain. Despite taking these medications, his pain is worsening. There does not appear to be any particular rhyme or reason for his pain, and his primary care physician, who has referred him, has diagnosed him with fibromyalgia. Job ranks his pain at 8 on a 10-point scale, and says he’s consistent most days at this level of intensity. Some days are worse, and only occasionally do symptoms lessen to maybe a 6 on that scale. He reports that his marriage is tense, as his spouse does not understand or sympathize with his pain, and because he is non-functional in the household and with their three children. His children seem to wonder

Job is a typical referral to the Mary Free Bed Pain Rehabilitation program, where I have worked as a psychologist for about the past year. This program has been in existence for more than 20 years and is one of two in the state of Michigan that follows this model of treatment: a multidisciplinary pain rehabilitation program that uses the combined work of a medical doctor, psychologist, physical therapist, occupational therapist, and nurse. The goal of the team is to reduce or eliminate reliance on medications that do not work, to increase pain coping skills, and to reduce as possible pain symptoms. It is a time-limited

---

## PAIN AFFECTS MORE AMERICANS THAN DIABETES, HEART DISEASE, AND CANCER COMBINED.

---

program that is intense and focused on these goals, occurring in a ten- to twelve-week timeframe with multiple appointments per week. There is a waiting list for program admission due to the overwhelming need.

My experiences with chronic, debilitating pain are both professional and personal (the latter I won’t get into here), but I have seen and been part of the struggles noted in the statistical paragraph above. Also, as clergy with pastoral experience, I have known many who have struggled with questions of faith and doubt that are raised by chronic pain conditions. There have been many attempts, across many years, by pastors, mystics, and theologians to find ways to think, consider, and hopefully understand the questions that are raised by these problems. Often framed by the word “theodicy,” the attempt is to find meaning to justify the existence of a good and loving God in the context of inexplicable pain, suffering, loss, or tragedy. I have a mini-library of such works, and here confess that there are no easy answers, and possibly none that are satisfying. I will turn to the namesake of the made-up patient described in the first paragraph to conduct a brief search for such meaning. Before launching into this treacherous ground, I will also confess something that is well-known by friends and colleagues in ministry and during my seminary years: I am a limited biblical scholar—but I will plunge onward anyway, knowing that others with greater skill and wisdom might well critique what is offered in the next paragraph. These thoughts

are not original, but are gleaned from the text of Rabbi Kushner.

Job is a good man who is “blue-collar” in his day as farmer-rancher, and he is a person of faith. Over the course of events he loses everything, including children, farm animals, buildings, his health, and wellbeing, and his faith is heavily threatened. His “pain” is emotional, familial, religious, and physical—as he is set upon by seeping sores and manifestations of illness. He maintains that he has done nothing to deserve this state of things, and shakes his fist at the heavens while enduring the religious soliloquys of his “friends,” who insist, in differently nuanced arguments, that he must somehow be responsible for his fate. His spouse adds to this litany and suggests that he would be better off to “curse God and die.” In the end he demands that his accuser, God, appear and justify the events that have befallen him. To his likely amazement, God appears. First, God takes on the “friends,” announcing to them that “you have not spoken the truth about me, as has my servant Job.”

---

# 19,600,000

of the U.S. population  
live with high impact  
chronic pain

---

This suggests the interpretation that when you go back and re-read everything that the friends have said about Job’s situation and God, an illuminated sign “NOT TRUE” ought to be flashing above their words. Further, when you read everything that Job has said the flashing sign reads “TRUTH.” Yet, the story is not easily ended there. God turns attention to Job and in a fit of poetry suggests that when Job can understand the amazing wonders depicted in the poem that maybe he can take a shot at being God. That is the end, unless of course you want to wrestle with the prose prologue and epilogue that Rabbi Kushner suggests were

added to make the poem more palatable to the religious establishment.

As you can see from the above sequence, I have been tacking (something I learned from another friend and colleague) between matters of psychology and religion—kind of the story of my life. In my worklife the former takes precedence. Those who see me professionally as a pain psychologist come to me to find some means to increase management of pain symptoms, while reducing pain symptoms and the effects of them in the balance of their lives. The good news is that there are many things that can be done. I often say to patients that if the current me (2019) could go back to the undergraduate college me (circa mid-1970s), the former me would accuse the current me of being deluded. This accusation would be due to what we “knew” in the past in comparison to the wealth of research that has revamped what we know today. Much of this knowledge has come about as there has been progress in various scanning technologies—C-Scan, MRI, PET-scan—and

the functional versions of some of these that has mapped the brain in action. This knowledge now allows us to intervene in ways that can effectively “reprogram” the brain and its “pain control systems.” The brain is the processing center of everything—pleasure, pain, movement, thought, emotion, insight. I refer the interested reader to

some on-line resources (see sidebar) that can be accessed through YouTube.

As you might deduce from the prior paragraphs, the matters of chronic pain are widespread and complicated in life and the effects on people and those who love them. The effects of this problem are felt by individuals, families, businesses, and the various professionals who are trying to address the issues. However, what I have learned is that this is not a hopeless quest. Rather, there are treatments and approaches that can make real differences in the lives of the afflicted and those associated with them.

## Additional Resources to Consider



Lorimer Moseley, PhD (physiotherapist, professor, University of South Australia: “Why Things Hurt” or “The Pain Revolution: 7 Discoveries to Change Your Life”



Daniel Clauw, MD (professor, University of Michigan) “Chronic Pain: Is It All in Their Head?”



# Connecting with One Another

## Greetings from the Molla Assen Family



*Rode Molla and Endrias Assen are from the Ethiopian Lutheran Church, and when Rode attended Western Seminary they worshipped at Hope Church. Rode began PhD work in Colorado a couple of years ago, and Hope Church continues to provide financial aid and support. They are seeking to return to Ethiopia to provide holistic support to women and children.*

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

Greetings from Rode and Endrias! The 2018-19 academic year is over, and the summer is here already. As I mentioned to you in our previous letter, this year has been so busy and challenging for me and Endrias. I did my comprehensive exams: two in the Fall and two in the Winter. I completed and passed all my comprehensive exam reviews. In the Spring Quarter, I was taking a Dissertation Proposal Class. Working on my proposal was a blessing and exciting process. I bring my context and all the theologies, concepts, methods, and theories that were touching and life-giving for me to design my proposals. Last Friday was my last class for the Dissertation Proposal Seminar and also my last class as a student in my academic journey. I will never go back to the classroom as a student again. That is a vast accomplishment for Endrias and I since we were together in this journey for the last three years.

In the summer, I will be working on my dissertation proposal with my dissertation committee. My plan is that I will be able to defend my proposal in September so that I can start working on the dissertation early in the Fall quarter of 2019. Endrias has been so supportive for me as usual. We hope that in the summer, we will have time to go to the mountains to pray, meditate, and take a deep breath to prepare for the next journey.

I am so excited about my proposal and the support and the presence I received from God, Endrias, my professors, and Hope church's pastors and community. So thankful for Pastor Jill and Pastor Gordon for their care and support. We are grateful for Hope Church for your commitment and love to support us to feel loved and included in the body of Christ. Please, we ask you to continue holding us in your prayers and presence in our journey. We also give your work and ministry to God. We pray for God's providence and protection for each one of you at Hope Church!

God Bless you!  
Rode Molla and Endrias Assen

## Curtis Gruenler Wins Book Award



Dr. Curtis A. Gruenler of Hope Church and the Hope College English faculty has won the Anne Middleton Book Prize from the

International Piers Plowman Society for his volume *Piers Plowman and the Poetics of Enigma: Riddles, Rhetoric and Theology*. The award, for books

published during 2017-18, was announced during the society's 2019 meeting, held in Miami, Florida, in April. Gruenler's book was published in 2017 by University of Notre Dame Press. "Piers Plowman," named for one of its characters, is a 14th-century, 7,000-line allegorical poem attributed to William Langford that explores biblical themes. Gruenler considers how the poem, like similar works of the Middle Ages, invites readers on a journey of discovery through a sort of playful obscurity regarding ideas—hence the term "enigmatic."

## An Invitation from Qiaoqiao Chen

Dear Sisters and Brothers  
at Hope Church

Greetings. Thank you for your prayers and love in Christ throughout the years. Your support and encouragement have meant a lot to me.

I will study at Western Theological Seminary in the ThM program for another year and do some studies on the Gospels, especially Matthew. During my previous studies, the more I explored Matthew's texts and the Matthean community, the more parallels I found in my own Christian context marginalized by dominant cultures and threatened by various forces, so I've been fascinated by how the Matthean community respond in their faith to God.

I have been interning at a Chinese church in Grand Rapids as well as a bible study fellowship in Holland since last summer. We did the Book of Exodus and have now moved to Acts. We try to do bilingual bible study in Holland—Mandarin and English, so you are most welcome to visit us if you are interested in Chinese culture or learning Mandarin.



I'm grateful that my mentors at Hope, Pastors Jill, Gordon, and Beth, guided me, encouraged me, and gave me practical insights at the beginning of my pastoral ministry. And your hospitality and love that I experienced have transformed me. I pray that your faith and love will be passed on to the larger community in the body of Christ.

May the Lord who loves me  
love you even more.

Blessings  
Qiaoqiao Chen

## Gratitude

I'd like to express appreciation for the pastoral care given to Marvin Hoff. After his death our family has received many cards and loving thoughts as we grieve this loss. Thank you.

—Joan Hoff

I am so thankful for the prayers of Hope Church! I am a miracle, testifying to God's grace. This November it will be four years since I was diagnosed with glioblastoma (usually a terminal brain cancer, usually terminal within a few years). I tell people that I am a miracle because of prayers — your prayers! God is good—and I think I am alive to testify to God's goodness. Thank you and please keep praying—this has been and promises to continue to be a hard journey. Current struggles: trying to investigate retirement communities with continuum of health options. If anyone has wisdom on this subject, would love to hear from you! The "business" of managing a "chronic terminal" illness is hard to (e.g., insurance coverage issues). I have been fortunate to have angel friends who have helped me: Deborah Reynolds; Christine Stander; Bob and Mary Luidens (have provided rides to church; Kathy Green, who reaches out often to check on me. Love and blessings to you all!

—Ellen Hale

I want to thank all of you for your thoughtful and caring visits, cards, prayers, and other forms of support and concern during my recent hip and heart issues. Your faithful presence made a significant contribution to my rehabilitation and overall recovery, and was heartfelt deeply.

Bless you!  
—Phil Van Eyl





## Taking your Garden into Fall

*By Lisa Denison, Caring for Creation Ministry member*

The availability of clean drinking water is a major issue emerging on the global stage. Most people in the world can't take potable water for granted. Even here in Ottawa County there is growing concern about the quality of the water being drawn from our aquifer. Caring for Creation calls for more than feelings of concern. There are very concrete actions we can take.

Know that small changes in your maintenance habits can help minimize your environmental impact! Some easy ways to save time, money and show your love for mother earth:

For your existing lawn:

- **Mow high** (3 - 3 1/2") in the summer/early fall to reduce stress.

This will reduce water needs by keeping the soil shaded and moist, and discourage grubs by promoting healthier roots. \*\*If someone else mows your lawn, tell them!!

- **Take off the bag!** Mulch lawn clippings to return nutrients to the soil and reduce the need for fertilizer.
- **Go organic.**
- **If you water,** do it in the morning when it's cool to reduce evaporation, and adjust your sprinklers so you are not wasting water and "watering the pavement."

For your flower beds, the goal is to use only the water nature provides:

- **Utilize rain barrels** and/or establish rain gardens to save water.
- **Protect water quality** by not using herbicides or pesticides.
- **Choose drought tolerant and native plants.**
- Where rainwater collection is difficult or impossible, **use direct water methods** (a watering can) or some form of drip or direct irrigation to cut down evaporation loss.

Finally, be more tolerant of some "imperfection," knowing that any changes you make will have a positive impact on our environment and demonstrate your commitment to Care for Creation.

# The Power of Gratitude

By Ginger Clark, RN, Parish Nurse

We have so much to be grateful for in this life. Each and every day. But reality is that sometimes constant life demands, struggles, and worries give more room to defeat than to a heart of thanks. Or we forget, in the midst of busyness and pressures, just to pause and give thanks for all that God has done and continues to do in our lives.

Sometimes it really is a sacrifice to offer praise and thanks. We may not feel like it. We're struggling. We're weary. Or maybe, we feel like He let us down. We think God seems distant, like He's far away, or doesn't really care about what's troubling us. Painful life blows and losses might have recently sent us spiraling.

But here's what can make a lasting difference: We have a choice, every day, to give Him thanks. And with a heart of thanksgiving, we realize that no matter what we face, God doesn't just work to change our situations and help us through our problems. He does more. He changes our hearts. His power, through hearts of gratitude and focused minds on Him, releases the grip our struggles have over us. We're strengthened by His peace, refueled by His joy.

God's Word is filled with many reminders of how powerful and vital a thankful heart can be in this world.

## The Power of a Grateful Heart: Seven Things It Can Do

1. It gets our eyes off ourselves, and helps us to focus back on God.
2. It reminds us we're not in control, but that we serve a mighty God. It keeps us in a place of humility and dependency on Him, as we recognize how much we need Him.
3. It helps us to recognize that we have so much to be thankful for, even all of the little things, which often we may forget to thank Him for... but they really are the biggest, most important things in this life. It takes our attention off of our problems and helps us instead to reflect on, to remember, the goodness of His many blessings.
4. It reminds us that God is the Giver of all good gifts. We were never intended to be fully self-sufficient in this life. A grateful heart reminds us that ultimately God is our Provider, that all blessings and gifts are graciously given to us by His hand.
5. A heart of gratitude leaves no room for complaining. It is impossible to be truly thankful and filled with negativity and ungratefulness at the same time.
6. It makes the enemy flee. The forces of darkness can't stand to be around hearts that give thanks and honor to God. Our praise and thanksgiving will make them flee.
7. It opens up the door for continued blessings. It invites His presence. Our spirits are refreshed and renewed in Him. God loves to give good gifts to His children. He delights in our thankfulness and pours out His Spirit and favor over those who give honor and gratitude to Him.

## The Physical Benefits of Gratitude

Studies have shown that being thankful can aid in stress relief, decrease pain levels, aid in better sleep, decrease anxiety and depression, and increase our energy and vitality. It is good for our brains! So, say out loud how you feel, take a moment



to think on positive things, keep a journal, relive good times, pray and meditate on these grateful feelings. Sharing these with others can create even more positive emotions.

## A Prayer of Gratitude

Dear God, thank you for your amazing power and work in our lives, thank you for your goodness and for your blessings over us. Thank you that you are able to bring hope through even the toughest of times, strengthening us for your purposes. Thank you for your great love and care. Thank you for your mercy and grace. Thank you that you are always with us and will never leave us. Thank you for your incredible sacrifice so that we might have freedom and life. Forgive us for when we don't thank you enough, for who you are, for all that you do, for all that you've given. Help us to set our eyes and our hearts on you afresh. Renew our spirits, fill us with your peace and joy. We love you and we need you, this day and every day. We give you praise and thanks, for You alone are worthy! In Jesus' Name, amen.

*Excerpts from Crosswalk.com/ Debbie McDaniel and NIH.gov 3/2019*





## Poetry Corner: Come to the Waters

---

*Hosted by Randy Smit and Rhonda Edgington*

Trudy Vander Haar joined Hope Church in 1992, when she and her husband Del, who served as calling pastor, retired in Holland. Trudy served as an elder, was a storyteller for Children in Worship, was active in Circle, Brim Bunch, Hope Church Readers, and wrote a series called *Branches on the Vine*, which shared the life journeys of Hope Church members. Trudy passed away in February at the age of 94. At her funeral, her family included with the bulletin two poems she had written; she'd included the poems in a book called *Come to the Waters*, which Trudy put together for her kids, grandkids, and great grandkids. In its introduction she wrote, "I invite you to come to the waters by taking just a few moments to let me share some of my thoughts or experiences." She described them as random pieces she had written on her life journey. As is evident in her writings, poetry was an important part of Trudy's spirituality—an opportunity to notice more deeply what God was doing in her life and the world. See "A Warm Spot," right. (Poetry Corner thanks Jane Van Es for help in putting this together)

"Some of my most sacred moments have been in God's beautiful creation, usually where there is a body of water—a creek, a river, a lake or an ocean. I don't know any more than the rest of you what heaven will be like. It doesn't matter because we are promised a very special place. Of course I like to think that my heaven will include water, because I have enjoyed its beauty in so many places."

Good friends, with Poetry Corner entering its second season, it remains our joy to share that same spirit of wonder and grateful noticing with you each month. Sometimes just a few phrases or lines from time to time is all it takes to call us right back to life as it feels to us exactly where we are; awake to abundant blessings, ready for truth, restored through the miracle of creative expression. (Oh, how we'd like to hear from ya...)

### A WARM SPOT

I remember that one spot  
in the dining room of my childhood.  
I remember the hot air register on the east wall,  
and losing things down the cavern  
of that square of black metal.

I remember "finding things" there too—in favorite books.  
I remember Mama sitting in her chair reading to us  
as we gathered around, hugging the register.  
I remember that spot of warmth in the big, cold parsonage,  
and I remember the emotional warmth I felt—listening—  
surrounded by loved ones and favorite story characters.

### CONCERT

Lying on the beach with eyes closed,  
I listen to the music of the sea;  
Whoosh, swish, roar and sigh,  
Humming, gurgling, trickling sounds  
Blend in perfect counterpoint  
Orchestrated by some mysterious Hand.