



SALT & LIGHT

a hope church publication

SEASON OF RECONCILIATION 2020



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

Hope Church
77 West 11th Street
Holland MI 49423



CONTENTS

Season of Reconciliation	2
Midweek Group	2
Adult Ed	3
Restorative Circles Training	3
THEM: Images of Separation	3
Congregational Meeting January 26	4
Play and Fellowship for Parents and Children	4
Holding Hope: A New Mental Health Support Group	5
Restoring Hope and Freedom for People with Chronic Pain	5
Connecting with One Another: Gratitude and New Members	6
Discernment and Calling for Ministry to Youth	8
Escape Ministries	10
What Should I do if I Fall	11
Disposing Unused Medication	12
Creation Care: Winter Outdoor Activities	13
Poetry Corner	14
The Word Became Flesh	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.

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EDITORIAL & DESIGN

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Season of Reconciliation: Race, Faith, and Community

“So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new! All this is from God, who reconciled us through Christ, and has given us a ministry of reconciliation!”
2 Corinthians 5.17-18

The Season of Reconciliation was introduced at Hope Church in 2011 to deepen our experience of the “Ordinary Time” between Epiphany and Lent. This timing also links us to national observances of Martin Luther King Jr. Day in January and Black History Month in February, calling us to unity, justice, and reconciliation. In this 10th Season of Reconciliation from January 19 to February 9, the theme of “Race, Faith, and Community” will engage us with the core moral work

we have as Christians and citizens to face the scourge of racism, working for a genuine reconciliation which requires attention to equity and justice.

Witness to Reconciliation Liturgical Worship 11 a.m.

Each Sunday during the 11 a.m. service throughout the Season of Reconciliation a member of our congregation will speak about an experience of reconciliation in their own lives. They will share their stories of reconciliation, passion, sacrifice, and new understanding in order that we may all gain empathic insight into the body of Christ that we share with one another. These stories have proven over the years to be some of the most memorable and powerfully moving events of the Season of Reconciliation.

Mid-Week Group

Wednesdays – January 22, 29 & February 5, 5:30 – 7:15 p.m.
Light supper provided

Lorilyn Wiering will lead three sessions entitled “Cultivating Open Mind, Heart and Will in Anti-Racism Work: Tuning Into the Body’s Experience and Sacred Wisdom for Healing.” Racism is not about the head, but the body. No matter our color, the legacy of racism lives in our bodies, and all of our bodies have suffered due to racism’s presence. This means that the work of repair and reconnection must also be done in our bodies. Following a

brief introduction to our three primary centers of knowing—head, heart and gut—we will together learn and try out practices for listening to the sacred wisdom each of these three centers offers us, guiding our own pathway into healing. Come with a willingness to listen to what your mind, heart, and gut have to tell you. Come with a commitment to curiosity, compassion, and courage. Sign up in the Gathering Area! Childcare is available.

Adult Education

Led by Chuck Green
Sundays, 9:40-10:40 a.m.

January 12

How did we get here?

History of the construct of race; exploring how exploitation preceded and necessitated racism in America

January 19

What's going on now?

Looking at current situation as backlash to "post-civil-rights era" narrative

January 26

Where is the church?

Exploring complicity of the church in construct and perpetuation of racial injustice, alongside prophetic voices of justice in the church

February 2

What can we do now?

Highlighting current leaders in

racial justice and opportunities for individual/ congregational advocacy as allies

February 9

Bringing it all home

Integrating wrap-up session led by Reconciliation Ministry

February 16

Confrontation and Civil Response

Following the Season of Reconciliation, this one-session class led by Elder Peter Boogaart will review two examples of hate speech, both drawn from the Zeeland/Holland public record. Attendees will be asked to critique their own immediate reactions and instincts upon being exposed to this material, and then to craft statements of response. Emphasis will be placed on responding from a Christian perspective.

THEM: Images of Separation

The Holland Museum is hosting a traveling exhibit from the Jim Crow Museum of Racist Memorabilia at Ferris State University. The exhibit opened in November and will be available through February 22.

Showcased are items from popular culture used to stereotype groups of people. Negative imagery found on post cards, license plates, games, souvenirs and costumes has promoted stereotyping against such groups as African-Americans, Asian Americans, Hispanics, Jews, and poor whites, as well as those who are "other" in terms of body type or sexual orientation.

"As a cultural leader in the community, the Museum has an opportunity and responsibility to bring awareness to social justice issues including racism, and we have the space to have meaningful discussions around those issues," says Holland Museum Executive Director, Ricki Levine. "We ask people to explore this exhibit and programs with an open mind and heart." As Martin Luther King Jr. stated, "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere."

During the course of the exhibit and beyond, they will offer resources obtained from local and regional organizations so that visitors who want to personally get involved in fighting discrimination will have information on how they may get started.

Restorative Circles Facilitator Training

Thursday and Friday
January 23-24, 9 a.m.-4 p.m.

Training for Restorative Circles has been a part of the Season of Reconciliation for the past eight years. The mission of restorative circles melds easily with the message of reconciliation that is central to the season. This two-day training is for anyone who is eager to support the creation of strong communities, families, and work environments. 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. For more information and to register go to hrcircles.wordpress.com or call the church office at 392-7947. Any questions can be directed to Jill Russell or Ann McKnight.



You're Invited: Congregational Meeting on January 26

Our annual congregational meeting will take place on Sunday, January 26, from 12:15 to 2:00 p.m. in the Commons. We will begin with a shared meal and conversation around tables, with a soup lunch provided by Consistory. The meeting will include a presentation and vote on the 2020 budget, a dialogue about the three-pastor model, as well as other important information about the coming year of ministry at Hope Church.

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 to share.

Transportation will be provided for residents of the Warm Friend and Freedom Village at 2:00 p.m. (as well as the usual bus run at 12:15 p.m.). Please plan to attend!



Play and Fellowship for Parents and Children

By Jocelyn Van Heest, Children's Ministry Director

Family Time Together Play Group at Hope Church is an opportunity for parents and children to meet together, doing a variety of activities and, more importantly, getting to know other young families. Over the years, when there has been a group of families with children between infancy and kindergarten that were interested in meeting together, we have set a couple of play times each month. Hope Church has offered the space, toys, and snacks. If you are a parent, caregiver, or grandparent of a young child, please consider joining this group. As the weather grows less conducive for play outside, the Commons and nursery could be a great place for the children to have some space to move. Hope Church has a few scooters, small riders, and

other toys that are not used in our limited nursery space.

The first meeting of this group will be Friday, January 10, from 9:30 to 11:00 a.m. If you are interested or have any questions please contact Jocelyn Van Heest (jvanheest@hopechurchrca.org), or respond on an interest sheet in the Gathering Area. The second meeting will be on Thursday, January 23, from 9:30 to 11:00 a.m. We will assess the days and times after these first two gatherings. In the past it has been a wonderful way for the children to enjoy each other and to meet new friends.

We hope you will join us for this wonderful time of fellowship and fun! You're encouraged to invite friends and their children, too.



Holding Hope: A New Mental Health Support Group

Beginning on January 7, a new support group will meet on the first and third Tuesdays of the month from 12:00 to 1:30 p.m. in the Youth Room. This group is for anyone who is seeking connection and community around their mental well-being.

Each session will be facilitated by a rotating combination of the following leadership team: RCA Pastor and Therapist Izzy Rhodes, Parish Nurse Ginger Clark, and Pastors Jill, Beth, and Gordon. The group exists to provide tools and support for

those learning to work with their own mental and emotional health challenges. May attendees learn that they are never alone, and that there is HOPE toward living a healthier and sustainable life.

Restoring Hope and Freedom for People with Chronic Pain

On Monday, January 20, from 7:00 to 8:30 p.m., Hope Church will host a presentation by Mary Free Bed Pain Rehabilitation on how chronic pain can be managed safely and effectively. At this free event, you'll learn

- The difference between acute and chronic pain
- Medical perspectives on pain and its treatment, including medication vs. non-medication

- How physical movement can improve your function
- Why structured movement can help you increase flexibility, strength, and endurance so you can engage in everyday activities
- How chronic pain develops and the skills needed to effectively manage it, including mindfulness, biofeedback,

and controlling negative emotions that affect your life.

The presentation will be followed by a Q&A session. Presenters include Lynda Hulst, MD; Psychologists Kimberly Bancroft, PhD, and Donald Topp, PhD; Patrick McInnis, MA; Physical Therapists Teresa Miller, MSPT, CMDT, OCS, and Nicole DeHaan, MSPT, CMDT; and Occupational Therapist Colleen McFawn, MS, OTR/L.

Connecting with One Another

Gratitude

Every year we look forward to Women's Service Day, but we know how much of its success is because of your generosity in letting us use the kitchen and facility. Thank you for opening your doors—and hearts—to our annual event. We're able to host volunteers and run a fundraiser to do good in our community. Hope Church is an important part!

~Women's Service
Day Committee

We appreciate being able to use the church as a drop off site of Groundswell CSA. We appreciate your kindness and look forward to continuing this business relationship next summer. Thanks again!

Sincerely,
~Jan Randolph and Staff,
Groundswell Farms

"...Even when I may no longer be able to speak or think clearly or pray this prayer of faith, I expect God's people to lift one another and me up to God who will never forsake us in life or in death or anywhere in between." These words written by Stan and echoed by Jill in her funeral meditation have been fulfilled beyond expectation by you, the people of Hope Church. I am so grateful for your many years of faithful presence through your prayers, visits, notes, driving, physical assists (in earlier times), hugs, gifts and caring words and gestures. I am deeply moved by all your kindness and truly thankful.

~Blessings, Nancy Rock

Welcoming New Members

These new members were welcomed into the fellowship of Hope Church on November 17 during the 11 a.m. worship service. Please welcome these individuals into the family of Hope Church.



Vince and Jane (Schaafsma) Iannelli join by transfer from the First Presbyterian Church in Kalamazoo, where they were members for more than fifty years. Jane was baptized and grew up in Hope Church, and Jane and Vince were married here. They have two adult children. Vince is a retired stockbroker, and Jane was a teacher and then a full-time homemaker. They are now residents of Freedom Village.



Izzy Rhodes joins by profession of faith. Originally from Chicago, Izzy moved back to Holland about three years ago and has been working as a minister and social worker. She loves traveling, backpacking, eating, and pretending to be an interior designer while watching HGTV. Izzy is grateful to have found Hope Church, a place that cares deeply for people and the community.



Amy and Matthew Van Zetten, along with their children Greta (16) and Ezra (13), join by transfer from Christ Memorial Church, Holland. Amy teaches for Zeeland Public Schools, and is a graduate of Hope College. Matthew works for Kent County in the Administrator's Office, and is an alum of Central College (Iowa). Greta is a sophomore at Holland High School, while Ezra is an eighth grade student at Cityside Middle School in Zeeland. As a family, they enjoy skiing in the winter, hiking in the shoulder seasons, and spending time at the beach during the summer.



Dan and Tammi Griswold join by transfer from Trinity Reformed Church in Rochester, New York, where Dan served as pastor for 15 years. Tammi is a registered nurse, and works at Holland Hospital in the Boven Birth Center. She enjoys reading and running. Dan works for the Holland Classis as Coordinator, and is a violist in the Holland Symphony Orchestra. Their daughter, son-in-law, and eldest son live in Colorado Springs, and their youngest son is a junior at Ithaca College in New York.

Karsten Voskuil (not pictured) joins by transfer from Second Reformed Church and the Zeeland Classis of the RCA. Karsten is the father of Nola (15), Marcie (12), Andra (8), and DeeDee (8). Yes, twins. An ordained minister in the RCA for the past 20 years, Karsten now serves as the pastor of Bethlehem



Keith and Sara Hogan, along with their children Benjamin (11) and Kaitlyn (8), join by transfer from Providence Christian Reformed Church in Holland. Keith is an arborist with Bartlett Tree Experts and loves being outdoors. Sara is the Director of Administration at Benjamin's Hope and likes to cook. As a family they enjoy camping and exploring new places.



Tess and Andrew Hoekstra join by transfer, Andrew from Bethel Christian Reformed Church in Lansing, Illinois, and Tess from Boston Square Christian Reformed Church in Grand Rapids. Andrew is an Electrical Engineer with Twistthink and Tess is the Resident Choreographer for Turning Pointe School of Dance. Together, they run a professional ballet company, Deos Contemporary Ballet, during the summer months with dancers from across the United States. In their free time, they enjoy fostering dogs from PAWS With a Cause as they train to be service dogs. They are excited to welcome their first child in March!

Lutheran Church (ELCA) in downtown Grand Rapids. Prior to Bethlehem, Karsten served as the pastor at Second Zeeland, as well as Trinity and Central Reformed Churches in Grand Rapids. The girls all attend the Zeeland Public Schools.

Discernment and Calling for Ministry to Youth

By Beth Carroll, Assistant Pastor of Discipleship

Over the past months, I have been discerning whether God is calling me to the Associate Pastor position at Hope Church. My discernment has taken shape in three threads: 1) What is the big-picture work to which God is calling me? 2) Does that calling intersect with the Associate Pastor position at Hope Church? 3) How does my calling shape priorities in this position in the next 5 to 10 years?

1) What is the big-picture work to which God is calling me?

God has given me passion and empathy for justice and for those who feel like outsiders in the church. Even as a little girl, I noticed those around me who were not being treated fairly, and I was not shy in confronting bullies or sticking up for kids I thought were treated unfairly by their peers, teachers, or others in authority. While I hope that over time my assertiveness has been tempered by a maturity in understanding that bullies are usually bullying victims, too, my passion for advocating and mentoring outsiders has not waned.

This calling has intersected with my current work as Assistant Pastor. I desire strongly to knit our youth more intentionally into our greater church life. Current generations of youth and young adults have become increasingly more isolated from broader church life, and have not valued, therefore, the communal church experience. We need to create opportunities for them to see that faith is not just a relationship between the self and God. Faith is

a living organism that enmeshes one's talents, passions, and identities with God's work in the church, as well as in community. This sustains and nourishes the faith of older generations and younger alike. We are created to need each other.

This philosophy has informed my work to connect youth to older adults at Hope Church. I educate and remind ministry teams and committees to consider including youth in their planning and activities. I educate youth about how their passions for justice connect to the way of Jesus, and that Hope Church is a place that especially values this connection. I model community engagement for them, supporting their priorities

“The young people with whom I typically work are those who have been hurt by the church...”

by attending their events and activist groups, and we spend intentional time discovering how the priorities and narratives in God's word guide our passions.

I also care deeply for the individual youths at our church. I desire our times together to be places where not only do all youth feel welcome, but that we also practice to be welcoming of others. The

desire to feel welcomed is a natural part of being human and learning to be welcoming needs to be cultivated in us all.

The other way my calling connects to my current work is with young adults, particularly those who are college aged. The young people with whom I typically work are those who have been hurt by the church, be it because they are LGBTQIA, have had questions about faith that were not nurtured in their childhood church experiences, have mental health obstacles, or have not experienced church as being a place that prioritizes social justice work. It is an absolute privilege as a pastor to be part of their healing. I try to teach and be an expression of God's unwavering love for them.

2) Does that calling intersect with the Associate Pastor position at Hope Church?

Yes. It has taken me the past three years to find clarity, especially since the young adult aspect of my role had been only loosely defined in terms of specific daily tasks. The more connection I have had to this church community, especially to the youth and their families, the more I have seen how naturally my gifts and calling fit this context. As our church continues to respond to the evolving religious landscape of our culture, I feel enlivened. The challenge of prioritizing both the current and future needs of youth and young adults, while discerning what makes our church uniquely relevant in meeting those needs, is an exciting opportunity for

Hope Church. I would love to be a part of this discovery process.

3) How does my calling shape priorities for the Associate Pastor position in the next 5 to 10 years?

In observing the direction the Western church is moving and the particular expression of that direction here in Holland, I have set some goals for youth and young adult ministries at Hope Church. I want youth to have more leadership and participation in our Sunday morning worship. Youth need to see themselves as respected and empowered leaders in our church, so that Hope Church will feel like their church, not just because that's where they

“A goal of my ministry with young adults is to enfold them into the body of Hope Church in more specific ways.”

attend on Sundays, but because they feel the church needs them. The pastors, Christian Education, and Consistory have agreed to empower youth who have made profession of faith to be intinction communion servers, in concordance with the polity of the RCA. I have begun speaking to the youth about this and look forward to having individuals serve with me several Sundays a year. The pastors are training youth how to write prayers, sentences, and other liturgical elements and give them permission to think creatively as to how they might become more involved in services.

Another goal is to nurture relationships between older adults and youth. One way to see this happen is by broadening our team of adult youth sponsors. I want more people in our church to feel they know our youth and for our youth to feel they are known by more than the pastors and Children in Worship leaders. I would also like to find ways to bring youth and young adults into ministries and task forces, not just with seats but with voices at the table. Consistory, Discerning our Future, Fellowship, and Worship Ministry are just a few examples of influential places in our church that could benefit from the leadership and creativity of our youth. I would like to see some of our work and hiking trips evolve into partnerships between youth and older adults. Youth work trips, adult mission trips, and the Appalachian Trail trip are fantastic opportunities for youth and adults to share in spiritual formation and the work of Christ together, not just in a youth/chaperone relationship.

A goal of my ministry with young adults is to enfold them into the body of Hope Church in more specific ways. A third church service might assist with this goal. I imagine this service as something liturgical that prioritizes the needs of this demographic and includes those in our existing body as well. Perhaps this service would be at another day or time to facilitate the needs of those who don't generally function in the 9-to-5, 5-day-work-week world. I imagine this to be intimate and perhaps in our chapel.

I would like this service to be liturgical. However, the expressions of liturgy might better serve this community if they have a say in how it is



expressed. We can increase hospitality by explaining liturgy more and teaching its theology. This personalizes the experience of liturgy, revealing just how relevant it is to our daily experiences and our connectedness to community. For the first time, many if not most of the young adults who have grown up in the Protestant church have not been exposed to liturgy or traditional worship, but have known only praise-and-worship style services. Young adults are intrigued by our worship, but intimidated; they may feel they're "the only one" not understanding what's happening. They would benefit immensely in having liturgy explained to them, both in subtle but clear ways in the service and in class settings.

There is much more I imagine in the life of our church that builds up our younger and older members alike. I am excited for the future of the American church and Hope Church in particular. Many young people who have left the church have not done so because they have no care for spirituality. Rather, they are hungry for means to connect their passions to spirituality, and for authentic expressions of community. I believe Hope Church is poised to be part of what satiates that hunger. I would be honored to be called to be a part of this exciting season.



Escape Ministries

Escape Ministries supports youth who are dealing with school suspensions, and Hope Church has supported Escape Ministries in a number of ways: through our benevolence budget, the Think Hope Auction, and most recently a portion of our Apple Pie fundraiser. In addition, Hope Church hosts a work group through the Escape summer youth employment program. What follows are some experiences of youth who are engaged with Escape.

A Bursting Heart: Ivan

(From Kristina Sage, Education Coordinator) Ivan was kicked out of West Ottawa for distributing drugs. The day he came to Escape it was with a stack of write-ups he had received from his school—labeled as “trouble.” It didn’t take long to see that Ivan was misunderstood. He had a big heart, and would refer to staff as “Mister” and “Miss.” He was brave, and slowly warmed up to his peers and got after his classes. For five months he worked hard to complete his online courses and earn a reinstatement hearing at West Ottawa.

On our way to his reinstatement hearing, Ivan said, “For the first time, I feel proud.” He was proud of his accomplishments. Proud of his completion of courses. Proud he had lined up

a consistent job. Proud when he heard his grandma say, “I see a change in my grandson: How he speaks to me and how he acts around the house. He speaks about his teachers at ESCAPE and his Pastor with pride.” The principal chimed in and shared that she could see a new confidence about him. This brought Pastor Watt and me to tears. His growth has been evident to all, and encourages us to keep fighting for these kids.

I Cut My Hair: Esperanza

Before Escape... I was a mess. As a person and a student. When I was in school before I got expelled, I was always talking back to others. I didn’t think of what I said and didn’t care about what I said or how it made others feel. I would never really be in class; I would always be in the hallway, in the bathrooms. When I did attend I would goof off, distract other kids from their learning, not listen to the teachers, walk out when I didn’t feel like being in that class. I would always sleep. Eventually, all that changed.... When I found out I was suspended for a whole semester of school I started to cry.

My dad was raised on the military base, so he decided for my punishment was for me to cut my hair off or move out.... So I cut my hair. I went down

to a “2.” I went through a rough time. I was depressed and lost my self-confidence. But I just thought about it as when I cut my hair I let the old Esperanza go and while it’s growing out I can grow with it and become a better person than what I was.

When I started at Escape I was really nervous. Scared. I didn’t talk to anyone. Now, three months I have been here at Escape, it changed me education-wise and personality-wise. I’m here to put my all in my education because I don’t want to go down the road that my mom and dad took. I want to prove to them that I’m not a kid that likes to get in trouble. I’m way more than that. I will set a great example for my baby sisters. I want to stay here at Escape and finish Junior year here. Then I will go back to public school and graduate with my class (2021). I WILL graduate.

Volunteer opportunities to support Escape Ministries

- Tutoring: Monday & Friday, 9am-2pm; Tuesday, 3:30pm-5:30pm
- 1 on 1 Mentoring
- Van driver: before or after school
- Meal donations

Contact AJ at (616) 836-1669



What Should I Do If I Fall?

By Ginger Clark, RN, Parish Nurse

A sudden fall can be startling and frightening. If you fall, stay as calm as possible.

Right after a Fall

- Take several deep breaths to try to relax.
- Remain still on the floor or ground for a few moments. This will help you get over the shock of falling.
- Decide if you're hurt before getting up. Getting up too quickly or in the wrong way could make an injury worse.



Getting up from a Fall

- If you think you can get up safely without help, roll over onto your side.
- Rest again while your body and blood pressure adjust. Slowly get up on your hands and knees, and crawl to a sturdy chair.
- Put your hands on the chair seat and slide one foot forward so that it is flat on the floor. Keep the other leg bent so the knee is on the floor.
- From this kneeling position, slowly rise and turn your body to sit in the chair.
- If you're hurt or can't get up, ask someone for help or call 911. If you're alone, try to get into a comfortable position and wait for help to arrive.

Source: US National Institutes of Health

Wise Choices: Lower Your Risk of Falling

Talk openly with your health care provider about falls

Find out about the side effects of any medicine you take.

Stay physically active to improve your balance and strength.

Have your eyes and hearing checked regularly.

See your health care provider about any foot problems. Make sure to discuss proper footwear.

Make your home safer. Remove things you can trip over from stairs and walkways. Have grab bars and non-slip mats in bathrooms.

Hold on to handrails when using the stairs.



Disposing Unused Medication

By: Moira Gargano, Congregational Care and Health Ministry

In September, Peter Boogart brought the problem of disposing of our medication to the Congregational Care & Health Ministry members' attention. The problem with medication disposal is twofold: accidental ingestion and environmental impact. The FDA urges us to get rid of unused medication for safety reasons. Medication could be ingested dangerously, even fatally, by other household members and pets. To aid, the FDA has publicized a list of drugs that should be flushed down the sink or toilet. The second problem, is that substances from unused drugs have been found in water, raising concern for the health of marine and human life.

You can learn more through The World Health Organization's publication, *Pharmaceuticals in Drinking Water* (available online at who.int/water_sanitation_health/publications/2011/pharmaceuticals_20110601.pdf). Michael E. Hochman, MD, MPH, urges more research to study the extent of unused pharmaceuticals seeping into water via landfills or sewage, and that flushing medication down the sink or

toilet should be a last resort (*The American Journal of Medicine*, Vol 130, No.2, February 2017).

Confused?

What should I do with my unused medication?

According to Ottawa County Department of Public Health:

1. Do not throw them in trash or flush them down the toilet.
2. Leave the medicine in the original bottle.
3. Scratch out any personal information on the labels
4. Bring your medication to a drop-off location:

Holland

- Holland Police Department, 89 W. 8th St.
- Holland Department of Health, 12251 James St. Building C
- CVS, 132 Douglas Ave.
- Paul's Pharmacy, 803 Lincoln Ave.
- Meijer Pharmacy, 746 E. 16th St, Holland and 3320 W. Shore Drive

- Skips Pharmacy, 700 Michigan Ave.
- Walgreen, 494 Butternut

Zeeland

- Zeeland Family Fare, 9479 Riley St.
- Zeeland Police Department, 29 W. Main St.

If you are unable to drop off your medication at any of the above places, perhaps family members or friends you trust can help you. Members on the Congregational Care & Health Ministry would also volunteer to help bring your medication to drop-off locations.

What should I do with needles (sharps)?

Put them in free home-use medical sharps containers, which are available to residents at any Ottawa County Department of Public Health office. Once containers are full, you may exchange them for new ones at those offices. Sharps containers obtained from other suppliers/organizations may be dropped off at CVS or other pharmacies.

Creation Care: Winter Outdoor Activities

By Bruce TenHaken, Creation Care Ministry Member

Creation Care Ministry would like the Hope Church congregation aware of area winter outdoor activities. Get outside and celebrate God's creation! Opportunities to hike, cross-country ski, snow shoe and fat-tire bike ride are ready and waiting for you and your family. Check out the areas below for specific location and winter activities.

**Ottawa County
Parks & Recreation
Parks Visitor Center**

**The Nature Center at
Hemlock Crossing**
8115 West Olive Road
West Olive, MI 49460

Riley Trails
16300 Riley Street
Holland, MI 49424

Pigeon Creek Park
12524 Stanton Street
West Olive, MI 49460
Phone: (616) 786-4847
ocparks@miottawa.org

The Outdoor Discovery Center
ODC Network Office
4214 56th Street
Holland, MI 49423
Phone: (616) 393-9453
outdoordiscovery.org

DeGraaf Nature Center
600 Graafschap Road
Holland, MI 49423
Phone: (616) 355-1057
degraaf.org

And for indoor activities
when it's just too cold,

Scrapyard Climbing Collective
76 S. River Ave
Holland, MI 49423
616-294-3931
scrapyardclimbing.com



Poetry Corner

Hosted by Randy Smit and Rhonda Edgington

You may know Judy Parr from her diligent work with husband Bill organizing adult education at Hope Church, or perhaps you have read her fascinating written history of Hope Church published in 2012 (*Hope Church: The First 150 Years*, available in the church office), you may see their letters to the editor of the Holland Sentinel on any number of local or national issues, or you may have contact with her through their involvement with Holland Area Senior Professionals (I've heard she's even taught a class there on diagramming sentences!). What connects all these activities seems to be Judy's appreciation for the power of words, as is only befitting a retired English professor. This month in the Poetry Corner, Judy has offered us a profound meditation on living, dying, and loving, weaving together her words with those of John Donne. May they speak to you in this season of reconciliation..

-Rhonda

Lately, I've been too busy living to even think about writing poetry, but last fall I happened to sit in on a Hope Academy of Senior Professionals (HASP) class taught by Jack Ridl, a Hope College emeritus professor of English. The class was about ways to turn memories into poems.

Prompted by his examples, I remembered a thank-you note I had written to a hospice nurse, and I remembered the experience that prompted that thank-you note. I remembered the form and lines of some poems I had studied long ago and some verses from the Bible that I had recently reread. I pondered all of these things, and they brought me back to the den in my parents' condo, a room that became my dad's bedroom, the place of my dad's last bath. That room in the presence of the hospice nurse and my dying dad became a "thin place," where the barriers between matter and spirit melted and the space between the mundane and transcendent disappeared. Following is the poem that came from memories of that experience on August 31, 1996. (It has been published in the 2019 HASP Review.)

-Judy

My Dad's Last Bath

by Judy Parr

If I wanted to visit with my dad while he was still alive,
my mother urged me, don't wait too long.
So Bill and I drove home for Labor Day weekend in '96.
The den had become Dad's bedroom.
I think he recognized us, but I'm not sure.
Between some of his breaths there were long pauses.

As virtuous men pass mildly away,

And whisper to their souls to go,

Whilst some of their sad friends do say

The breath goes now, and some say, No....

Saturday evening, the nurse from hospice,
arrived to give him a bath, the kind one gets in bed.
Mom and others were occupied by visitors in the living-room
so I stayed in the den with the nurse and Dad.
He was sleeping
so she gently touched him,
introduced herself as Karen,

and asked whether he wanted a bath.
Like a little boy with better things to do
or like a man who didn't want to be any trouble,
Dad blinked open his eyes and mumbled the words,
"already had bath."

*When thou shalt be old,
thou shalt stretch forth thy hands,
and another shall gird thee,
and carry thee whither thou wouldest not.*

Numbed by Dad's stillness and acquiescence,
I mainly watched the bathing, a ritual performed
with the deliberate slowness of a Japanese tea ceremony.
Near Dad's eyes were the mattery marks of sleep, or maybe tears,
and she gently dabbed them away with soothing, warm water.

*And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.
and there shall be no more death,
neither sorrow, nor crying,
neither shall there be any more pain.*

Dad seemed to enjoy the caress of the warm, moist cloth on his face,
and so she continued to dry where she had washed,
then to wash and dry his neck, and chest, and abdomen, and each arm and hand,
and each leg and foot, his private parts, and finally, with my help, his back.

*Peter saith unto him, Lord, [wash] not my feet only,
but also my hands and my head.*

In finding an extra towel, getting Dad's deodorant,
combing his hair, and learning how to administer his pill,
I felt in some small way a participant in this mysterious and holy activity.

*And Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father....
And [Noah] said, Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants
shall he be unto his brethren.*

I had looked upon my father's nakedness
and pondered my conception, baptism, and gentle dying.



Note: The indented italic lines are from the following sources: John Donne's "A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning," and the King James Version of John 21:18, Revelation 21:4, John 13:9, and Genesis 9:22, 25.



The Word Became Flesh

Published on thatreformedblog.com by Cindi Veldheer DeYoung

A good friend of ours read scripture during the Sunday service a few weeks ago. I was affected by her very good reading—affected both cognitively and emotionally. She read well, and her voice of faith resonated with me in a sense of faithful solidarity.

This person was well-selected, mind you. She's taught biblical languages for some time. She knows pronunciations and nuances about the text; she's likely aware of the textual variances and weight of the particular text she's reading. She knows the meaning of the text, and the larger context. I have great respect for one who knows deeply the original languages of our sacred text.

I also know she solidly believes the Word from which she read. Because I know her, and know of the sincerity of her faith, the depth of her wisdom, and some of the faith-shaking experiences of her life, I feel all the more her testimony behind the words she's reading. She is making the Word real, or incarnate, by speaking these words of life with respect, love, and sincerity. This is what made the reading resonate so deeply with me; it impressed me to my soul.

It occurred to me that this sense of faithful solidarity is similar

to what happens to me when I stand with the congregation in reciting one of the creeds. We believe this stuff. We also have arguments with these statements, and at times, need other people to believe these things for us, so that we can, together, live into the belief and the statements and the community that the creeds represent.

Mind you, it's not just the community of the congregation I attend, or my denomination, or even the Christian church around the world at the moment. It's the community of all times, of all people who have written these words, verified the importance of them, and said them. And yes, people have and do dispute the nuances and implications of statements of faith. It is the act of saying the creeds that helps build credibility and faith with each of us.

Our congregation has lined up "lay" readers for one of the lectionary scripture readings each Sunday for a number of years now. I'm surprised that it's taken me so long to be aware of how I feel the impact of this Word. Perhaps I'm exaggerating the point. Of course, pastors who read scripture... and preach, and teach... also represent sincere faith and engagement of the Word. They, too, know the words behind the Word;

they live faith in its challenges and joys as much as the rest of us—and see intimately how we struggle with life and faith.

Sometimes the reader is a very young person who struggles with reading; I see in them the effort to grow into the faith they're grasping (like the rest of us, only we've likely been at this for a while). I hear a deacon reading, and know that for this moment, his faith is focused on the truth of the text, even as he carries many concerns of his family and of this community.

I catch myself by surprise sometimes when I'm the scripture reader; I'm one of the "professionals," right? Yet the strong regard for worship, the Word, and the gathered community's intensity sharpen my awareness of the significance of the living Word becoming realized in this place at this time. We breathe these words, and the Word becomes flesh in our hearing and living its truth. Not only are the words "the Word of the Lord," but the reading and hearing and responding become the Spirit's engagement of us.

May the words, and the Word coming from our mouths, and the meditations of our hearts, be acceptable in God's sight as we listen and live.