



# SALT & LIGHT

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## CONTENTS

It Is Growing Season	2
Fall Programs Begin on September 11	3
Connect As a Prayer Pal with Children of Hope Church	5
Celebrating our Fishes and Loaves	6
Why Be a Kids Hope Mentor?	8
A World Perspective for the RCA	9
Connecting with One Another	12
Reflecting on Juneteenth	13
Sharing Love with One Another	14
Creation Care for Dummies	15
Poetry Corner	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.*



See how you can join us at  
[HopeChurchRCA.org](https://www.HopeChurchRCA.org)

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# It Is Growing Season

*Pastor Gordon*

I've reflected with you a number of times over the years about the ways we measure seasons and times. I've shared that our faith community practice of marking time using the liturgical year calendar has become very meaningful to me. The liturgical year can be a countercultural way of together having God's life-giving stories as our reference point as we navigate seasons in our lives and world.

But we mark those other seasons, too. In our church life, this has been a season of farewell—of gratitude, loss, and blessing—with the departure of Pastor Beth; it's been important to share that together. By our calendars, it's September, which, no matter your age or stage or household, is tied to the rhythms of a new school year, a shift from summer to fall, and a new program year. For Pastor Jill it's a sabbatical season, and it's a new season of service with Hope Church for Pastor Phil Quinn. You might say it's election season, with significant votes on the horizon for us as citizens. So many other currents of circumstances, times, and significant seasons run through our individual and collective lives—and through our communities, nation, and world. It is compelling to me to sift through and see all the times and seasons woven together in our lives.

And it usually brings me back to liturgical time.

One of the wonderful aspects of the Children in Worship program—which Hope Church uses so meaningfully for our children—is that it speaks of the many months between Eastertide and Advent not as “Ordinary Time” (the customary liturgical-year term) but as “Growing Season.” This fits nicely with the green liturgical color! It is also a profound shift to view the ordinary seasons of our lives as times that the Spirit of Christ is nurturing growth and goodness.

In the midst of a season of change for Hope Church and in all the times and seasons we see in our lives and world, what can ground us (pun intended!) is that this time is also Growing Season. Growing Season calls us in the midst of these circumstances to look for how God's Spirit is present within and around us, in familiar ways and in new ways of doing and being as followers of Christ; how God's gifts can be received in patterns that have given good fruit in the past and in possibilities for abundance we haven't yet explored—or even thought of!

Here's a question to ponder: As September arrives, what season is Hope Church in? In the midst of the varied answers in our lives, an answer we can share together is one rooted in God's faithfulness, love, and grace: It is Growing Season. Thanks be to God.

# Fall Programs Begin on September 11

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*Beginning in September, worship in the sanctuary will begin at 11:00 a.m., Children in Worship departure at about 11:15 a.m.*

## Church Picnic - Sunday, September 11

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Join us in the parking lot after the 11:00 a.m. worship service for our annual picnic, which celebrates the start of our fall programs. Lunch will be provided, with a suggested donation of \$5 per person or \$10 per household. The construction on 11th Street calls us to remain flexible; watch your emails and social media and listen for any announcements of any changes. Please also be on the lookout for opportunities to volunteer and help make the picnic a success!

This will be a time to share in fellowship. All are invited to attend, and we welcome visitors to join us as our guests.

## Adult Education Offerings

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Adult Education is offered in Hope Church Commons 1, from 9:40 to 10:40 on Sunday mornings.

### Evangelicalism and Hope Church September 11 – October 2

This four-week series is to explore the unfolding—if not unraveling—story of the Protestant evangelical movement in North America, and Hope Church's relationship with that movement, both present and future.

#### September 11 *Evangelicalism in Crisis*



*Peter Wehner, senior fellow at the Trinity Forum and contributing writer for the New York Times and The Atlantic Monthly*

The session will include a Zoom conversation with **Peter Wehner**, senior fellow at the Trinity Forum and contributing writer for the *New York Times* and *The Atlantic Monthly* on religious, political, and cultural issues. We will focus particularly on his

October 24, 2021, article in *The Atlantic* titled “The Evangelical Church is Breaking Apart—Christians Must Reclaim Jesus from His Church.”

David Myers will introduce Wehner, who will then share an overview of his article's theses and recommendations. Those in attendance will then be invited to submit questions for Wehner's comment during a closing Q&A time.

#### September 18 *History and Theology of Evangelicalism*

**Dennis Voskuil**, Senior Research Fellow at Van Raalte Institute, will share a brief historical overview of evangelicalism in North America, followed by **Dan Griswold**, Holland Classis Coordinator, reflecting on the changes in theological emphases during that history. Their reflections will provide helpful context for the final two sessions. Q&A will follow their presentations.

#### September 25 *Evangelicalism and the RCA in Crisis*

Reflections will be shared from three perspectives in response to Wehner's article's theses and recommendations, with consideration to the RCA's relationship to wider evangelicalism, and to the RCA's unfolding debates and divisions that reflect evangelicalism's own shifting, if not schismatic, story. Historical reflections by **Lynn Japinga**, ecclesiastical reflections by **Larry Schuyler**, and sociological reflections by **Don Luidens**. Their reflections will conclude with a Q&A time.

#### October 2 *Hope Church and Evangelicalism*

This concluding session will provide a focus on the present and future of Hope Church's relationship with evangelicalism, with the goal of highlighting ways by which Hope Church might move into the future modeling constructive discipleship both to the wider community and the wider evangelical church. A panel composed of **Jim Brownson**, **Lois Maassen**, **Phil Quinn**, and **Dave Van Wylen** will share reflections, followed by a Q&A time.

# Fall Programs, Cont'd

## Mental Disorder and Christianity October 9 – 16

*October 9*  
*Mental Disorder and the Church Community*



*Kate Finley, Hope College Assistant Professor of Philosophy*

With Hope College Assistant Professor of Philosophy **Kate Finley**, we will look at helpful and harmful views of mental health and disorder often found in Christian communities and the theological and cultural ideas and stigmas that shape them. We will also discuss the practical impacts of these views, how they can be changed, and the positive and negative power of church communities to deeply impact those experiencing mental disorder.

*October 16*  
*Mental Disorder and the Individual*

Hope College Assistant Professor of Philosophy **Kate Finley** explores how experiences of mental disorder can influence someone's faith both positively and negatively. We will engage with research on how specific mental disorders (e.g., depression, bipolar disorder) can affect important aspects of identity and faith; as well as personal stories of the relationship between mental

disorder and religious beliefs, experiences, and practices.

## Grace and Social Ethics October 23 – 30

*October 23*  
*Grace and the Moral Life*



*Angela Carpenter, Hope College Assistant Professor of Religion*

Christian understandings of grace have raised questions for human morality that go all the way back to the apostle Paul, but which are particularly pressing for Protestants. In contemporary discourse some Protestants even suggest that concern for social justice conflicts or competes with the gospel. In this session, presented by Hope College Professor **Angela Carpenter**, we will discuss the early Reformers' commitment to sola gratia (by grace alone) and why they believed it was foundational for the moral life.

*October 30*  
*Grace and Work*

The moral significance and dignity of hard work is one of the few areas of contemporary life that receives broad support across religious and political differences. We frequently assign value to ourselves and others based on our work. This valuing of work, however, has a dark side, and in this session with

Hope College Professor **Angela Carpenter** we will consider how an understanding of human value grounded in God's grace can revise our perceptions of and participation in the world of work.

## Our Leadership and Future: A Conversation

**November 6**

As we consider a call for a new associate pastor, this time is set aside for reflection and conversation about where we are as a faith community, what's changed or envisioned, and what that might mean to the way we think about the associate pastor role. This session will be facilitated by members of the Discerning Our Future and Personnel Committees, which have been jointly charged by Consistory to lead the exploration process leading up to a formal candidate search.

## David Alexander Presents November 13 – November 20

*November 13*  
*"Bustin' Lintels, Breakin' Doors"*

In the 1830s, missionaries of the Reformed Church established educational and outreach work in Amoy (Xiamen), China. Within a few years, they were joined by John Talmage, who was famed for his 40-year tenure before his death at his New Jersey home. But four women bearing the Talmage name, two his wives, two his daughters, spent a combined 187 years there; three of them died in Amoy.

This presentation looks at the life and work of Mary Elizabeth, born in Amoy and educated in Jersey City and New York City.

She is listed among the pioneers of women's education in China and still honored in Amoy. This presentation was originally prepared for the 2022 Hazel Gnade Fellowship and presented as part of Women's Stories Day at New Brunswick Theological Seminary last March. The presenter is **David Alexander**,

whose hero used to be John Talmage.

### *November 20 Tensions Related to Taiwan Play Out in America*

Among America's mass shootings early this year was one at a church in California that had its origins in tensions unique to

ethnic and political rivalries in Taiwan. This presentation will look into the mid-twentieth century origins of those conflicts and how they play out among Christians and churches on this side of the Pacific Ocean even in 2022. The presenter is **David Alexander**, a citizen of Taiwan, who has taken a side.

## Solo Organ Concert Features Music by Bernard Wayne Sanders

Rhonda Sider Edgington will perform a solo organ concert at Hope Church on Sunday, September 18, at 3 p.m. Featured will be music by a friend and colleague of Rhonda's, Bernard Wayne Sanders. You may recognize this name, as Rhonda has often played his works in services and concerts. Bernard recently retired as Music Director and Organist of a large Catholic church in southern Germany, and will be visiting the States to be present for this concert. Come to hear Bernard's music and commentary about the pieces from both him and Rhonda. You can tell your friends you're going to see Bernie Sanders in concert at Hope Church!

# Connect As a Prayer Pal with Children of Hope Church

*Jocelyn Van Heest, Children's Ministry Director*

The children of Hope Church have certainly been wonderful and resilient over the last couple of years. They have continued to be engaged in many different ways throughout that time. They watched Children in Worship videos, had some Zoom worship times, watched video lessons and done activities for two summers, and had some events outside the church building. Thankfully and joyfully, the children have met together beginning last fall in our adapted worship center in the youth room. The children were so excited and thankful for that gift. The children were all together again, found joy in that fellowship, and learned from each other as they wondered together about the stories they heard.

To strengthen connections to our church family, Hope Church members are offered the opportunity to become Prayer Pals with the children of a family from Hope Church. Prayer Pals are people in the congregation selecting a family with children through a reverse offering, a selecting of names from a basket sent through the congregation, and then making connections to those children. There are many ways to

make an impact on those children and any or all are appreciated. Ideas include introducing yourself to the family, praying for the children, remembering them on special occasions, making a plan to eat pizza with the family, etc. We all know that two years is a long time in the life of a child and their families; they change and grow so much. The children will create small posters about themselves, each of which will include a picture; the posters will be on display at church so congregants can connect the names of the children to a face and to learn more about them. The children will be working on these posters in the weeks leading up to the start of fall programs on September 11.

As we continue to nurture the children of Hope Church through the programs and worship experiences we offer, we invite you to join in that endeavor by becoming a Prayer Pal. As members of the church, we have made baptismal promises to these children. This is a very tangible way to show them they are important to us as cherished members of the church.



## Celebrating Our Fishes and Loaves

*Beth Carroll, Associate Pastor of Discipleship*

Before this year, August of 2019 was the last time Hope Church youth went on a mission trip. It is no news that the past few years have been challenging, to say the least, for us all. Perhaps you are like me in this new season of Covid transition. Every time I go back to an activity I engaged in before Covid, an activity that was paused during

the height of the virus, I think it will be “normal” now; that the experience and rhythm of that activity will resume just as it had before. Yet that has been far from true! Virtually nothing has been the same. And that is because I have changed. Others have changed. Circumstances have changed. Even the virus keeps changing!

Our trip to Greenpoint Reformed Church was no different. All of us had changed, therefore this trip changed. I sometimes forget that our collective stamina has not returned. This was the first summer when I planned two trips: one for middle schoolers and one for high schoolers, and when registration was down for both. Only one youth

registered for the middle school trip to Bellwether Farm in Ohio, and only four signed up for our Greenpoint trip. Sadly, the middle school trip had to be canceled. Before Covid, our youths were extremely busy, but in this season, they are not only busy, they are also trying to pick what they can and cannot do, just like many of us adults. I appreciate the great parents we have at Hope Church who are trying to help their youths navigate how to pick what activities to do and when to say “no” in favor of their mental and physical health. So, this year, we were a group of four youths and five adults. All of us gave our all and all of us were humbly reminded of our limitations.

I am always amazed how God speaks to us through scripture on these trips. “Coincidentally,” we studied the feeding of the 5,000 in John 6 for the week.

John 6:8-9 says “One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother, said, ‘A youth here has five barley loaves and two fish. But what good is that for a crowd like this?’” All of us at some point asked ourselves this question, just like Andrew. “What good is my help, when I have a bad back?” “What good is my help, when my anxiety flares up?” “What good is my help, when I have to take frequent breaks?” Yet, we persevered. We kept showing up. And what we had to offer was more than enough. One of the projects we had was to purge the church basement of unneeded junk, items that were no longer used but were taking up valuable real estate for the church’s food pantry. After we finished, Mike, the new pantry manager, went down to the space and started imagining aloud what processes could change now that some

space had been freed up. Pastor Ann, always the encourager, said to our group “See?! The change you all made prompted the rest of us to also change and now we are more efficient and have new ideas on how to serve our community better.”

That’s the funny thing about change, isn’t it? To create space for something new in our lives, there must be change. There is no post-Covid “normal” because that is not how our growth works. Life changes and we change with it. God is doing new and redemptive things! God changes us so we, like Mike, can see the projects in our lives differently and thrive in the creativity and newness it offers to our communities. Let us celebrate in our own fishes and loaves, no matter how small they seem. God can do so much with our little!



# Why Be a Kids Hope Mentor?

Vicki Rumpsa, Kids Hope USA Director

One thing I know about Hope Church members is that they volunteer. Some of you visit home-based members of our congregation. Others provide snacks for our fellowship time or help set up for Pizza Sunday. Several sit on the boards of directors for local organizations or serve meals at the Community Kitchen at Western Theological Seminary. Others staff booths at Pride and Juneteenth celebrations. Personally, I volunteer at Community Action House's Food Club, and I see many other Hope Church members volunteering there as well. Outreach into the community is one of Hope Church's strengths.

So why might you want to volunteer for the Kids Hope Ministry? Can you really fit more into your schedule? Or, if you haven't yet found a way to serve in the community, why consider Kids Hope? As the Kids Hope Director for Hope Church, I recruit and train volunteers at the beginning of each school year; I'm hoping this article sparks your interest in finding out more about Kids Hope and volunteering. It requires only an hour a week to mentor, so even those already volunteering elsewhere may be able to fit it into your schedules. One mentor told me that he could not think of one hour being spent elsewhere that could compare with the difference made volunteering for Kids Hope. So true! I followed his lead and asked some current mentors, "Why did you decide to become a Kids Hope Mentor?" Here are some of their replies:

- "I'm a former teacher, and I wanted to stay involved with children somehow."
- "I see mentoring as one small way I can do something to help a student who is struggling."
- "I was attracted to Kids Hope because of its reputation as a well organized and supported way to assist children in their educational, social, and personal development."
- "The constant positivity of the child I mentor is the highlight of my week."
- "Being a mentor is an easy way to build into the life of a young person today."
- "For the one child I meet with, I am that 'extra' person of love and support and positive encouragement that she needs."

What a testament to the effects of Kids Hope on not only the student but on the mentor as well!

If you are interested, here are some details:

What is the time commitment? Beginning in October and ending in May, it is one hour a week.

**What if I have vacation plans?** A trained substitute will take your place.

**How will I know what is expected of me?** You will receive online and in-person training before you begin.

**What will I do during that mentoring hour?** You will spend your time talking, playing a game, reading, or doing one of the special activities planned for you. Some teachers send along assignments to finish. The time goes by fast.

**Who do I mentor?** This year we will accept referrals from the second grade teachers, so you would mentor one of those referred students.

**Where do I mentor?** Hope Church is assigned to Vanderbilt Academy, on 16th Street and Van Raalte Avenue.

I'm sure you have more questions! To inquire further, sign up, and meet some current mentors, join me after church on September 28 in the conference room adjacent to the church offices. It will be Pizza Sunday, so you can grab your lunch and stop over! You can also email me at any time at [vlwigs@gmail.com](mailto:vlwigs@gmail.com).

Thank you for considering being a Kids Hope mentor. It may be one of the best decisions in your life.





# A World Perspective for the RCA

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*Phil Tanis*

We've shared information here and in an in-person panel discussion from the Reformed Church in America's 2022 General Synod, which took place in Pella, Iowa, in June. Among the "small world" instances of the RCA, those of us in attendance had the special privilege of hearing from Hope Church member Phil Tanis. He spoke on behalf of the World Communion of Reformed Churches during the exchange of ecumenical greetings and encouragements.

*Phil's message of communion and justice and a global perspective seemed valuable to share with the Hope Church community.*

... It's so very good to be here, to be back, in the town in which my grandfather served as an RCA pastor, on the campus where my parents fell in love, and at General Synod—my nineteenth. There were seventeen as an RCA staff member... and [this is] the second with the World Communion of Reformed Churches. The first, in 2014, was as the Executive Secretary for Communications; this time it is as Executive for Communications and Operations as part of the Collegial General Secretariat (or, to put it another way, one-third of a general secretary as part of a new, collaborate leadership model with my fellow executive secretaries, Hanns Lessing of Germany and Philip Vinod Peacock of India).

After nineteen synods, this is the first time I have the privilege and pleasure to speak, to bring greetings from the Communion and our 100 million Christian siblings from around the world, of which all of you are a part. So, on behalf of President Najla Kassab of Lebanon, General Treasurer Johann Weusmann of Germany, Vice-Presidents Sylvana Apituley of Indonesia, Samuel Ayete-Nyampong of Ghana, Raissa Vieira Brasil of Brazil, and Lisa Vander Wal of the US, and the general secretariat headquartered in Hannover, Germany, hello.

And thank you. Thank you for the talent provided to us, with both Lisa and I in leadership positions

and other RCA members involved, including Terry DeYoung, currently editing an edition of our theological journal, Reformed World. Thank you for your continuing financial commitment to our work, especially in these challenging budgetary times. And thank you for inspiring us to adopt a discernment and consensus model for our decision-making process—which we used effectively at our 2017 General Council and since then by our Executive Committee.

As a global Christian communion composed of denominations from more than 105 countries in Congregational, Presbyterian, Reformed, United, Uniting, Waldensian, and other pre-Reformation traditions we are diverse—including in cultural and contextual realities, theological interpretations, and missional goals—and we are not always in full agreement.

Yet the WCRC is a global koinonia marked by discerning, confessing, witnessing, and being reformed together. Called to communion and committed to justice, we believe that communion and justice are inextricably connected: communion without justice masks inequality, exclusion, and oppression; justice without communion is in danger of becoming divisive.

Now, I had been planning on enumerating the many ways in which the Communion does come together and the

important work we're doing throughout the world. But you can find that on our website....

Instead, I want to spend the few moments I have before you speaking about the sacredness of our commitment to both communion and justice.

I'd like to begin at the Lord's Table, and John Calvin's commentary on it, because this holy meal is not only for unity but for justice. In the Institutes Calvin says:

Now since [Jesus Christ] has only one body, of which he makes us all partakers, it is necessary that all of us should also be made

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# A World Perspective for the RCA, Cont'd

one body by such participation.... We shall benefit very much from the sacrament if this thought is impressed and engraved upon our minds: that none of the [siblings] can be injured, despised, rejected, abused, or in any kind offended by us, without at the same time, injuring, despising, and abusing Christ by the wrongs we do; that we cannot disagree with our [siblings] without at the same time disagreeing with Christ; that we cannot love Christ without loving him in our [siblings]; that we ought to take the same care of our [siblings'] bodies as we take care of our own; for they are members of our body; and that, as no part of our body is touched by any feeling of pain which is not spread among all the rest, so we ought not to allow a [sibling] to be affected by any evil, without being touched with compassion for them. (Institutes, 4, chapter 17, par 38.)

But taking this sacred and sacramental moment, this commitment to care for each of God's children, from the Lord's Table out into the world, to dinner tables, to board tables, to synod tables, is not easy for us.

The Belhar Confession acknowledges this when it states, "We believe... that unity is, therefore, both a gift and an obligation for the church of Jesus Christ; that through the working of God's Spirit it is a binding force, yet simultaneously a reality which must be earnestly pursued and sought: one which the people of God must continually be built up to attain (Ephesians 4:1-16)...."

"We believe... that the church must therefore stand by people in any form of suffering and need, which implies, among other things, that the church must witness against and strive against any form of injustice, so that justice may roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream."

This is embedded in the values of the WCRC, as noted in our constitution: "The World Communion of Reformed Churches in its order and actions is called to respect, defend, and advance the dignity of every person. In Jesus Christ all human differences must lose their power to divide. No one shall be disadvantaged for, among other reasons, race, ethnicity, or gender, and no individual or church may claim or exercise dominance over another."

And it's made even more explicit in the Accra Confession, adopted at the 2004 General Council and reaffirmed at the 2010 Uniting General Council:

17. We believe in God, Creator and Sustainer of all life, who calls us as partners in the creation and redemption of the world. We live under the promise that Jesus Christ came so that all might have life in fullness (John 10:10). Guided and upheld by the Holy Spirit, we open ourselves to the reality of our world.

24. We believe that God is a God of justice. In a world of corruption, exploitation and greed, God is in a special way the God of the destitute, the poor, the exploited, the wronged and the abused (Psalm 146:7-9). God calls for just relationships with all creation.

26. We believe that God calls us to stand with those who are victims of injustice. We know what the Lord requires of us: to do justice, love kindness, and walk in God's way (Micah 6:8). We are called to stand against any form of injustice in the economy and the destruction of the environment, "so that justice may roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream" (Amos 5:24).

Micah 6:8 was the foundational question for a discernment process which we began during the pandemic. Gathering the Communion online—through live-streamed Zoom meetings—we asked, "What Does God Require of Us?" Nearly every two weeks for almost a year we listened to the stories, challenges, priorities, and needs of members from every corner of the Communion. And then we talked in small groups, wrestling together with all the injustices at work in the world and how we could respond. Papers, of course, were produced, and I'd like to share these words from one of them:

But what we need, now more than ever, is to move beyond the normal, into not just a "new normal" but into another world in which there is justice for the oppressed and abundance of life for all. And the church, the *Ekklesia*, the radical collective of believers is called to be the initiators of this new community. And baptism is the initiation into this new community. Theologically speaking therefore, it is through baptism that we enter

into the household of God, a household that reaches out in love, service, welcome, and acceptance to the other. This does not mean that “the other” is either extinguished or absorbed into this household, but that in the household of God that otherness is accepted and difference celebrated. It is within this household that hospitality is shared and experienced. From a liberation perspective, therefore, baptism would demand dying to systems that deny life, systems such as racism, patriarchy, ableism, and neo-liberal capitalism, and rising again to new life in which all belong to the one household of God, a place where justice and peace kiss.

Sisters and brothers, siblings in Christ, preparing the way for the Kingdom of God is not easy. Attempting to do so through Roberts

Rules of Order is even more challenging. But through the love of God, the grace of Jesus Christ, and the movement of the Holy Spirit, humbling ourselves to truly listen to the excluded, to the marginalized, to the victims of injustices—to be in the place where Jesus would be—is something we must strive for.

And know this: the challenges you face are—unfortunately—not unique. We are in times of crisis. But you are not alone. Sisters and brothers around the world are praying for you, loving you, supporting you. May you feel uplifted in this knowledge. Blessings on your continuing work both here at synod and in your ministries at home.

And thank you for your continuing prayers for the Communion and your Christian siblings around the world.



*Phil Tanis, left, represented the World Communion of Reformed Churches at the RCA General Synod. Other ecumenical partner representatives were Chris Olkiewicz, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America; Lisa Gaston, United Church of Christ; Lyle Bierma, Christian Reformed Church in North America; and Dianna Wright, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), shown with RCA General Secretary Eddy Alemán.*

# Connecting with One Another

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## A Move for the Molla/Assen Family

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*Hope Church developed a relationship with Rode Molla and Endrias Assen when they worshiped with us during Rode's studies at Western Theological Seminary. We have been providing support through prayers and financial assistance.*

Dear Hope Church Family,

We are delighted to share that we are moving to Alexandria, Virginia, at the end of June. I accepted a teaching position at Virginia Theological Seminary as Assistant Professor,

Berryman Family Chair for Children's Spirituality and Nurture. Endrias and I thank God for your support and presence in this journey. We ask you to stay with us and participate in our call through your prayers so that we can affirm God's grace and goodness for God's creation.

May the love and grace of Jesus Christ be with you all!

Endrias, Rode, Halleta

## Kristen Gray Honored for Achievement

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Hope Church member Dr. Kristen Gray has received the Lifetime Achievement Award from the Association for University and College Counseling Center Directors (AUCCCD). Each year, the organization recognizes achievements that exemplify excellence in promoting campus mental health. Kristen was honored for having provided "outstanding service to AUCCCD and exemplary leadership in the field of University and College Counseling Centers at the highest national levels."

Kristen served for 23 years as associate dean for health and counseling and director of the Counseling and Psychological Services office at Hope College; last year she transitioned to a new role as Hope's off-campus study advisor. She was actively involved in the AUCCCD throughout her career as associate dean and director.



# Reflecting on Juneteenth

Pat Bloem

Juneteenth: our newest national holiday. As we have learned, the day commemorates the day in 1865 that Texan slaves heard General Order #3, the news they were free, after that news had been suppressed by their angry “owners” who wanted every free hour of labor. But according to historian and blogger Heather Cox Richardson, from the beginning, Juneteenth “emphasized that emancipation in the United States meant not just freedom from enslavement, but also freedom to shape the nation’s future.”

What was Juneteenth Freedom Festival in Holland, Michigan, in 2022? It was a hugely successful celebration of more than 1,000 people, a multicultural feast of music, dance, basketball, food, and sharing of ideas and resources. I AM Academy, a relatively new organization that wants “to shape our nation’s future” by supporting African American youth, kept the stage programs moving along, and their tee shirts were everywhere in sight.

And what was Juneteenth for Hope Church? A dozen happy volunteers set up and held down a table along one of the Kollen Park paths. We shared support and resources—including the Gordon-Wiersma-approved bookmarks and bracelet bling!—and engaged in dozens of fun conversations with those who stopped by. It was our chance to demonstrate that the church, too, celebrates with love and support, that we do not stand with white supremacists, and that we are indeed allies.



# Sharing Love with One Another

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Ginger Clark, Parish Nurse



As we begin this new program year, I'd like to remind us all of the ways in which we can make visible our love for each other, which is one of the ways we live as disciples (John 13:34-35).

The entire congregation is invited to participate in sharing—giving and receiving—loving care and encouragement with one another to build up the body of Christ. The Congregational Care and Health Ministry includes a team of dedicated laity working with the pastoral staff to minister to both the needs and joys of the Hope Church family.

## Receiving Care

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**Prayers, Visits, Meals, and Transportation:** If you are going through a time when you could use the support and care of your congregation, contact the pastors or the church office. Requests for prayer are shared through the PrayerLink, email alerts to those who have pledged to pray for the needs of the congregation. Times of prayer with the pastors or parish nurse can also be arranged. The pastors, parish nurse, and Congregational Care Ministry members also organize a system of visitation for those members who can no longer attend worship regularly. The Congregational Care Ministry and office staff can arrange for meals, transportation, or other resources in times of need as well. Prayer Shawls are also shared during times of extended illness or hospitalization as a way of sharing a sense of God's peace and healing.

**In-Home Communion:** Elders serve home communion twice a year, and the pastors can share the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper if you are unable to be in worship during a time of extended illness.

**Parish Nurse:** In recognition of the connection between spiritual and physical health, as your parish nurse I can help you sort through complicated medical information, locate and advocate for health-related resources during

or after a hospitalization, evaluate safety issues through home visits, offer resources for making end-of-life decisions, and provide support through presence and prayer at times when stress begins to affect health.

I can meet with you at the church during weekly office hours, or you can contact me through the church office or at [gclark@hopechurchca.org](mailto:gclark@hopechurchca.org) for a one-on-one consultation.

**Caregiver and Grief Support:** If you are a caregiver or dealing with grief after a loved one has died, you may be interested in the REST group, which meets twice a month (see the church calendar or contact the office for specific plans). By coming together at REST, care-givers and those who are grieving can Relax, Empathize with each other, and Share experiences in a spirit of Thanksgiving to our God.

**Mental Health Support:** The Holding Hope mental health support group meets twice a month, currently in a hybrid mode, where some come to the in-person gathering at the church and others join over Zoom. It's for those who are seeking connection and community around their mental well being.

## Giving Care

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**Prayer Shawls, Baptism Banners, and Baby Blankets:** Volunteers are needed to knit or crochet prayer shawls, cross stitch baptism banners, and knit or crochet baby blankets. The Congregational Care Ministry shares prayer shawls with people during times of extended illness. Personalized baptism banners are given to families at the time of baptism and baby blankets are shared at the birth of a new child or at the time of baptism.

**Ongoing Volunteer Opportunities:** Sign up to the Life of Hope Church volunteer blog at [lifeofhopechurch.wordpress.com](http://lifeofhopechurch.wordpress.com). All volunteer opportunities within the community are shared through this blog, including requests to make meals or provide transportation for people in times of need.

**PrayerLink:** Contact the church office ([office@hopechurchca.org](mailto:office@hopechurchca.org)) to receive prayer requests via email and be part of this ministry of prayer for the needs within Hope Church.

# Creation Care for Dummies

*Peter Boogaart, Creation Care Ministry*

The perplexing question that has dogged my twenty years in the Creation Care Ministry at Hope Church is, “What’s the definition of Creation Care?”

That’s a right kind of question. After all, how can one work at something absent a mission statement? What are we trying to do here?

So, what’s the answer? Let’s work at that.

**Step one:** Recognize the context. Creation Care conversation originates with so-called environmental issues. (Set aside for a moment the question of whether the environment can be singled out as an isolated problem.)

**Step two:** Accept the fact that this conversation is taking place in a faith community. It may not have been our preference, but we pick up these issues because they’ve been thrust upon us. And isn’t it interesting that, even in a secularized society, there’s a longing for some kind of word from God?

**Step three:** Be thankful for hard questions. All hard questions are ultimately spiritual questions. Make no mistake: this is not an optional conversation. Climate change, for example, is like the Titanic heading for an iceberg. This is serious business.

Serious though they may be, these spiritual questions cannot be resolved by science, despite the wealth of data it has given us. To paraphrase Wendell Berry, we don’t have an environmental problem—we have a way-of-living problem.

The choices we make, the economies we build, and the expectations we nurture all combine to debase the natural world. Our future is threatened by—us. How ironic! And how Biblical! “...Cursed is the ground because of you,” God said in exiling

Eve and Adam from Paradise. That wasn’t so much a pronouncement as an observation.

The blessing of hard questions is that they bring you back to the fundamentals: Why am I here? Where’s my security? Who is my neighbor? What’s

the right thing to do? We can reconfigure our way of living, but only if we address the fundamental questions first.

Let me remind you of who you are. You are a child of God. You have been set aside as salt and light in a dark world. You have been called by God to participate in the great work of renewal and re-creation of the whole world. And because

nothing can separate you from the love of God, you are in a unique position to face the risk that comes with change.

There’s no checklist for Creation Care—been there, done that, move on. There isn’t a manual either. If you stick with it, Creation Care is a process of dawning awareness. Each hard question faced accelerates the process of healing a broken relationship with God.

Creation Care is an invitation to experience joy. You can have happiness with a big house, but you won’t experience joy without first asking, how many square feet are enough? You can be well fed, but you won’t experience joy without first asking, what is sustainable farming?

There are no fixed answers. Each of us has different needs. But joy isn’t an answer anyway. It’s not your reward for doing the right thing. Joy, which is only available in the presence of God, is a way of being which arises when one is able to say, I’m living out my most deeply held values.



# Poetry Corner

Hosted by Rhonda Edgington and Randy Smit

Summer's end often catches us unaware, even as we are immersed in the changes of the season. Marking this transition, we share a poem Pastor Gordon Wiersma wrote during his 2021 sabbatical.



TUESDAY AFTERNOON (1:31GST)

It is good  
to feel small,  
to be small.

Sky darkening  
and lightn-ing;  
trees quickening, flailing, quivering;  
sounds cacophon-ing  
(gusts, crickets, traffic, leaves) ;  
air burgeoning  
(hot, cool, moist, frantic, fragrant, earnest) ;  
waiting.  
Ready.

It is good  
to feel small,  
to be small.

Scents merging;  
time retreating;  
earth yearning;  
drops urging.

Life is large.  
'The unlikeliness of being'  
(a poet once said?)  
demands attention,  
urgency, even,  
toward 'very good.'  
(1:31GenesisStandardTime:  
eternity past calls to the present)

Breeze exhaling;  
dissonance resolving;  
drips playful-ing;  
birds calling;  
stray flash rumbling;  
day returning and receding.

It is good  
to feel small;  
to be-ing  
toward  
'very good'.

GSW 9/7/21