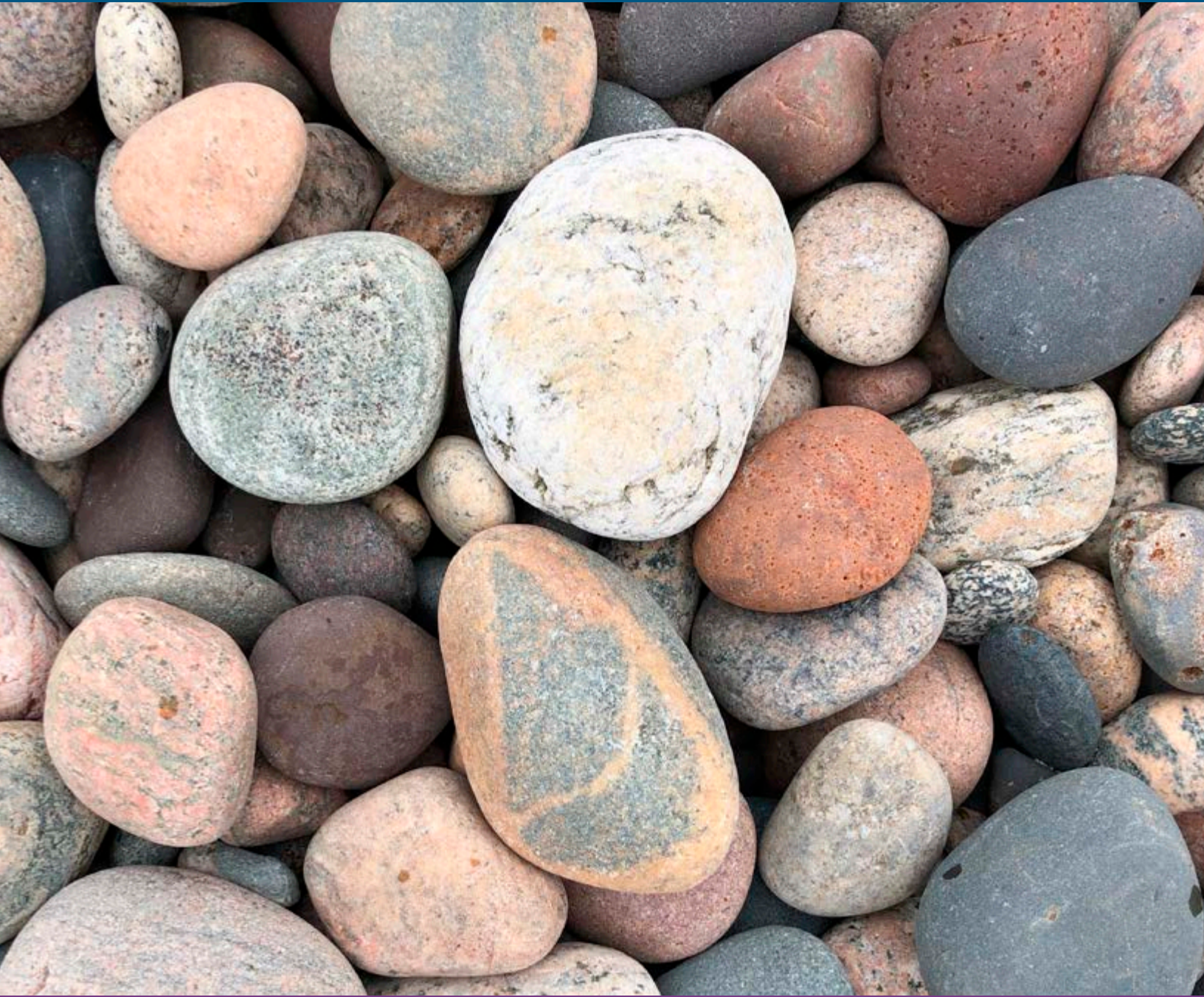




SALT & LIGHT

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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
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Photo by Kevin Russell

An Invitation to Be

Jill Russell, Co-Pastor

I'll be honest, I don't read all the newsletters that come into my office, enclosing fundraising envelopes—even from my favorite organizations. There are just too many of them and not enough hours in the day. But I am glad that I noticed an article on the front of *The Christian Century* about a sibling Rabbi team who serve side by side in a New York city synagogue. They spoke of their ministry in this way: "Even as we promote the concepts of *tikkun olam* (the repair and fixing of the world) and *tikkun middot* (the fixing of one's character), so too do we work to develop spiritual practices that people can utilize."¹ They were writing for *The Christian Century* because they like to quote in their sermons writers and speakers from many traditions, including voices found within the pages of that periodical.

I was drawn to those two ideas of looking outward to the repair of the world and looking inward to the nurture and repair of the interior life and character of the self, not unlike our language of social justice and spiritual formation.

During the program year, we offer a lot of—well, for lack of a better word—*programming* at Hope Church. In the summer, we slow down, and much of our programming and meeting schedules go into hiatus. What if we entered this quieter summer season with an intention taken from our Presbyterian siblings' Westminster Catechism question and answer #1: "What is the chief end of human beings? To glorify God and enjoy God forever." Enjoyment of God is quite a compelling way to enter into summer. What if we thought about the repair of the world and

¹ *Inside CC*, A Quarterly Newsletter for those who support the Journalistic Ministry of The Christian Century, May 2023. "Donor Profile: Perry and Leah Berkowitz."

of the social justice we are called to engage this summer as coming out to revel in the beauty of ourselves and of our kindred who are often treated as other and less than? What if we enjoyed God through the great gifts and contributions of our African American members and neighbors at Juneteenth or our LGBTQIA members and neighbors at Pride? What if we looked at the fixing of one's character or the building up

of our spiritual formation not as another project to "do" but an invitation to just "be"?

Enjoy the beauty of creation, enjoy the warmth of the sun, the fruit of the earth, the change of pace, the chance to get away if you can, the time to sit on the deck or chat on the front stoop. What if this slowing down is not somehow a stepping away from *tikkun olam* and *tikkun middot* but rather a different way of stepping into

them? Come party with the community, go step away into some solitude. But however you enter into this summer invitation be sure to bring with you a spirit of glorious enjoyment! Wherever we can glorify God and enjoy God in the community between us, in the natural world all around us, or in the quiet spaces within us—that is where we need to be!

Peace to you,
Pastor Jill

Guests Bring Unique Perspectives

Jane Dickie, Personnel Committee

Summer is upon us, and once again we will hear some new voices in the pulpit.

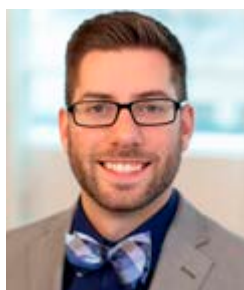
Hope Church has a tradition of asking people from outside (and a few from our own pews) to preach in the summer. This practice was developed to bring diverse voices into our pulpit and to provide a little summer sabbath to our pastors to cover vacation and trip leaves without additional preaching responsibilities.

The Consistory approved an adjusted summer preaching schedule that would provide our pastors, Gordon Wiersma and Jill Russell, the time and space for reading, planning for the coming program year, and professional exploration. In addition, it gives Hope Church the opportunity to invite guest preachers who brought to our congregation a range of voices. Over the years, the gift of these additional voices has greatly blessed our congregation.

With the recommendation of the Personnel Committee, the Consistory has approved

a similar preaching schedule for the summer of 2023. We are pleased to introduce (or reintroduce) these voices to you.

June 18: Kyle Kooyers



The Associate Director for the Kaufman Interfaith Institute, within the Division of Inclusion

and Equity at Grand Valley State University, Kyle Kooyers is responsible for coordinating community-based interfaith engagement, dialogue, and relationship-building activities; networking religious, secular, and spiritual communities as well as social service organizations; and coordinating the efforts of the West Michigan Interfaith Council. Kyle is a facilitator for the Inclusion and Equity Institute at GVSU, training faculty, staff, students as well as community partners in areas including Anti-Racism White Consciousness,

Multi-Faith Considerations in Patient Care, Anti-Racism in Faith Communities, and Interfaith Inclusion. He serves as a member of the Post-Acute Care Committee for Corewell Health and is ordained within the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A).

July 2: Angel Lopez



Angel Lopez grew up in Chiapas, Mexico, immigrating to Canada as a young adult and later to the

U.S. His journey galvanized in him a heart for others facing the uncertainty, danger, loneliness, and learning curve of being an immigrant. Angel received his MDiv from Western Seminary in 2014. Angel collaborates with Frontera de Gracia as a Hope-Church-supported RCA missionary, integrating his work with immigrants and asylees here in Holland with the systems and experiences that caused them to leave home and

make their way to the border. Angel educates people about the border situation and provides advocacy resources for immigrants. He also works with congregations to develop Christian witnesses who embrace and build relationships with migrants in their sojourner process. He and his wife, Janelle, also an RCA pastor and former missionary, live in Holland with their daughters.

July 9: Leanne VanDyk



Having recently retired from her position as President of Columbia Theological Seminary in Atlanta, Leanne Van Dyk has returned to Holland. Having studied at Calvin College, Western Michigan University, Calvin Theological Seminary, and

Princeton Theological Seminary, she taught at San Francisco Theological Seminary, Graduate Theological Union, and Western Theological Seminary. Another expression of her passion for theological education is publishing which includes editing or authoring *A More Profound Alleluia: Theology and Worship in Harmony*, *Believing in Jesus Christ*, and *The Desire of Divine Love: The Atonement Theology of John McLeod Campbell*, among others. Leanne is making the most of her more-open calendar with travel, hikes, knitting, cooking, and hanging with her dog, Delta (not named for a Covid variant).

July 30: Ron Rienstra



Ron Rienstra is the Director of Worship Life and Professor of Preaching & Worship Arts at Western Theological Seminary. He is an ordained minister in the RCA, an author of many articles, a few dozen songs, and a couple books.

He is the author and composer of “The Lord Be with You” communion liturgy often used here at Hope Church. He and his wife Debra have three grown children, a multiplicity of living-room instruments, and a tame backyard they are slowly rewilding. And yes, his mother Marchiene Rienstra was pastor at Hope Church back in the day.

August 13: Lynn Japinga



A graduate of Hope College, where she started pre-med but was soon seduced by American religious history, Lynn also studied at Princeton Theological Seminary and Union Seminary. She is currently Professor

of Religion at Hope College as well as, as an ordained RCA minister, serving as pastor and interim pastor for RCA congregations. We at Hope Church have benefited from her far-reaching research and publication, which she’s shared in Adult Ed classes and beyond. Among her published books are *Feminism and Christianity: An Essential Guide*, *From Daughters to Disciples: Women’s Stories from the New Testament*, *From Widows to Warriors: Women’s Stories from the Old Testament*, and *Loyalty and Loss: The Reformed Church in America, 1945–1994*. Lynn enjoys walking (preferably with a dog) and the Jersey Shore.

August 27: Winfred Burns



Born in Chicago, Winfred Burns II graduated from Langston University with a degree in Finance. He’s worked in banking, while also accepting his call to ministry and preaching a message of hope and salvation.

Winfred served on the worship team and as a minister at Maple Ave. Ministries with Rev. Dr. Denise Kingdom-Grier while finishing his Masters of Divinity at Western Theological Seminary. He went on to serve Tabernacle Community Church before, in October 2022, becoming the lead pastor at Maple Ave. Ministries. He hopes to continue to carry on Maple Ave’s mandate described in its “3Cs”: **centered** in Christ, **called** to the core city, **committed** to being a multi-ethnic, multigenerational community reconciled to Christ and to each other.



Gathering the Children

The last few years have meant a lot of change for many of us, and the Children's Ministry at Hope Church is no exception. To catch us up, Sarah Kolk interviewed Jocelyn VanHeest, the Children's Ministry Director.

Sarah: So many things have changed in the last few years, Jocelyn! What are some of the ways that the children's ministry program has changed at Hope Church?

Jocelyn: Well, everyone had COVID issues, of course. So we started doing different things, like weekly emails and deliveries, just trying to keep connected. For the most part, I think families felt connected during that time as much as they could. The transition back was difficult partly because of construction [on the 2nd floor of the Christian Education wing]; we were downstairs all last year.

When we did move back upstairs, there was only one room available and attendance has been very up and down, so we combined Children in Worship. There have been some unexpected bonuses from that, though. I think the kids really know each other; they are working together, and the older ones seem to enjoy the younger ones. The younger ones, of course, always love the bigger kids, and some really good friendships have come with that.

With the range of ages, we're doing a mixture of Children in Worship stories. We're keeping the same timeline, but some weeks I use a younger children's worship story and then supplement it for the older kids, and sometimes we do the older kids' story with their figures and then do a little more explaining for the younger kids. But the kids are really adaptable. So it's gone pretty well.

The Children in Worship leadership has

changed, too. It's just me for the most part, and Michael De Vries, who's been helping for about 17 years. We'll see when the fall comes around. Right now we have fewer fourth and fifth graders, but as the younger ones move up, we might have to make some changes.

We've done more family and outside events, and I send a weekly email, where I communicate to parents ideas or resources they could use. We've added an Easter egg hunt and a Pentecost craft, along with the regular activities we've always done, like with Advent.

Church school is still offered before church, but attendance depends a lot on the Adult Ed offering or whatever else might be going on, like a book group or choir practice. That's made Children in Worship a little different; I've tried to incorporate more teaching, like using a timeline to show relationships between stories if kids have missed other weeks.

Sarah: What plans or changes do you hope for in the next few years?

Jocelyn: I hope to have at least two worship centers open: a younger one through kindergarten or first and an older one. I'd like to have at least a month of orientation with the younger ones to help them understand how worship centers work. I always hope that we can try new things, but I would like to bring back favorite traditions like our Children's Sabbath. We have so many new members at church, and I would like to go back to finding ways to help the adults and children know each other.

Sarah: Right, and that leads into ways that adults and others not as involved with children now could maybe volunteer or

help out? You recently asked for volunteers with the nursery, for example?

Jocelyn: Yes, which has gotten a good response! I think another thing I may try this summer will be to involve congregation members who have special interests or expertise to engage with the kids—it might be a passion for caring for creation, or social justice, or something like that. I think it would be nice for the kids to see new faces and for them to be introduced to the wide variety of interests the adults have in our church.

Sarah: What about helping in the worship centers? Or helping new members see what happens up there?

Jocelyn: Right, we used to have a sort of open house, when members could come up and be guests in our worship center on Sunday, and I do hope to bring that back this fall.

Sarah: Changing directions a bit: some of our newer Hope Church members may not know you as well, or how you started with children's ministry. Can you share anything about your background in this area?

Jocelyn: Well, I'm a minister's kid, so I'd always been very connected to education and children in church. I grew up learning that you make a baptismal commitment to children, and so my involvement started even as a youth myself.

When I joined Hope Church in, maybe, 1983, I started teaching church school. Then, perhaps in 1984, I was introduced to the curriculum for Children in Worship at the seminary as they were writing it. When we started it up, there were five of us, and every week we would make the story for the next week and work through it. I've been doing it pretty steadily since then!

And as for other parts of the ministry, at different times, I've led both church school and Children in Worship—one or the other or both, as staff positions changed.

Sarah: So you were involved since the beginning of the Children in Worship curriculum.

Jocelyn: Yes, I took a few years off, but I've always loved it. It's changed over the years. When we first started, we were with the very basic Children in Worship that Sonya Stewart developed, for younger kids. Then when Colette [Volkema DeNooyer] brought her version out, we started changing into that approach, to one where the stories are bigger and longer.

So I've been doing Children in Worship a long time. A lot of churches have stopped because it's not as energetic. When I talk to children's ministry directors at other churches, they have videos or bigger productions, but they also have more kids and so it's a different feel. But I think there's still a core group of Children in Worship leaders who are really devoted to it.

I think it's enriching for the kids. They enjoy that different pace when they come in, and it is simpler. Kids are asked to wonder, and that's one thing that they have not stopped doing—they still have great wondering questions at the end. That's always my favorite part to see what interests them or what catches their eye, or what connections they make.

Sarah: It does seem like something that would be hard to give up here at Hope, because it is so characteristic of the children's ministry here.

Jocelyn: And I think visitors are just amazed. It's such a foreign experience to so many people, but also, since it's sort of Montessori-based, some recognize that. But when we started it here, it was pretty foreign to a lot of people. Now it's familiar and very cherished for our kids.

Sarah: Do you want to say something about how the Christian Education Ministry itself is changing?

Jocelyn: [See related article on page 12.] What I'll miss most from the Christian Education Ministry is the brainstorming. I am very open and welcome new ideas from anyone who has them for me! Moira Gargano suggested that we make palm crosses; we set up a time, we did it, and it was fun! I would hope that other church members will reach out if they have an idea that we can tie in to the children or families. Now that I send an email to families every week, I can emphasize activities, such as Caring for Creation doing a bike ride.

Sarah: Anything else you think the congregation should know about children's ministry?

Jocelyn: Well, I hope that the congregation knows that for the gathering time after worship, we are moving the kids towards the chapel into that ramp area. That time is a lovely way for people to spend time together, but parents are conscious that their kids are running around. We're aware of it, and we're trying to make that happen.

We want the kids to be present and we want them to interact with the adults. Anytime an adult wants to talk to the children, just ask them what they did! They're very good kids, very talkative, and I think they really enjoy that interaction.



Hope Church Youth Travel to... West Michigan!

Phil Quinn, Associate Pastor of Discipleship

A key component of discipleship has always involved journeying into unfamiliar spaces to witness and participate in the work of the Spirit in that place. On these journeys, our assumptions are challenged. We notice realities we might overlook in our own daily lives. We witness the work of people who have committed themselves to confronting injustice, to feeding the hungry, to making space for those on the margins... people who have set aside what is comfortable to work toward greater equity, justice, and shalom. We go on these journeys to be convicted, to be inspired, to be transformed, and to return to our own communities with eyes to see what we once overlooked. We return ready to engage our own community in new ways.

This June, we want to do exactly that—but we want to do it in the very community where we live and work and learn and play: West Michigan. There are people walking the same streets, attending the same schools, and drinking the same city water who are living very different lives from our own. Instead of traveling to a distant city, we want to take a week to get to know the place we live through different eyes. Each day will be spent visiting sites and organizations that are dedicated to meeting needs in the community

that it can be easy to overlook—poverty, housing, hunger, animal welfare, ecological preservation, and a number of other critical issues. We will have hands-on opportunities to serve and learn how to get involved with important work happening in our own community and neighborhoods. Beyond that, we will also be exposed to organizations that have volunteer opportunities that our young people may discover matches their passion and gifts—opportunities that our students might choose to invest in long term, deepening relationships with the ministries in the community and our neighbors alike.

We will also take time to play—beach, bonfires, minigolf, and a number of other fun events! We will sleep at the church, enjoying games and movies before bed. Students are encouraged to commit to stay for the entire experience, but those who can only participate for portions of the week will absolutely be welcome as well.

For those interested in supporting this discipleship experience, we will post sign-ups to provide meals, and we would love your prayers for open eyes, ears, and hearts, that we may return from this journey with greater awareness of and compassion for the community we live in every day.



Learning to Give

Hal Alsum, Deacon

I vaguely remember my first experience with formalized giving. If memory serves, I received the extravagant amount of one dollar on Saturday as a weekly allowance, and ten percent of that went to church the very next day. I imagine that this was the experience of many CRC kids growing up in the 80s and 90s. That experience was taken as a given then and probably now.

The first time I really thought about giving, however, came years later in college when a small group of guys did a deep dive into the Sermon on the Mount for a semester-long Bible Study. Though we were all on a mission to memorize the whole of it, I think I made it the furthest by getting through the beginning of chapter six. It was through internalizing the words by memorization that I had to wrestle with what it meant to give in such a way that I would never receive a congratulatory response of any kind.

What are we supposed to do? Give and just know that we're a good person because of it? How much nicer to get a pat on the back or a thank-you note! But really, not even letting your left hand know what your right hand is doing? That's some real spy-level action! What if you share a joint bank account with your spouse? I can tell you from experience that it brings up an awkward conversation, especially if they are the higher earner of the two. Did I fail because my better half found me out? Or was I the better half originally but lost that status because she found out my giving?

Hermeneutics and modern banking practices aside, my next formative experience with giving was from reading Tracy Kidder's *Mountains Beyond Mountains*, a biography of the late Paul Farmer. That must be the most inspiring book ever written, yet I, as the reader, sympathized with Farmer's associates because his generosity of spirit was beyond our ability to relate to. The main takeaway was his "preferential option for the poor," a principle he adopted from working alongside Catholic priests in Latin America. Farmer is an inspiration whose guiding principles are unattainable for "mere mortals," but the challenge his work puts forward reframes how I, and others I've spoken with, view the world, as well as informs our day-to-day lives with a more generous attitude.

Now as my tenure as a deacon draws to a close, I again reflect upon giving. One of my thoughts is that I'm not sure an institution can give in secret. Transparency is vital for an organization to be as healthy as it can be, and the fact of the matter is that you're not really giving away your money. You're giving away other people's money, and they might not have the same priorities as you. There are needs all across the globe and no shortage of needs right in our own backyard. It might be nice to have Hope Church's priorities aligned. On the other hand, such homogeneous thinking might not be the best illustration of the Body of Christ. But again, answering who Christ would give to is an open and valid question that I hope would challenge our individual as well as collective priorities.

Hope Church Reads!

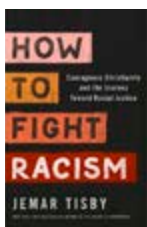
Pat Bloem and Ruth Stegeman, Justice & Reconciliation Ministry

The Justice & Reconciliation Ministry has been exploring books for a possible Hope Church “big read” on anti-racism in the upcoming ministry year. We love how the books listed below open our eyes and inspire us to action. However, each of these can be disturbing in its own way, as it should be if we are to seriously explore our nation’s past and present racism. Please be forewarned of the difficulty of such a journey.



The Color of Compromise: *The Truth About the American Church's Complicity in Racism*, Jemar Tisby, 2019. Why

should we become an anti-racist congregation? In stark terms, Tisby answers this question by recounting the church’s fight against Black equality, beginning in the colonial era, through enslavement, the civil war, Jim Crow, the civil rights movement, and Black Lives Matter. Finally, he urges Christians to act now for racial reconciliation and describes actions to take.



How to Fight Racism: *Courageous Christianity and the Journey Toward Racial Justice*, Jemar Tisby, 2021. What might we do

as an anti-racist congregation? This book walks us through three categories of racial justice actions—awareness, relationships, and commitments—that have the potential to transform both us and our communities.



March: Book One, John Lewis, 2013. Many of us are hazy on facts of Black history and of twentieth-century attempts to bring justice to our communities and our country. Perhaps we only vaguely recognize John Lewis’ name or have never read a graphic memoir. Here is a chance to get smart about all of the above, plus feel and see the embodiment of Tisby’s ideas. And, if you love *March One*, Books 2 (2015) and 3 (2016), contain moving stories that bring more historical events and figures to life.



Ain't Burned All the Bright, by Jason Reynolds, with art by Jason Griffin, 2022. For all the Hope Church artists and lovers of art, this may be the book for you. In three sentences and many carefully constructed collages, Reynolds & Griffin provide insight into how Black Americans experienced the summer of 2020.



Dear Martin, by Nic Stone, 2017. This slim, compelling novel invites Hope adults into a young adult world of discrimination and despair, biracial romance, cops, and racial profiling. While the reflections on what Martin Luther King might say or do today provide a rich conversation for our purposes, this book is not for the faint of heart! Readers need to know that there is no sugar coating,

nor do the characters speak in Sunday School language. But the story connects beautifully with Tisby’s ideas and does not back away from the complicity that we as a church are trying to confront. Please choose this book deliberately.

Finally, consider spending 20 minutes with two powerful picture books, with or without children in your laps:

- *We Shall Overcome*, illustrated by award winner Bryan Collier, 2021, is not only beautiful but inspiring. Be sure to spend a few minutes looking at the historical references.



- *Let the Children March*, by Clark-Robinson, 2018, tells a story about an ugly part of our country’s history, yet it ends with triumph. We recommend that you read it through alone first, as it will provoke many questions from the young. The book connects perfectly with the John Lewis graphic memoirs and contains helpful—and disturbing—historical back matter.



Stay tuned for information regarding which of these options we will include in our common reading and ways everyone can participate. As the Justice & Reconciliation Ministry finalizes plans through the summer, we’ll share updates. We’re grateful to be able to explore challenging issues as a community of faith as we follow God’s call to Beloved Community for all people.

Accessibility: A Continuing Focus at Hope Church

By Terry DeYoung

This is the first in a series on accessibility. Terry is recently retired as the Coordinator for Disability Concerns for the RCA.

Historically, people with disabilities have been marginalized and silenced, and often this has been more true in the church than in the world. Scripture does not support this injustice, but the church has been reluctant to recognize it or act on it.

A voice cries out:

“In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God.

Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill made low; the uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places a plain.

Then the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all people shall see it together, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken.”

As someone with a lifelong physical disability who grew up in the church and served within it my entire life, I have come to read this text from Isaiah 40—whether in Advent or any other time in the church year—as a prophetic call to the church to provide a generous welcome of physical, programmatic, and vocational access for all people.

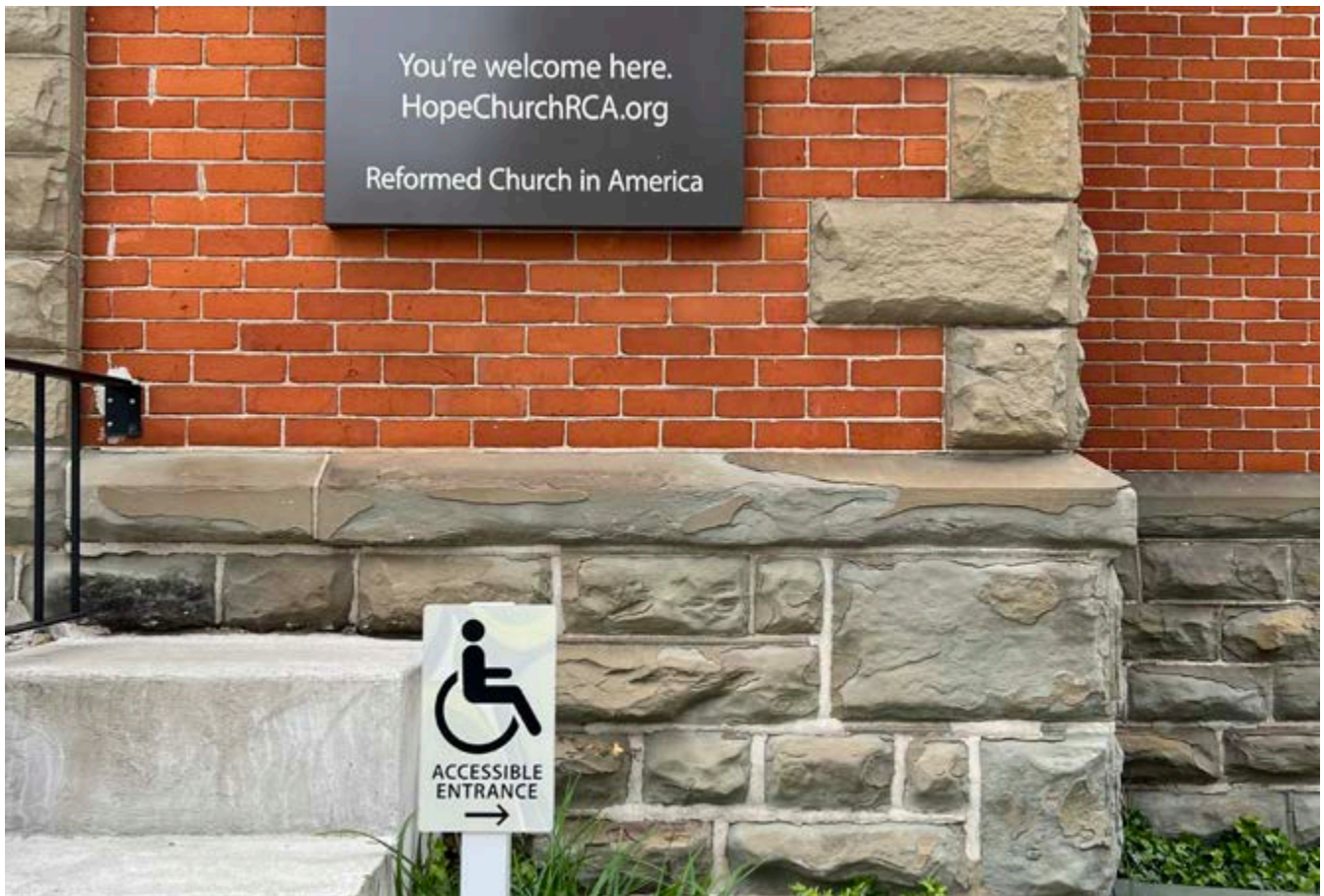
Some churches do this well, and for those that do, it's not by accident. In many ways I've found Hope Church to be a leader in providing access to people with disabilities, partly because we realize accessibility is never finished and we don't have everything figured out (which may be why Hope Church has an Accessibility Ministry!).

The changes made to Hope Church during the Living Hope renovations over the past six years have featured a range of accessibility improvements, some more obvious than others. From the outset, all renovations were to be “welcoming, hospitable, and accessible to all.” Consider these improvements found in the 2015 project list of facility renovations:

- More options for barrier-free entrance to the sanctuary
- Barrier-free access (or at least reduced barriers) to the chancel
- A weather-protecting canopy to protect everyone (including people who need more time to get out of a vehicle)
- Improved lighting in a number of areas (which can be helpful to various vision impairments)
- Improvements to HVAC (which reduces interference for hearing-aid users)
- ADA-compliant directional signage and door levers (rather than knobs) throughout
- Door openers to the restrooms
- Making the Sunday morning experience more intuitive and easily navigable for everyone (including families with mobility challenges)
- An elevator to the second floor of the education wing.

This focus on improved accessibility for people with disabilities is not an outlier or recent add-on for Hope Church. Judy Tanis Parr's exhaustive volume published 10 years ago, *Hope Church: The First 150 Years, 1862-2012*, describes numerous accounts demonstrating that accessibility measures have long been a matter of importance to Hope Church.

Ramps: As far back as 60 years ago, Hope Church had a ramp to the sanctuary. A ramp is what attracted Helen and Millard DeWeerd, a wheelchair user who had polio at age 5, to come to Hope Church in 1962 to be married. Helen and Millard wanted to be married in a church, but no other church in Holland was accessible to Millard. One day, when they noticed a rough wooden ramp leading to the Hope Church entrance, Helen and Millard stopped by, introduced themselves to pastor Bill Hillegonds, and asked if he would marry them. Hillegonds agreed, and he added that if they kept coming to Hope Church, a more permanent ramp would



be built. It was, and the DeWeerds were active members of Hope Church for the rest of their lives (Millard died in 1993 and Helen in 2020).

Transportation: In the mid-1990s, Hope Church began to explore transportation for residents of Freedom Village, and in December 2000 the first busload of residents from Freedom Village and Resthaven's Warm Friend arrived. Many have found this continuing ministry to be a welcome means of transportation and a way to participate in worship and community.

Hearing enhancement: Hope Church began radio broadcasts of its traditional worship service in 1953. The broadcasts on WHTC started as an experiment. Besides the public relations benefits, homebound members found the broadcasts helpful, and those who were hard of hearing could turn up the volume on their radios to suit their needs. In 1995 the first hearing-enhancement system was installed in Hope Church, but people rarely used the headset receivers to access the infrared system. A short time later, when Hope Church member David Myers experienced the dramatic benefits of an induction loop system while visiting a church in Scotland, he

provided incentives for a hearing loop system to be installed in Hope Church's sanctuary and Commons in 2002 (and did the same for other churches and public venues in West Michigan).

Becoming a more accessible church requires intentionality, listening, and action, which have been values of Hope Church for a very long time. In 1969-70, with the help of Hope Church member and Western Theological Seminary professor Jim Cook (during a sabbatical year), Hope Church established eight task forces to seek out areas of need for Christian action in the community of Holland. Several of the eight task forces focused on groups of disabled people, including a sheltered workshop for people with disabilities (Kandu Industries), worship and Bible study for those with intellectual and developmental disabilities (called Faith to Faith), making daily phone calls to elderly people living alone to ensure their health and well-being, and personal outreach to people considering suicide due to mental health challenges.

In the next issue of *Salt & Light*, I'll explore the benefits of accessibility to people with and without disabilities.

Ministry Structures in a Living Community

Lois Maassen, *Discerning Our Future*

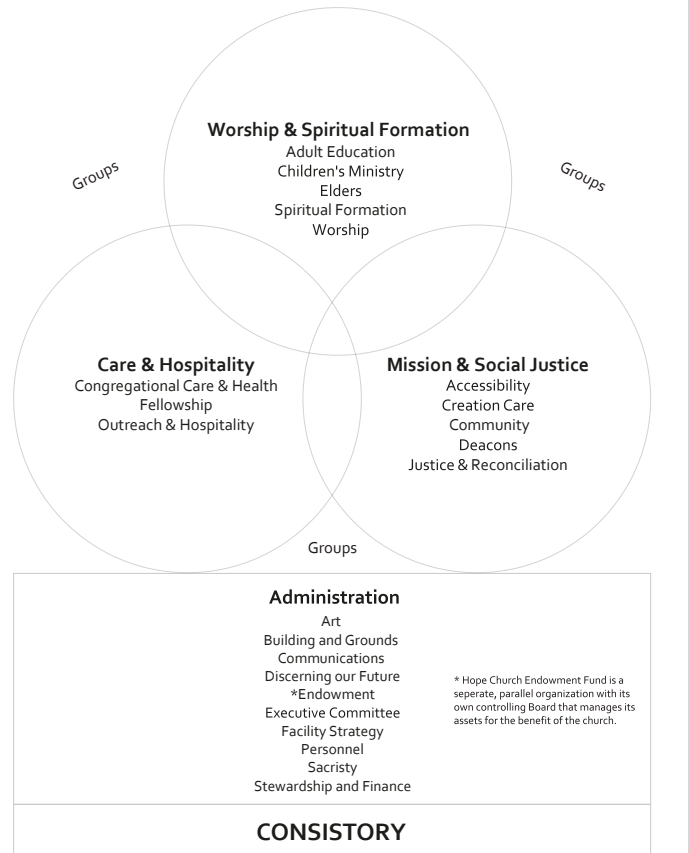
Hope Church's ministries and committees serve us well, inviting all of us to participate in living out our mission. The diagram to the right shows the results of the work of Discerning Our Future several years ago, mapping our many groups to our intentions together. We organize them in categories--Worship & Spiritual Formation, Care & Hospitality, Mission & Social Justice, and Administration--to keep us alert for possible synergies or duplicate effort.

While the names of many of these ministries and committees sometimes seem to be written on stone tablets, we do have a history of change and evolution. Sometimes a need emerges that we realize needs focus to be addressed; sometimes a ministry itself may identify a need for change; occasionally a group has run its course and disbands. In 2012, for example, what was then the Community & World Ministry asked for a narrower agenda so that it could build momentum. As a result of a workshop, the global initiatives were transferred to the Board of Deacons and a Reconciliation (now Justice & Reconciliation) Ministry was formed; the new Community Ministry could focus its work locally. After the 2017 Living Hope Capital Campaign process, the need for a Facility Strategy Committee was identified so that we could better project our needs over longer periods of time. The Art Committee took shape in recognition of the significant collection of artwork at Hope Church, with the intention to care well for what we own and to manage any acquisitions.

The Worship & Spiritual Formation cluster of groups has evolved most recently--and may continue to evolve. Previously, a Christian Education Ministry was the "parent" to both Adult Education and Children's Ministry. Given long experience with that structure, Pastors Gordon Wiersma and Jill Russell and Children's Ministry Director Jocelyn VanHeest proposed, and Consistory approved, the simplification of the structure: The Christian Education Ministry is disbanded, and Adult Education and Children's Ministry will each stand on their own, both with much leadership from staff.

The newest component of the Worship & Spiritual Formation groups is currently named Spiritual Formation. It was originally proposed

Hope Church in Ministry



shortly before the pandemic; the timing made developing programs for small groups or retreats unproductive for a season. Since conditions have thankfully changed, Pastors Jill Russell and Phil Quinn are partnering over this summer to finalize the name (is Discipleship part of the name?) and the ministry's full plans. The youth ministries, Bible Pride, and Pub Theology will fall under the guidance of this group; new programs are intended to include study opportunities for adults in a variety of formats.

To develop these plans, Pastors Jill and Phil plan to build the Ministry team through doing spiritual formation work together, understanding what is meant by that term, and then designing ways to engage the broader congregation. Contact either of them to learn more or express your interest in this work.



General Synod 2023 Preview

Dan Griswold

Dan is an RCA minister and a member of Hope Church. Over 30 years in the denomination, he's had many opportunities to learn about its assemblies, commissions, and General Synod.

Every June (unless there's a pandemic), the Reformed Church in America holds its annual assembly, the General Synod. This event convenes elder and minister delegates from every classis and regional synod in the denomination, along with non-voting delegates from various commissions and boards, plus staff necessary for keeping the whole thing on track. General Synod 2023 will meet in Pella, Iowa, from June 8 until June 13. It is always a very busy experience for those involved, with a day's obligations often starting at 8:00 a.m. and wrapping up after 9:00 p.m.

Holland Classis is sending six delegate to General Synod 2023, three elders and three ministers. They are Ryan Boes (senior pastor of Third Reformed), Jennifer Prince (elder from Christ Memorial), Felix Theonugraha (president of Western Seminary), Bill VanAuken (elder from Trinity Reformed), Hugo Vasquez (elder and commissioned pastor from Eagle's Wings Church), and Travis West (professor at Western Seminary). In addition, Carol Bechtel (professor at Western Seminary) and Chad Pierce (senior pastor of Faith Christian Reformed) will be General Synod Professor delegates.

Some General Synod meetings are dominated by major reports that are highly anticipated and hotly contested. This one may be not so volatile. There are no major reports of a fractious nature on the agenda. Nor are there many classis overtures. But there is plenty on the agenda to stretch the delegates.

The main conversations will likely revolve around the Restructuring Team formed in the aftermath of the decisions of the 2021 General Synod. The team's task is to explore and propose ways of restructuring the RCA so that we can better live together in our differences and, even more,

engage in ministry together. The Restructuring Team has offered an interim report, with no recommendations. They had their first meeting just in March of 2022, and they expect to issue their final report next year. A lot of time will surely be set aside at this Synod for discussion of this interim report and feedback from delegates.

Three overtures have been submitted regarding the Restructuring Team's work. These express concerns about lack of transparency, suppression of dissenting opinions, and prior assumptions of the Team that appear to dismiss the theological affirmations implicit in RCA understandings of ordained office and assemblies.

There are a certainly other important items on the agenda besides matters of denominational restructure:

- The Commission on Theology has a brief and insightful paper regarding the Russian Orthodox Church's support of Russia's war against Ukraine, particularly whether the RCA might consider a full break in communion (severing of ecumenical ties) with the Russian Orthodox Church.
- The Commission on Christian Action has put forth a recommendation on workers' rights, which appears in part to target the use of non-disclosure agreements by RCA senior denominational staff.
- An overture from a classis asks the Synod to direct the Commission on Church Order to review an apparent conflict between top-down government of the General Synod Council and the bottom-up and conversational government of RCA polity. The concern expressed in the overture is particularly with regard to the use of Carver Process Governance by the General Synod Council for the past 20 years.

Please pray for the delegates to General Synod as they seek to act wisely and faithfully.

FOR THE HANGED AND BEATEN.
FOR THE SHOT, DROWNED, AND BURNED.
FOR THE TORTURED, TORMENTED, AND TERRORIZED.
FOR THOSE ABANDONED BY THE RULE OF LAW.

WE WILL REMEMBER.

WITH HOPE BECAUSE HOPELESSNESS IS THE ENEMY OF JUSTICE.
WITH COURAGE BECAUSE PEACE REQUIRES BRAVERY.
WITH PERSISTENCE BECAUSE JUSTICE IS A CONSTANT STRUGGLE.
WITH FAITH BECAUSE WE SHALL OVERCOME.

Reflections on Birmingham, Montgomery, and Selma

By Jane Schuyler

In January, Larry and I attended the Association of Partners in Christian Education (APCE, formerly Association of Presbyterian Church Educators) annual event in Birmingham, Alabama. Eloise Van Heest has served as president of this ecumenical group (five denominations) and was the 1996 Lifetime Achievement Award recipient. In addition to the inspiring plenaries and worship, the on- and off-site workshops/experiences offer opportunities to learn and engage with a local community (events are held in a different city each year).

During a pre-conference workshop, we toured the Birmingham Civil Rights Institute (BCRI) and the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church. Both are across the street from Kelly Ingram Park. The displays at the BCRI are set up along timelines of civil and human rights history. Following a movie in the Orientation Theater, we walked through the historical displays witnessing the separate drinking fountains, segregated schools, and Martin Luther King, Jr.'s cell, from which he wrote *Letter from Birmingham Jail*. In addition to the famous quote, "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere," King stated in the letter the four basic steps of a nonviolent campaign: "collection

of the facts to determine whether injustices exist; negotiation; self-purification; and direct action."

Walking across the street to the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church, we noted the Wales stained glass window, the image of a Black crucified Christ with the words, "You Do It To Me...!" given after the bombing by the people of Wales. We learned that it took the church two years to accept the gift, as they were concerned that it would make them again a target.

While telling the horrific story of how white supremacists planted a bomb at the church killing Addie Mae Collins, Carole Robertson, Cynthia Wesley (all 14), and Denise McNair (11), the church insists on also telling the story of other two youths who were murdered in Birmingham that day. A Black youth was killed by police and one was murdered by a mob of white men. These terrifying acts of domestic terrorism created public outrage and produced political pressure that helped ensure passage of the

Civil Rights Act of 1964. A Black youth in our group wore a sweatshirt stating, "Black Voters Matter."

Our on-site workshop featured Bernard LaFayette, a Freedom Rider, a participant in the 1960 sit-in campaign, and director of SNCC's



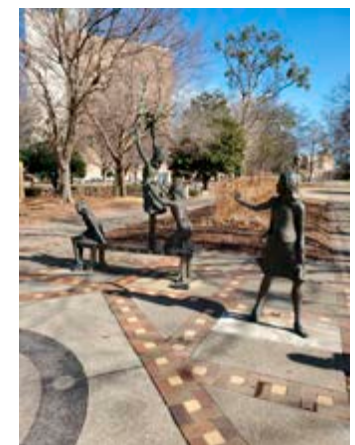
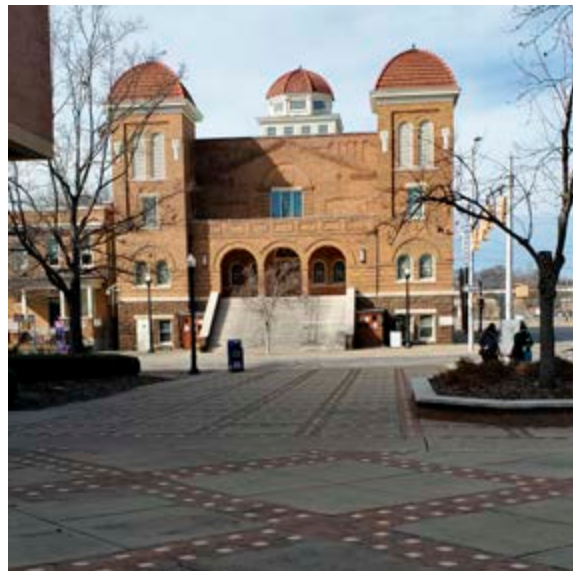
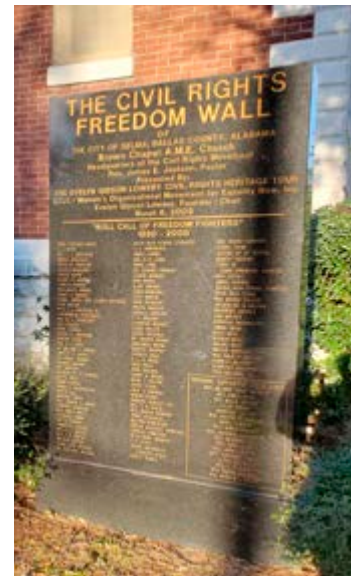
(Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee) Alabama voter registration project in Selma. LaFayette served 40 days in Mississippi's notorious Parchman Prison. He sang some of the freedom songs that the Riders sang so loudly and persistently that they were punished by having their mattresses taken away. They also used the time to talk about the purpose of the movement, turning the jail into a university (teaching James Lawson's nonviolent principles).

On a day off, four of us hired a tour guide in Selma. We were able to see the Edmund Pettus Bridge, Brown Chapel AME Church, Lowndes Interpretive Center, and the National Voting Rights Museum and Institute before driving the Selma to Montgomery National Historic Trail. The following day in Montgomery (a bus tour arranged by APCE), we toured the new Legacy Museum and the National Memorial for Peace and Justice. The immersion into the Black presence in America from slavery and lynching to the civil rights

movement and the modern-day scourge of mass incarceration is haunting and transformational.

What do you gain from traveling to the sites where the rights movement took place? Bernard LaFayette explains: "When people say, why is this happening? Why did that happen? You got to have the background, and you got to have what may sound too intellectual: the contingencies of reinforcement. What are the things that cause things to happen now? Why are people still behaving the way they behave? People don't understand that this is passed on. That's one of the things that people must understand when they go to museums and that sort of thing. It's not that you want to preserve that behavior, but you want to understand the history and where it came from. It is the interpretation of those experiences that really makes the difference."

In 2024, APCE will be in St. Louis. Join us! Stephanie and Phil Doeschot, who periodically worship at Hope Church, will lead worship at the event.





“The Moon Belongs to Everyone....”

By Peter Boogaart, Creation Care Ministry

The moon belongs to everyone—The best things in life are free.
The stars belong to everyone—They gleam there for you and me.
The flowers in spring, the robins that sing, The sunbeams that shine.
They're yours! They're mine! And love can come to everyone—
The best things in life are free.

— *Buddy DeSylva and Lew Brown (lyrics), 1927 musical Good News*

There's an old story that I'm told used to circulate in the native American community:

A young boy, walking in the woods, finds two pups. He brings them home to live under his own roof. As the pups mature, it becomes apparent that they have very different natures. One is gentle and playful. The other is aggressive and combative. Observing their differences, the boy goes to one of the old elders to ask, “When they both grow up, which one will dominate? That depends,” says the elder, “upon which one you feed.”

Perhaps with your Biblical ear you're hearing an echo; a vague sense that the old elder got it right. You might be remembering that one of our wise old elders offered quite similar advice. The apostle Paul, to his Philippian community, once said:

Finally, beloved, whatever is true,
whatever is honorable, whatever is just,
whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing,
whatever is commendable, if there is any
excellence and if there is anything worthy
of praise, think about these things.

You are what you eat. What you take in determines who you are. Those of us with unhealthy eating habits understand the push and pull between our two natures. Of course, this observation applies to more than just calories. Who we are as persons also depends upon where we spend our time and with whom we spend our time.

The song states “the best things in life are free.” The old wisdom agrees: Yes, they are. But

they have to be pursued with intentionality. Paul recognized that Jesus didn't conscript his followers. Jesus was invitational. One had to choose to follow and then engage with the work of feeding the new nature.

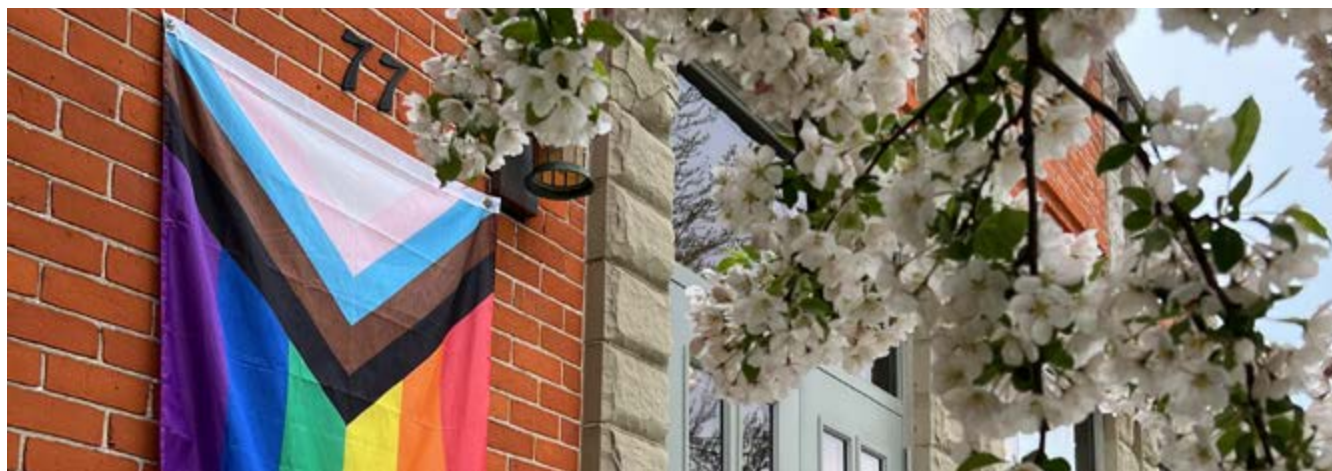
There's another echo from the native American story. Again, your Biblical radar may be sounding: Train children in the right way, and when old, they will not stray (Proverbs 22:6). Research—yes, people actually study this stuff—has found that children need time spent in nature to develop a healthy spirituality.

The Creation Care Ministry would like to encourage you to spend time with your children (and grandchildren) outdoors. Include them in your gardening. Include them in your walks. Take them to Ottawa County Parks (OCP). And when you're on the trail, ask them: Did you hear that? What kind of bird was that? I wonder why the leaves grow that way?

You'll find on the Creation Care bulletin board a listing of OCP's story walks. Story walks are meandering trail walks that include progressively placed story boards for young children. Each storyboard is a new page in an unfolding story. By the time the walk is over, you all will have read two books—the story book and the book of nature.

“...The flowers in spring; the robins that sing; The sunbeams that shine; They're yours! —They're mine! And love can come to everyone—The best things in life are free.”

Happy walking. Take your camera.



Pride Matters

Phil Quinn, Associate Pastor of Discipleship

Each June, we are invited to stand alongside our LGBTQIA+ neighbors as they celebrate Pride Month. Rainbow flags and parades bring life and love into our community, but the very notion of celebrating “pride” is abrasive to many raised in White American Christian families. Isn’t pride a sin—isn’t it the sin beneath all the others?

We run into a language problem because we so often conflate pride with a fiercely independent, self-focused stance—a person that knows what is best for themselves and everyone else, who neither needs nor wants the support of others. Such a stance would be a strange thing to celebrate, but it is not what we are guarding and cultivating in the queer community each June.

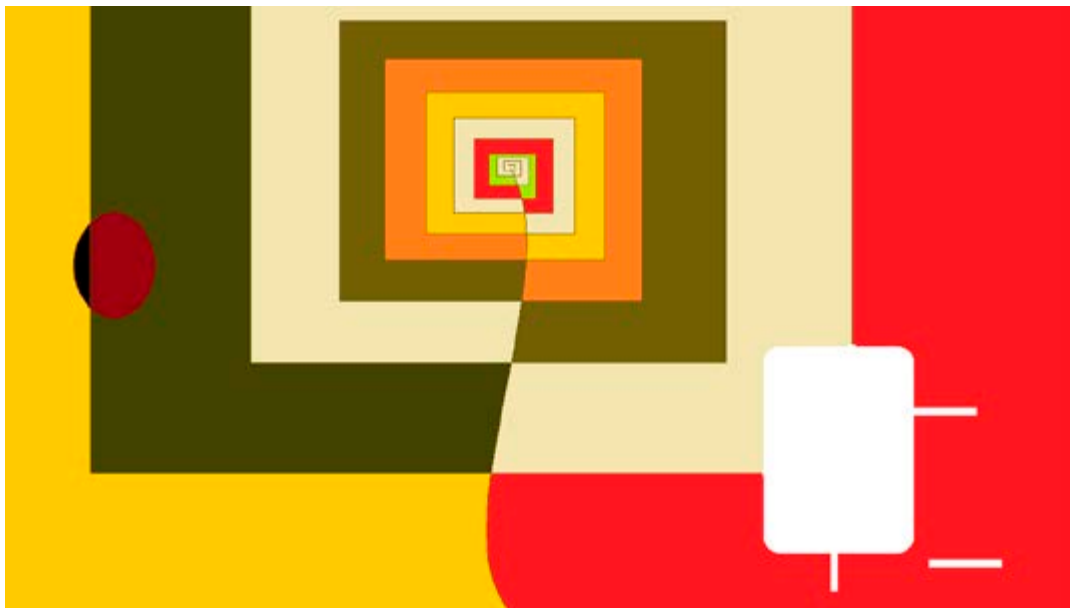
If you take a look at the event calendar put out by Out on the Lakeshore for this year’s Pride, you will find a breadth of events—an open mic night on June 1, a 5k run on June 10. There are events involving tacos and tie-dye, a Pride graduation open house, and a “Diverse Voices” speaker series throughout the month engaging such topics as gender identity in young people, love in all dimensions, the challenges of living as a bisexual, and more. There will be opportunities to remember the hardships faced in the past and today by members of this community. There will be spaces to lament, spaces to learn, and spaces to celebrate. I myself get to host a space for queer-identifying young people to build mental health skills, explore their identity, and learn coping mechanisms through table-top roleplaying games!

This blend of advocacy, awareness, commemoration, community, and celebration is

what Pride embodies, and it is offered as a much-needed antidote to the poison of shame so often heaped onto our LGBTQIA+ neighbors. We were created for community, and yet so many have heard that they do not belong. We were created good, image-bearers of God, and yet so many have been called unclean and an abomination. We have been called to love, to embrace, to include, to stand against and tear down that which harms, dehumanizes, isolates, marginalizes, and excludes. We are called to bring the light of love and hope and fellowship, the light of God’s Kingdom into our community and the world. Pride is an opportunity to do that alongside a community that still experiences a great deal of hardship in our world, including the risk of hate crimes and other physical and verbal violence, bullying at home, school, and online, and discriminatory treatment in healthcare and other settings. Mental health concerns, including anxiety, depression, loneliness, and suicidal ideation disproportionately affect LGBTQIA+ individuals, who also have a more difficult time than others finding supportive care.

I am honored to serve as a board member at Out on the Lakeshore, where we are at work to create a space and resources for this community, that Holland may be a place where people know they matter and belong, that they are worthy of love and inclusion and celebration, and that we need the gifts of love and light that they bring.

Happy Pride, Hope Church! May we love our neighbors well.



Delicious 3, by Randy Smit

Poetry Corner

Hosted by Rhonda Edgington

Poetry Corner was born out of my friendship with Randy Smit, a fellow poet, who I first met in one of my first years at Hope Church, when he was co-leading a book group on *The Artist's Way*. Much later, we dreamed up this Poetry Corner together; we loved encouraging and featuring all the Hope Church poets we could find (as well as ourselves, of course—we joked that there was little use in hosting a poetry column if you couldn't feature your own work). It seemed only fitting that I would highlight Randy and his poetry in this space one last time. The more I thought about it, the more intimidating it felt. How could I sum up his life and work, a person so creative, so complex, so unique, in one or two pages?

With relief and joy, I realized I didn't have to do this alone, and I could invite two dear friends (both of mine and Randy's) to accompany me on this farewell journey through words. Thank you to Jack Ridl and Andrew Spidahl, who I knew before I asked them would say yes. Remembering Randy with you is like having a little piece of him still with us. Which he is, I'm sure he would remind us, each time we hear the wind chimes, or see the sun's light filter through the leaves, hear an amazing poem or piece of music, watch a baseball game, or experience any of the many things that bring him to mind. Dr. Amy Kenny, a disability activist, spoke at the Calvin January series this year, and I wished I could text Randy her quote about the euphuisms

often used around disabilities, "My needs aren't special, they're just human." In his *Witness to Reconciliation* in 2014 (available in [text](#) or [audio](#)), Randy explained, "I'm created exactly as God wanted me to be... *and* I'm not supposed to be this way." Full of contradictions, sometimes seeming to live on another plane, nothing like us, yet also, so very human. Just like us.

Randy's brother Chris, who also lived with Spinal Muscular Atrophy and died within weeks of Randy, interviewed Randy a few years ago for his podcast, "My Dearest Friends," on [DisArtNow.org](#). It is a lovely opportunity to [hear these two](#) very close brothers, similar and yet different in many ways, shooting the breeze together about living with a disability, and how they see the world.

Turning to a poem, I especially enjoy the title poem from his last poetry chapbook, *Turn*, in which Randy also writes an intro speaking directly to the reader: "What follows are just a handful of poems... I can tell you this: Several of them made friends of mine make the hmm sound after reading them so I figured I'd pass them along. If any of them cause you to wonder whether you should be writing down some lines here or there yourself, let me go ahead and second that right off the bat. It's good to say stuff, to yourself or to someone else, and most importantly to do it like you and only you can."

Turn

by Randy Smit

Sometimes I drive
my wheelchair in circles
because my damned finger
gets all bent up in the cold and it's
all the movement I can get from it and then
some other times it's because
I am in ancestral song, bathed in incense, calling for the
Spirit to rush down as a hawk to glide
healing over each of these fragile vessels of light, these
children of God who know untenable troubles and then
turn to holy circles in their wheelchairs.

My maddeningly mesmerizing friend

Jack Ridl

Czech Toast

by Randy Smit

This'll make your Ma cry
Have a drink
Tell me about it
Feel no pain
Why Scotch? I got
news for ya. It
took me to
the truth of it. Every
time.
Told me no lies.
That
every tear is a good
tear.
Na zdravi



Poetry Corner *Continued*

So here ya are again, my maddeningly mesmerizing friend. And I'm supposed to compose a tribute to ya. You don't want a tribute. I can hear you growling, saying something like "Tributes are for those people who like to have stuff named after them, or people who have glad-handed God."

One day, a long time ago, you called and asked if I'd come to your place and teach you poetry. I said that I don't do house calls. "I don't know you." You made some god-awful plea/threat, and offered Scotch and the companionship of a fellow Czech, even though I insisted that I was from Bohemia. I caved. When you answered the door and, taken by surprise, I looked down—which you were used to—and mumbled, "I recognize you!" You said, "Yeah it's the glasses." "You say that a lot," I grouched. Instant friends.

No Pity: It was like a highway warning sign.

What do you do when with Randy? You play one-on-one with any imaginable subject. Only we were on the same team. Yeah, I better amend that. We went two for, or against, whatever came up. Look again at that poem. Is it a poem? For, or against? I know, some would say it's not. At the college, I heard that

often enough. "Ridl, you aren't teaching them how to write a poem!" "True. I'm helping them to write *their* poem."

Let's look at Randy's. He took us into a world we'd have no access to without it. And we feel it. We feel that askance look that Randy often placed on what he knew was a lie. And we feel his open heart for the commonest of moments. Let's raise a glass! And then that rascal chokes us up with just one tear. Just one. But oh, that one tear—it rolls down the page and into our laps. And then he goes and turns things around again, closing on a celebration of... of what?

Those wide spaces between lines. What's going on there? Nothing? Anything but. Randy's wheeled himself into that nothing. He's brooding. He's wondering. Laughing. Praying. Taking a toke. Being irreverent. Meditating. Mad as hell about something. Celebrating someone. Disagreeing. Thanking God. Excited about what he's been reading or painting or writing or watching. Contemplating. He's sure. He's uncertain. He's being faithful.

He's being Randy, our complicated, challenging, devoted, loyal, life-opening friend.

Where is he these days, the Book Man?

Andrew Spidahl

"Don't try to say everything," he would tell me. "Just say one thing..." Then he would nod, making a punctuation sound with his mouth. *This.*

He sometimes took his own advice. And he was good at it. He was good at exploring places with me that others would hurry past, creating space and permission for my human experience to be holy and attention-worthy.

I've been missing him, especially when the morning is cool and sunny and promising and good for strong coffee and slow conversation. Especially when I start to feel adrift about theological convictions, or familial consternations, or creative insecurities. Or when I find something funny, or beautiful, or share-worthy. When the breeze stirs summer scents and leaves and carries along the manifold notes of a chime. When I long for a good friend to listen and speak.

As one of many young care attendants over the years, I got to witness how Randy drew out the

mystical and poetic side of people, steering them away from religion's tightrope and towards that open field Rumi imagines, "beyond any ideas of wrongdoing or rightdoing," where they might uncover, discover, bear witness. *Notice what you feel. Notice what you long for. Don't turn away from your own flesh and blood.*

Towards the end, he sent out to some close friends a link that comprised some of his works—poems and paintings—mentioning the poem "Book Man" as one he was particularly proud of. I hope you'll read the whole thing. This is just one vignette from that poem that speaks concisely to my experience of Randy.

VIII

As a Mystic it is nothing to him that you should have or should not have done this or that. It is everything to him as a poet filled with blood and tempest, petals and studs, that you might know your own guts, their pressing ways. There are some lines tucked in, folded away that he still hopes you find someday. He takes leave, these days. He stays.