



SALT & LIGHT

a hope church publication

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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
[HopeChurchRCA.org](https://www.HopeChurchRCA.org)

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Holding Together

There are in this season a whole mixture of emotions, personal for each of us and shared as a community. For us to hold all of those feelings in connection – within ourselves and with each other – is the best we can do in the days ahead: to hold together the sadness of a pastorate concluding, gratitude for a ministry that has enriched and blessed Hope Church, care and prayers for well-being, the feeling of loss that a change in relationship brings, the uncertainty and disruption that comes from significant change. It's all present, and we'll each and all of us be feeling different parts and pieces of those realities at different times; we can be gracious and gentle with ourselves and one another as we do so. Doing so will connect us to God's gifts and grace, also present within and among us, providing what we need at this time and providing for a faithful path forward.

It is also okay in these coming days to have in the mix and carry with us a gratitude for the life and vitality and community of Hope Church. Each of you, each of us, offers to Hope Church our gifts and commitments, our persons and our passions, placed in God's hands: That is what will continue to make Hope Church a vital and important place in our lives and community.

What continues for us as a community of faith, is that we are followers of our Lord Jesus Christ – sharing in a calling that we have heard to do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with our God; sharing in a calling that has Room for All, that speaks to Accessibility for all, to Racial Justice and to care for God's creation; sharing in a calling to prayer and care, to worship and Beloved Community, to love our neighbors and serve our community.

All of those things all belong together. I offer for all of us to hold those many things together, in connection, in our hearts and prayers, believing God will give us the grace to do so – grateful to be called together as Hope Church in this time.

Pastor Gordon



Black History Month: February Focus on Films

Dede Johnston, Justice and Reconciliation Ministry

Hope Church is making a formal Racial Justice Commitment (watch for an upcoming Adult Ed session for more information and an opportunity to discuss). This commitment includes educating ourselves about Black history. What could possibly be more fun than watching critically acclaimed films, and what could be a better time than now, during Black History Month?! The Justice and Reconciliation Ministry has provided a list of films to get you started. We hope that you will watch several films during February and that these films will spark good conversations within our congregation.

In Theaters Now

- **American Fiction [Oscar Nominee; Look for upcoming streaming on Prime]** A brilliant, funny, and complicated film about reducing Blacks to clichés. This film is satire and exposes white people's stereotyping and guilt in some complex ways. It is also complicated by the fact that some non-progressives have missed the satire and claim the premise of the film is to promote racist agendas. This is not a film for novice learners who are just beginning to explore how people's identities are represented (and misrepresented), but for those who have been reading and learning about race in America for some time, it is a thought-provoking film.
- AMC Theaters are celebrating Black Excellence in Film by offering \$5 tickets to **The Color Purple** (new musical remake), **The Equalizer 3** (Black woman delivers justice), **Spider-Man Across the Spider-Verse** (Afro-Latino authentic identity representation), and **Soul** (Disney/Pixar) throughout the month of February.

Black Slavery Experience (History)

- **12 Years a Slave [Apple TV; Oscar Winning Film]** Based on the true story of a free black man who was kidnapped and sold into slavery.

- **Harriet [Apple TV; Academy Award Nominee]** Historical drama exploring the life of Harriet Tubman and her courageous work to help enslaved people reach freedom via the Underground Railroad.

Civil Rights Movement (History)

- **Rustin [Shown at Hope Church on February 4; streaming on Netflix]** Historical drama about the life of Bayard Rustin, a gay civil rights activist and advisor to Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. who helped organize the March on Washington in 1963.
- **Judas and the Black Messiah [Max, Hulu, Apple; Best Movie of 2021]** Tells the story of Fred Hampton, leader of the Black Panthers, and the FBI's actions during the Civil Rights Movement.
- **Selma [Prime, Apple TV]** Powerful historical drama of the events of 1965 and the march from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama, fighting for equal voting rights.
- **'I am Not your Negro'** [Apple, Max, Hulu] Documentary based on the unfinished novel of James Baldwin that explores the friendships and interactions between Martin Luther King Jr., Malcolm X, and Medgar Evers.

- **Till [Prime, Apple TV]** The story of Emmett Till's brutal murder and his mother's fight for justice.
- **4 Little Girls [Max, Apple TV]** The 1963 KKK bombing of the 16th Street Baptist Church in Birmingham killed four Black girls attending Sunday School.
- **Malcolm X (1992) [Apple TV]** This film promotes understanding of the evolution of Malcolm X's philosophies about Black liberation.
- **One Night in Miami [Prime]** This film imagines the conversations about Black identity, religion, civil rights, and their own legacies, when Muhammad Ali, NFL star Jim Brown, musician Sam Cooke, and Malcolm X spend a night together in Miami in 1964.
- **42 [Prime, Max, Apple]** The story of Jackie Robinson and his impact on both baseball and society.
- **Hidden Figures [Disney, Apple]** During the Space Race with the USSR, Katherine Johnson, Dorothy Vaughan, and Mary Jackson's mathematical genius contributed to the launching of astronaut John Glenn into orbit.
- **Black Art in the Absence of Light [Max, Apple, Hulu]** This film inspired "Two Centuries of Black American Art," the first major exhibition to recognize the work of Black artists.
- **Maya Angelou: And Still I Rise [Apple]** Documentary juxtaposing Angelou's life and literary contributions with major historical events. The exploration of Angelou's work demonstrates the impact of literature and art on activism and social change.

Systemic Racism

- **13th [Netflix]** Extraordinary film connecting what constitutes a "crime," the Black community, and mass incarceration in contemporary America.
- **Stamped from the Beginning [Netflix]** Based on Ibram X. Kendi's best-selling novel, this film deconstructs myths about Blacks and traces the creation and spread of racist ideas.
- **Who We Are: A Chronicle of Racism in America [Apple TV]** Seeking to teach his 13-year-old son about racism, a criminal defense attorney explores the historical development of white supremacy and systemic racism.
- **The Hate U Give [Apple TV]** Based on Angie Thomas's best-selling novel, the story follows a Black teen who attends a predominantly white prep school while living in an impoverished Black neighborhood. Her best friend is shot by a white police officer, and she's the only witness.
- **Aftershock [Hulu]** Black women are three times more likely to die in childbirth than are white women. This documentary unpacks medical racism by demonstrating racial disparities in infant and maternal health care and the history of gynecology.
- **Marshall [Apple]** This film highlights Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall's early career as an NAACP lawyer, depicting a case in which Marshall defends a Black man accused of rape by his white employer.
- **John Lewis: Good Trouble [Prime, Apple]** "Do not get lost in a sea of despair. Be hopeful, be optimistic. Our struggle is not the work of a day, a week, a month, or a year, it is the struggle of a lifetime. Never, ever be afraid to make some noise and get in good trouble, necessary trouble." This film portrays the life and legacy of Congressperson and Civil Rights Activist John Lewis (1940–2020).
- **Toni Morrison: The Pieces I Am [Hulu, Disney, Apple]** Incredible documentary exploring the cultural impact of the late Nobel Prize-winning author's life and literary career. Segments include reflections by Morrison, and interviews with Angela Davis, Sonia Sanchez, Oprah Winfrey, and Fran Lebowitz.
- **King Richard [Apple, Max, Disney]** "The most strongest, the most powerful, the most dangerous creature on this whole earth is a woman who knows how to think. Ain't nothing she can't do," says Richard Williams, father of Serena and Venus Williams. Coming from Compton, the daughters face formidable challenges, but Richard tenaciously plots to launch his daughters' careers as international tennis stars.

Celebrating Contributions to Music, Sports, Art, Literature and Government

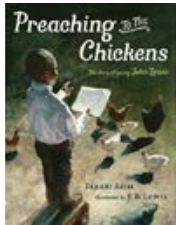
- **Bessie [HBO]** This film celebrates the accomplishments and music of Bessie Smith, "Empress of the Blues," who was a widely acclaimed blues singer in the 1920s and 30s.

Black History Month: For Readers

Pat Bloem, Justice and Reconciliation Ministry

Are you interested in educating your children or grandchildren about Civil Rights with books that look beyond Martin Luther King? These books have been added to the Hope Church library and are available for borrowing.

For Younger Readers



Preaching to the Chickens: The Story of Young John Lewis, by J. Asim: This book depicts the childhood days of an important Civil Rights leader. The art by EB Lewis is terrific and inviting. A picture book for ages 6-10.



My Selma: True Stories of a Southern Childhood at the Height of the Civil Rights Movement, by Willie Mae Brown, who makes cultural milieu of Selma and time period vivid. A picture book for ages 9-15.



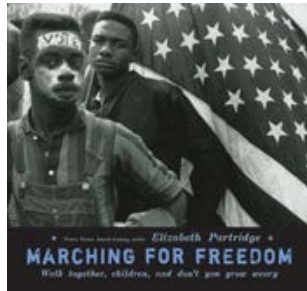
28 Days: Moments in Black History that Changed the World, by Charles R. Smith. If you are interested in a family coffee table book that puts the big events of the Civil Rights Movement into a larger perspective, look for this book. The brightly illustrated (by Shane Evans) text appears to be more for kids than adults, but the information it holds and its use of poetic forms fit a broad reading audience.

For Older Kids and Adults



March: Book Two and **March: Book Three**, by Andrew Aydin and John

Lewis, illustrated by Nate Powell. Those of you who loved the John Lewis graphic history that we read for our Hope Church Reads project may want to look at these next two in his series, written and illustrated by the same team. Book Two takes us from the small, segregated movie theaters in the south to Birmingham Sunday in 1963. Book Three, which won the National Book Award, begins in Birmingham with the murder of the four girls and ends with the Voting Rights Act of 1965.



Marching for Freedom: Walk Together, Children, and Don't You Go Weary, by Elizabeth Partridge. She develops vignettes of young kids who got involved in civil rights in Selma and other places, using photos, quotes, and songs. This book is an amazing way to learn history. For ages 10 to adult.



Because They Marched: The People's Campaign for Voting Rights that Changed America, by Russell Freedman. Did you know that there was a teachers' march, a children's march, Bloody Sunday, and a disappointing march they dubbed Turnaround Tuesday? Freedman is a meticulous researcher who writes compelling prose and includes powerful photographs. For ages 10 to adult.

The (Non-existent) Fine Print of Accessibility

By Terry DeYoung

Fourth in a series on accessibility



We can assume that a sign showing a wheelchair—the universal symbol for accessibility—implies a place or structure is accessible in some way, but lacking additional clues, the specifics are left to our imaginations. Accessibility

in its various forms can be all over the map. If you think wheelchair access is straightforward, ask a wheelchair user about their experiences.

I have contacted numerous hotels over the years before making a reservation for an accessible room to ask in what ways their rooms are actually accessible. These are the kinds of responses I've received:

- “I don't know,” “Let me check,” and “The person who knows isn't here right now,” are the most common.
- “The hotel entrance is accessible and there's an elevator, but beyond that...” Or, “There are grab bars in the bathroom.” Or, “We have wide doors.” These are marginally better.
- “Bathrooms have higher toilets, roll-in showers, and extra space to move around.” Or, “Closets have accessible shelves/rods, desks have an adjustable chair, outlets are 36 inches from the floor, nightstands have multiple USB ports, and we have one room with a doorbell flasher and visual fire alarm for hard-of-hearing guests.” Or, “We have a variety of accessible rooms. What sort of accommodations do you need?” These are the most helpful responses, but they're rare.

When it comes to churches, the variations are far greater than they are in hotels. Church standards of accessibility are seldom open to the same level of scrutiny and critique that most public places experience.

This is the last in a series of articles that suggest tangible steps churches can take to become more welcoming to people with disabilities. It's based on an RCA-CRC Disability Concerns ministry document, “30 Indicators of an Anti-ableist, Fully Accessible Church.” For the purposes

of this series, I've divided the list into four basic categories. These indicators are from the category I call “facility and technology,” and I've included my own commentary after each one.

The church has a bathroom I can use. What makes a church bathroom accessible is wildly subjective, but as a matter of basic hospitality and respect, every church should recognize that people “won't come if they can't go.” Hope Church is part of a tiny minority of churches that provide automatic door openers on its primary restrooms, not to mention a gender-neutral bathroom that has many accessible features.

I have options for where to sit in the sanctuary because there are pew cutouts or accessible seating options in multiple locations. Churches with mobile seating instead of pews have an unlimited number of options. For those with fixed seating—whether pews or theater seats—the best practice is providing multiple locations, with generous spacing, for people who use mobility devices. This approach is more accommodating than expecting all wheelchair users to sit in the back of the sanctuary, for example, or suggesting they can “park in the aisle” (yikes!). Alternatively, assuming someone can transfer from their wheelchair into a pew is inhospitable, dangerous, and creates a potential fire hazard.

I can access all areas of the church, including the pulpit area, without assistance. Providing this kind of access makes a theological statement about who is expected to preach, participate, or lead the congregation in worship. The recent Hope Church renovation that made the chancel accessible took planning and resources, and it was done with obvious intention. Randy Smit was the first wheelchair user I'm aware of who benefited from our accessible chancel (on Easter Sunday 2017). Several years later, while recovering from an Achilles injury, pastor Gordon Wiersma accessed the chancel using his knee scooter. Accessibility of the education wing was greatly improved with the addition of an elevator during the recent renovation (applause for Judy VanderWilt's advocacy during a congregational meeting!).

I know I'll be able to park close to church if I need to because ample accessible parking is



available; or, if I don't drive, transportation is offered. Like so many others on this list, Hope Church does more than meet the minimum requirements. For many years transportation has been offered to those who can benefit from it. The number of accessible parking spaces exceeds what the Americans with Disabilities Act requires—1 for every 25 parking places—and several of those parking spots can accommodate a vehicle with a ramp. In West Michigan, snow and ice are chronic challenges that need ongoing attention (read [this article written by Lucia Rios](#), a lifelong Holland resident).

I know that as a hard of hearing person, I can still participate because hearing assistance technology is in place, it's functioning properly, microphones are used, and people utilize them without reservation. Think about how often you've attended events in venues that have hearing assistance technology available, but it isn't used, it's used poorly, or people with hearing loss have been put on the spot when someone says, "Does anyone need me to use a microphone?" or "I'm not going to use this microphone because I talk loud." Sometimes assistive technology is in place but doesn't work. When Cindi and I visited my brother's church that had recently installed a hearing loop, she was proudly asked by those who knew her how it worked with her hearing devices. When she said it didn't work, they began troubleshooting immediately. In time, they discovered that the loop wire surrounding the sanctuary had been cut by a carpet installer. Once a church invests in the necessary technology to

support people who are hard of hearing, it takes years to create a church culture that follows these guidelines for hearing access, and it requires constant education, monitoring, and intentionality to maintain and utilize the technology effectively. Hope Church is a model for doing this well.

When my church has virtual gatherings, services, or presentations, closed captioning is always available. One of the positive responses to the pandemic was the normalization of digital meeting platforms like Zoom. In many ways Zoom leveled the accessibility playing field because people with disabilities were able to participate in ways they previously could not. Unfortunately, the use of live captioning did not keep up, but gradually that's been improving. Still, there are many Zoom-type presentations that fail to provide a live captioning option when the meeting host neglects to enable captions to be turned on by users.

My church leaders understand that people learn in different ways, and they use multisensory approaches with sermons and presentations. Given the dominance of our word-centric practices, it has taken a long time to recognize the benefits of using all five senses. Our appreciation for and experiences in a faith-based community are deepened when life and learning are embodied regularly through taste, touch, smell, hearing, and sight (and imagination).

To read the entire list of 30 indicators of an anti-ableist, fully accessible church, go to: crcna.org/accessiblechurch.

Connecting with One Another

Welcoming New Members

During 2023, these people joined the Hope Church community; we're so happy to welcome them!



Norman Bert recently moved to Holland along with his wife, Amy Kim, who is on Hope College's Art faculty. In 2019, Norman retired after 25 years teaching playwriting

in Texas Tech University's School of Theatre & Dance. He particularly resonates with Hope Church's membership in the RCA's Room for All and with the congregation's witness as a progressive representative of Christ for a suffering world.



Linda Rath Harter, a consummate Midwesterner, was born in Minnesota's Twin Cities, grew up in the Wicker Park neighborhood in Chicago, attended

McAllister College in St. Paul, and then moved with her husband, Al, to Milwaukee, Wisconsin. She spent her professional life in retail, insurance, and banking. Much to the delight of her sister, Jane Dickie, she moved to Freedom Village in the fall of 2022. Linda enjoys reading and discussions about books, being with her nieces and nephews, and coaxing her shy cats from hiding whenever there are visitors. She is happy to find a church where the God of love and inclusion is celebrated.



Karen Howells moved to Holland from Muncie, Indiana, five years ago after her husband died and her children wanted her to be closer to one of

them. She has a daughter who is a doctor at Holland Community Health Center and another daughter in Raleigh, North Carolina. She enjoys music, knitting, and reading, and especially loves volunteering at Refresh, Food Club, Holland Hospital, and Evergreen Commons Day Care Center. She appreciates Hope Church because of the people and social justice stands and—of course—because of the music.



Lance and RoseAnn Engbers are excited to be journeying with Hope Church, drawn by consistent kindness, liturgically rich services, current-to-life educational programs, and compassionate visionary leadership. They moved to Holland in 2021 after 10 years

in Denver, Colorado, and 37 years in Whitinsville, Massachusetts. Career paths took Lance from middle school science teacher in Denver to Christian school K-12 administration in Whitinsville. After arriving in Holland, Lance served as interim principal at Hudsonville Christian Middle School for a year and then mentored the new hire. RoseAnn's 46-year nursing career included the Emergency Department, SANE sexual assault nursing, and behavioral health nursing; she recently signed on as a nursing volunteer in the Holland Hospital ED. Living closer to children and grandchildren prompted the life-changing move: Two sons are in Holland, one is in Hudsonville, and a daughter is in Charlotte, North Carolina. In addition to family, a new home in Michigan means kayaks, bicycles, walking, HASP, traveling, and condo living.



Mark and Giny Hoekman moved to Holland in 1987 from California. Mark worked as a chemist and later in non-profit bookkeeping, while Giny worked as a family physician. Having retired about ten years ago, they have three children and nine grandchildren. They like to garden, ride bikes, read, and listen to music.



Hannah and Jackson Nickolay moved to Holland in 2016. Since then both have received their Masters of Divinity from Western Theological Seminary (WTS). Currently, Jackson works as Manager at Ferris Coffee here in Holland, and Hannah works as Library Services Assistant at Cook Library at WTS. Together with a group of friends, they also run a small liturgical arts company called Wayfolk Arts. Hannah and Jackson love watching movies, hosting friends for meals and games, and playing Dungeons & Dragons.



Billy Reck and Josie Riley join by profession of faith. Billy is originally from Muskegon and works at Haworth as a product engineer. Josie is from Grosse Pointe and just graduated with her Masters in Speech Language Pathology from CMU. Married in November, In their free time they enjoy reading and doing crafts. They are happy to have found Hope Church because of its inclusivity and really enjoy the music, especially the organ.



Ella Williams is a sophomore at Hope College studying Elementary Education and specializing in working with students with Learning Disabilities and Emotional Impairments. She is from Kalamazoo, where she lived with her two sisters, parents, and two dogs. In her

free time she enjoys reading, crafting, and spending time with friends. Ella is the Hope College student intern this year and loves working with Bible Pride and youth group.



John and Valerie Yodhes are retired teachers who lived in Allen Park, Michigan, and attended Allen

Park United Presbyterian Church. They moved to Ann Arbor in 1993, joining the Ann Arbor First Presbyterian Church, where John served as a Deacon. They both volunteered at Alpha House, helping homeless families. John also co-chaired a program to help the Delonis Homeless Shelter winter overflow problem by using the church basement to house overnight guests during those months, part of a rotating shelter program. They are happy to be in Holland, near their daughter, Ann McKnight, and son-in-law, Jim, and to be nearby when the grandchildren, Ian and Caroline, come home for a visit.



Living in Community with Unhoused Neighbors

Jared Lambers, Board of Deacons

Walking into our church, many of us have encountered neighbors gathering outside our entrances, using the canopies for shelter or the exterior outlet to charge a phone. These brief encounters give first-hand visibility to a widespread issue regarding housing and resources for our unhoused neighbors. They also raise questions for how we live as the body of Christ in our community.

Our church has many uses throughout the week: as a place of worship, a place of education, a place of gathering, and a place of shelter. Our staff, congregants, and our Head Start families have interacted occasionally with unhoused individuals on church property. These interactions have been varied. Many stories have been pleasant; some have been confrontational and sometimes resulted in discomfort. Sometimes that discomfort on our part stems from a desire to help those who do not have what many of us take for granted.

The Board of Deacons has met and reviewed these interactions as they have come up in the past, and are working through a policy to assist in balancing care and shelter for those experiencing homelessness while protecting existing commitments and uses of our facility. At times we have found these values to be in conflict, as families of Head Start and our own staff have felt uncomfortable approaching the building due to interactions with those sheltering outside. While they do not represent the majority of interactions, we have received reports of disrespect of the property, substance abuse, and verbal confrontations. We also hear reports of people having nowhere else to go.



Recently, the Deacons met with Jessica Pressley from Community Action House and Sergeant John Weatherwax from the Community Policing Team of the Holland Police Department to seek greater

understanding of our local situation and receive some direction on our path forward. In this discussion, it was confirmed that there is a growing number of unhoused individuals both in our community and throughout the country.

There are many different organizations working to provide support for these individuals. Through the programs at Community Action House (CAH), there are 304 people currently on a housing journey. A partnership between First United Methodist and CAH provides showers, access to services, and meals once a day to those experiencing homelessness. These local



services are seeing an increase in requests and referrals. There are also some gaps in these services as staff member Bruce TenHaken learned from our unhoused neighbor Suzie, who is transgender and unable to stay in either a women's or men's facility. Others may not know of the resources available or choose not to use them.

We have learned that many people experiencing homelessness struggle with mental health. Holland Public Safety is currently training their officers in mental health first aid. In 2021, Holland Public Safety established a Crisis Intervention Team to more specifically provide assistance with those who may be experiencing a mental health or crisis. There is a specific full-time officer assigned to the team available during the week. This Crisis Intervention Team is an incredible asset to the community policing team, but their availability is limited during nights and weekends. In these instances, when an individual is violating the policies of any private property, the policy department recommends initiating the banning process. To do so, a representative of the property—a pastor or a deacon—calls 911 to request an individual be removed from the property. This does not mean they will be arrested, but there will be a record so that subsequent trespassing by the same individual may lead to more involvement in the justice system.

The advice we received from Sgt Weatherwax was to set and clarify our boundaries. Currently, at our entrances there are statements on the door stating in English and Spanish that there is no overnight sheltering allowed (dusk to dawn), but use of the outlet and shade is welcomed. There is also a list of local organizations' addresses and phone numbers to contact for assistance. It is loving to the many groups and

individuals who use our space to enforce these boundaries with zero tolerance for substance abuse or verbal or physical confrontations.

As a deacon body, we have wrestled with this topic and we continue to get feedback from Bruce Ten Haken, who provides respect and care to our unhoused neighbors. As we consider how to show God's love, we also need to acknowledge our current limitations of facility, resources, and training. Service for and support of these individuals can be accomplished through strengthening partnerships with existing organizations. By partnering with these organizations, we will be able to find areas where we can provide assistance with the resources and facilities we have. A recent example of this is the warming shelter hosted at Hope Church early in January. The chapel was opened from 1-5 p.m., allowing individuals to warm up in our coldest weather. Cookies, coffee, hot chocolate, and restrooms were available and utilized by up to 20 people a day. The First United Methodist Church also provided extended services beginning at 5:00 p.m., including opening up the gym at night.

If you or your family is interested in volunteering to support our neighbors, Community Action House includes an [area with "Pressing Volunteer Needs"](#) on their website.



Determining how to best enact this mission to help those experiencing homelessness will continue to be a dynamic situation requiring discernment, grace, respect, and love. If you have any questions or feedback for the deacons as we continue to engage in this discernment process and work through policy development, please reach out [to me](#) or [Senior Deacon Sara Hogan](#).



Organ Renovation Approaches

Dan Fisher, Facility Strategy Committee

When you attend a Sunday worship service at Hope Church, one of the most striking things you will see is dozens of huge organ pipes reaching for the heavens. Couple that with Hope Church's organist, Rhonda Edgington, who skillfully fills the sanctuary and affects our emotions with music of great composers: There is no doubt that the organ music of Hope Church is an important part of who we are as a congregation.

Beginning in early April, we will begin a major renovation of the organ. All the pipes that you see, and most of the inner workings of the organ, will be disassembled and moved to Champaign, Illinois, for refurbishment. The total project will take about six months to complete. The project will cost \$360,000 and has been fully financed by the Sustaining Hope Capital Campaign.

Our organ was built in 1965, so it's almost 60 years old. Typically, an organ renovation like this takes place every 50 years. We have kept the organ in pretty good shape over the years, but things do wear out and materials degrade over time. This renovation will help us to address many issues and allow us to move forward for

another 50 years so that future generations can enjoy the history and beauty of this organ.

In 2022, Hope Church assembled a team to evaluate the organ condition and develop a plan for repair, renovation, and upgrade. The team includes Trevor Dodd (a local organ consultant), Rhonda Edgington, Paul Elzinga, Dan Fisher, and Gordon Wiersma. After several months of discussion and evaluation, four organ companies were contacted and interviewed. We chose to work with Buzard Pipe Organ Builders out of Illinois. In June of 2023, we signed a renovation contract with the assistance of Hope Church member Andy Mulder, who helped us with contract review.

Our organ is an amazing instrument. Although you can see 50 to 60 organ pipes from the sanctuary, the organ has over 2,350 pipes, most of which are hidden in the chamber behind the chancel. Some of the small pipes are the size of a medium-sized nail. The pipes are made of either metal or wood and can create 40 different individual timbres (ranks) and combinations of them (e.g., strings, oboe, or trumpet).

From the sanctuary, you can also see the organ console, which includes 4 divisions (keyboards) called Great, Choir, Swell, and Pedals. Each of these divisions is associated with specific sets of pipes “ranks” controlled by “stops” and by other features of the console.

In the basement is the air supply, consisting of a large motor and fan that supplies all the pressurized air to feed the pipes.

Back behind the chancel area in the organ chamber room, there are several electrical and mechanical devices including “wind chests.” These devices determine which pipe to activate and allow air into, based on the keys the organist presses, and the stops that control which timbres are selected.

Some of the key renovations include:

- Replacing all note/stop felt leather valves (3,000+)
- Restoring 10 winkler, chamber, and tremolo reservoirs.

- Updating Peterson multiplex electrical system
- Refurbishing keys, stops, and pedals
- Cleaning and topping pipes and repacking caps
- Enhancing the instrument’s versatility and musical effectiveness.

What happens when the organ is out of commission for six months? Well, most visible will be the absence of the pipes in the sanctuary. It will look very different than it does today! When the pipes are finally reassembled, they will be in a slightly different configuration, and all painted the same color.

Also, there will be no organ music. The good news is that Rhonda has demonstrated that in addition to being our organist, she is our music director. Throughout the year, you have seen and heard not only the organ, but music from piano, bell choir, various solo instrumentalists, small ensembles, solo vocalists, and the choir. As we eagerly wait for the completion of the organ renovation, we will continue to be blessed with beautiful, diverse, and meaningful music.



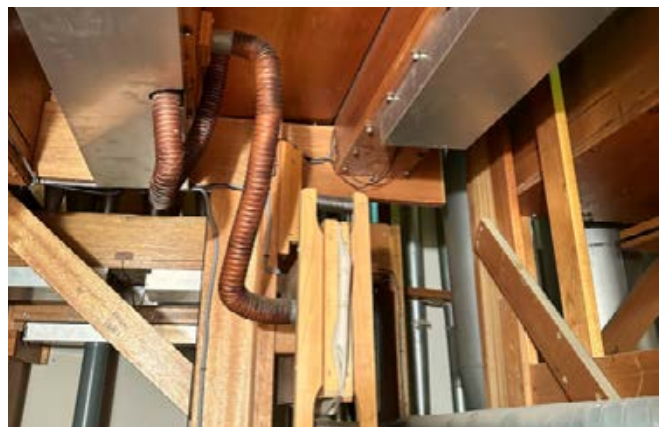
Console



Pipes



Air Supply



Wind Chests



Places of Hope and *Refugia*

Jackson Nickolay, Caring for Creation Ministry

I went home over Christmas this past December. My home is about as far north as you can get in the lower 48. Sitting about 45 minutes south of Canada along the shores of Lake Superior you'll find Grand Marais, Minnesota. Then if you take the two-lane highway another 30 minutes north, you'll find where the gravel roads start, and along one of those roads my family keeps a sort of last homely house nestled in the woods and rivers. It is a place I remember as a place of extremes, where great natural beauty is matched with negative-20-degree winters, the year-round hypothermia-inducing waters of Lake Superior, the wide stretching wilderness of the Boundary Waters, and people who are joined in neighborhood by their shared commitment to make it through the weather's massive mood swings.

However, this trip was different. Having been asked to write this short piece for *Salt & Light* as a

new member of the Caring for Creation Ministry, I had been looking forward to crafting it amidst snow-clad pines and ice laden branches. But as I walked the paths of the woods, my feet crunched on decaying fall leaves still waiting for the warm blanket of snow, the breeze sighed through unladen branches, and the coat I had brought with me quickly became too warm in the 40-degree weather of late December. The entirety of my trip was spent in an unseasonable warmth which even the most seasoned backwoods folks will tell you has only happened once before in recent memory.

So it was that sitting in the beauty of my home, there crept into my mind a sadness and a dissonance; a knowledge that something was deeply wrong. Perhaps you have felt this way before. The awareness that things are changing ecologically that cannot be undone brings with it a stuck-ness and a morass of worry and doubt. I

was put in mind of this quote from Aldo Leopold, which I heard via the *Refugia* podcast and has stuck with me: “One of the penalties of an ecological education is that one lives alone in a world of wounds.” It comes at a point in the podcast where the host Dr. Debra Rienstra (author of the book *Refugia Faith*) asks Timothy Van Deelen (a professor of wildlife ecology at Madison University) about what wounds he is experiencing as a result of his work in trying to bring awareness to the need for biodiversity. He responds that the primary wound he is experiencing is loss: loss of species, loss of ecosystems, and humanity’s role in their decline. He offers wolves as an example, saying that while they are going strong in certain northern states and in Yellowstone, their success as a species will be entirely determined by humans’ tolerance of them.

Is the power of life or death over entire species and ecosystems a part of our ordination as earth keepers, caretakers, and gardeners amidst creation? I think not. It has been a comfort to be a part of a growing ecumenical community of believers who feel the same way and who are engaged in taking responsibility for our role in the climate crisis. I am particularly grateful to have found Hope Church to be a place so aware and focused on this issue.

Even with this kind of involvement, the sadness and the feeling of loss persists. But perhaps this is where the church has the most ability to hold people. The church can be a place that holds those who are in grief, who are hurting, who are experiencing sorrow. In scripture and in the life of Christ the church has comfort for those beaten down, those who work for justice against one-sided oppression, and those who feel they have lost. If it wants to be, the church can be a place of hope and refugia for these people. For us.

On my last walk in the woods on the final day of our trip in Minnesota, my heavy footsteps drew me slowly out of the woods back toward the house. The pre-packed car, final goodbyes, and the long road ahead waited, but one last walk called to me. On one of the last bends in the trail I wandered through one of the valleys which hosts a small creek. There—hidden low among the bushes—sparkled small vestiges of ice. They spread in wild fractals across the surface of the running water, bubbling and dancing in the cool light of the sun peeking through birch branches. In that small *refugia*—sheltered and waiting—a gift of hope was given, a deep breath, and a lightening of my feet as I made my way out of that river valley and into what lay ahead.

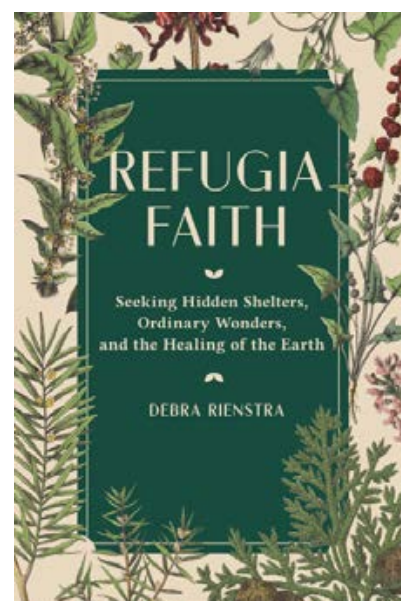
Refugia, Further



Dr. Debra Rienstra,
Professor of English / Writer
Calvin University



Refugia are places of shelter where life endures in times of crisis. From these small sanctuaries, life re-emerges and the world is renewed. On this podcast Debra Rienstra is exploring what it means for people of faith to be people of refugia. How can we create safe places of flourishing—“micro-counter cultures” where we gain strength and spiritual capacity to face the challenges ahead?





Poetry Corner

Hosted by Rhonda Edgington

Just when I'd decided that "Poetry Corner" had come to an end, Judy Parr submitted a beautiful piece that I couldn't not share with you all. Maybe the end is never really the end, and "Poetry Corner" will make an occasional encore appearance. At the least, please enjoy this meditative piece by Judy.

This summer I taught a Hope Academy of Senior Professionals class on Wendell Berry's *A Timbered Choir*, a collection of his Sabbath poems. Instead of attending church, on Sundays Berry would walk in a woods or field and write a poem. Having given students an assignment to write a poem in the style of Wendell Berry, I, too, responded to the assignment.

Breakfast Time on the Sunporch 18 July 2023

by Judy Parr

Inspired by Wendell Berry's *A Timbered Choir*,
a *Collection of Sabbath Poems*

I open the door to the sunporch
and set my bowl of fruit and cup of coffee
on the table before me
across from the empty chair.

Through the gaps among the trees across the creek beyond the bridge
I see vehicles on the highway passing by.
I notice a large bird with wings out-stretched gliding high.
It turns, descends, and lands in the creek.

A work of art framed by the sunporch window,
the blue heron stops still and looks my way
and then gazes down to see if breakfast is ready.

Look, Bill. See through my eyes. Hear through my ears.

The blue heron flaps its wings
and is off to find his breakfast elsewhere.

My breakfast finished, I look down at the magazine
that served as my placemat.

Words on the page speak out to me:

“even though the presence of death and loss in my life
has forced me to learn to grieve,
that very grief
has forced me to learn to live.”¹

To which I respond, Amen.

¹ Amey Victoria Adkins-Jones, "In the Lectionary: August 6 18th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Matthew 14:13-21," *The Christian Century*, August 2023, 24.