



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.

CONTACT US

Hope Church, RCA
77 West 11th Street
[616] 392 . 7947
See how you can join us at
HopeChurchRCA.org

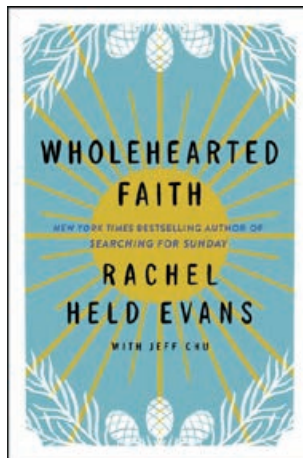


EDITORIAL & DESIGN

Lois Maassen – Editor
Michael Kolk – Creative Director

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Deconstruction and Reconstruction: *Wholehearted Faith*



I've chosen a book for a fall weekday/weeknight study that I'll lead in October. The book is *Wholehearted Faith*, by Rachel Held Evans with Jeff Chu. It's an engaging and profound book, and I invite you to join in this study opportunity. I'd like to tell you first about my search for a book to explore with Hope Church and then about how I settled on this book.

A term that has been used over the past couple of decades in Christian theology is “faith deconstruction.” That refers to the experience of many Christians who experienced problematic or harmful theology in their upbringing: aspects of faith to “deconstruct” from their theology. That is often very important to do, but the reality many then face is that deconstruction is easier than reconstruction! It's essential to offer constructive, substantive expressions of faith for those moving away from what they have needed to leave behind.

Hope Church has been a part of deconstruction and reconstruction over these recent decades. And I felt a particular draw to focus on exploring constructive expressions of faith in this season. It was 10 years ago at Hope Church that we studied the book *A New Kind of Christianity*, by Brian McLaren; this was a very valuable and well received exploration of renewed expression of Christian faith. I was looking for something in that vein for this fall, and I was so grateful during my reading week in August to read *Wholehearted Faith*. The author grew up in a more conservative Christian tradition and had written much about her path of faith deconstruction and her search for a substantive and life-giving faith. But this book is valuable whether or not you experienced a more conservative or problematic faith background.

Rachel Held Evans offers a faith and theology that is biblical and genuine, wise and curious, hopeful and honest—all while being open about her ongoing questions, struggles, and wonderings. And she does so not by demonizing or belittling her past, but by seeking to speak the truth in love about what she experienced as faith-diminishing rather than faith-flourishing.

I wholeheartedly 😊 recommend this book, and we'll make copies available whether you can join in the study times or no. I do invite you to join if you're able, as we'll have groups meet for an hour on Tuesday afternoons and evenings; please watch announcements for further details.

And I want to share a final poignant note about this book. Many of you know that Rachel Held Evans died in 2019 at the far too young age of 39. She had

written most this book but it was not completed at the time of her death. Her dear friend, pastor and writer Jeff Chu, completed the book using her notes. Jeff Chu is known to many of us as a gifted minister with our Reformed Church in America denomination, and his work in bringing this book to completion is a wonderful honoring of Rachel Held Evans and a gift to those seeking to build their faith in life-giving and enduring ways.

Peace – Pastor Gordon

Diverse Adult Education Opportunities

Jane Schuyler, Chair Adult Education Ministry



The Peaceable Kingdom: The Unique Opportunity for Interfaith Dialogue in the Arabian Gulf at the Al Amana Centre will be presented by Steve and Jean Norden. They lived a month during fall 2023 at the Al Amana Centre, where Steve served as guest preacher/pastor at the Protestant Church in Oman (PCO). While there, they experienced the hospitality of the Omani people, the beauty of the country, and the important work of the Centre.

- **September 8:** An overview of the history and culture of Oman, the rich history of Reformed Church in America presence in the Arabian Gulf since the late 1800s, the ministry of the PCO in serving Oman's expatriate community, and the PCO's connection to the Al Amana Centre
- **September 15:** A focus on the formation of the Al Amana Centre—its history of cooperation with the Sultanate of Oman, its presence in promoting and facilitating interfaith dialogue, and its dreams for the future.



Israel and Palestine is the timely topic of three sessions led by Joshua Vis, RCA Church Engagement Facilitator for Israel/Palestine.

- **September 22:** "Israel/Palestine in U.S. Politics and Society." We will examine the current state of the political and societal conversations about the war in Gaza and the Israeli occupation in general.
- **September 29:** "Israeli society." We will investigate the political and societal landscape in Israel.
- **October 6:** "Palestinian society." We will investigate the political and societal landscape in the West Bank and Gaza.

Adult Education, Cont'd

October 13: The Psychology of Misinformation and its Remedies



Social psychologist and author David Myers will document ten socially important examples of people believing misinformation. He will also offer five psychological science explanations of why folks embrace falsehoods and some reflections on

three antidotes: evidence-based science, critical thinking education, and faith-rooted humility.

October 20: Christian Stewardship



As our congregation moves into the season of budget design for 2025, we will consider what it means to be **stewardly caregivers of any and all neighbors in need**. Retired pastor Bob Luidens will read a chapter, titled “Keepers,” from his recently published memoir (*With Feet of Clay—Pastoral Confession*). Thereafter

brief, responsive comments will be shared by Hope Church members Steve Hoogerwerf (professor of Christian ethics) and Scott Rumpsa (executive director of Community Action House). The balance of the hour will provide opportunity for wider discussion among all in attendance.

October 27: Hope Church Budget and Endowment

A presentation and discussion led by the Stewardship and Finance Ministry.



The Four W's of Book Censorship: Why? Who? What? When?

Retired Hope College professors Barbara and Richard Mezeske will focus on these questions: Are



books and the ideas in them a threat to civic good, and if so, what is the nature of that threat? Who determines what books are within the bounds of

acceptability? How do parents navigate a balance between opening the world to their children and protecting them from certain content?

- **November 3:** Participants will explore the questions listed above.
- **November 10:** The Mezeskes will explore specific challenged books and responses to them.

Telling Stories in the Dark



Presented by Jeff Munroe, these sessions will focus on the content of Munroe's recent book, *Telling Stories in the Dark: Healing and Hope in Sharing our Sadness, Grief, Trauma, and Pain*. The thread that runs through Jeff's book is Frederick Buechner's idea of “the stewardship of pain,”

which changes the basic question in response to suffering from “Why has this terrible thing happened?” to “What do I do with this?”

- **November 17:** Our first session together will provide an overview of the book.
- **November 24:** The second session will dig deeper as Jeff is joined in conversation with Hope Church member Terry DeYoung.

Prayer Pals: Connect with Hope Church Kids

Jocelyn VanHeest, Children's Ministry Director



This past summer, the children of Hope Church have learned about the many people Jesus met and changed in many ways. We discussed sharing the Light of Jesus with others and how to be a part of the community of followers. The children know that they are an important part of our congregation; they have many ways they can share the Light of Jesus with other members. They can share a simple smile with someone they don't even know, help with church activities, pray for others, attend worship, and, most certainly, be kind and considerate to others. They have made cards for people who are unable to worship here at church, made encouragement cards for the youth as they set out on their trip this summer, and shared small gifts with others related to the stories of Jesus they heard. Surely, many of you have seen the way they enjoy fellowship with each other as they share a pizza lunch, listen to the Word with the Children, spend time talking together, and are a part of this community of believers.

Hope Church is an important part of our lives, and it's important that the children feel that deep connection, also. As members of the church, we have made baptismal promises to these children. All of us can make an effort to get to know and show these children that they are loved, nurtured, and prayed for by this community.



This fall, the members of Hope Church members will be given the opportunity to become Prayer Pals with the children of a family from Hope Church. Prayer Pals are people in the congregation selecting a family with children through selecting a paper from baskets at church and then making connections to those children. The children will have an opportunity to create a small poster about themselves, including a picture, which will be on display at church so congregants can connect the names of the children to a face and to learn more about them. There are many ways to make an impact on those children, and any or all are appreciated. You can introduce yourself to the family, pray for the children, remember them on special occasions, make a plan to eat pizza with the family, and more. This has been a Hope Church tradition for many years, and we hope that it is an easy way for all of us to feel connected with people of all ages.

The care and concern we share with each other are a wonderful way to share the Light of Jesus!

Communications Bring Us Together

Lois Maassen, Communications Committee



The screenshot shows a Google Form titled "Hope Church Social Media Tips". At the top, there is a photo of a church building with a steeple. Below the title, the form asks users to bookmark the form or add it to their phone. It provides instructions on how to use the form to suggest content for the church's Facebook account. A "Switch account" button is visible. There is a section for "Your answer" and a footer that says "Any comments about what makes this especially relevant to Hope Church and".

The Communications Committee, co-chaired by Michael Kolk and Lois Maassen, has been working to increase the accessibility of information—about each other and the mission and interests of our shared community. In addition to this publication, which is published quarterly, the committee shares information via Facebook, with the dedication of member Judith Boogaart.

You can help the information flow in the Hope Church community! If you see articles about or written by members of Hope Church, use [this online form](#) to tell us about it or email office@hopechurchca.org! And don't be shy about sharing your own news, whether professional milestones, creative projects, or volunteer activities. We regularly hear from folks how much they appreciate learning about their fellow members—the people with whom we regularly share pews.

Help us to know each other and to keep our connections strong!

Thank You, Aubrey!

At the close of the summer, we express our thanks and best wishes to Aubrey Brolsma. Aubrey began with us as an intern, and stayed on to offer administrative support; you may have seen them working in the office or at the welcome desk on Sunday mornings. Aubrey is off to law school, and we send our blessings with them.





The Verity Duo ballot marking device (BMD)



The Verity Scan secure vote capture device

Disability Pride and Voting Rights

Terry DeYoung



As someone who has dealt with a significant physical disability my entire life, I don't like asking for help, even though I sometimes need it. Whether I'm using my cane to knock down a can from a grocery store shelf beyond my reach or going to a polling place to cast my vote, I want to do things for myself as much as possible—

without assistance from others, no matter how well-intentioned would-be helpers might be.

Why do I (and many other disabled people) feel this way?

For one thing, there's widespread stigma attached to having a disability. Many people see us as helpless, incapable, having little to offer, or a drain on other people and society. Whenever I ask for help, I risk reinforcing stereotypes that people with disabilities are trying to overcome or negate.

Asking for help may also invite others to pity me, and I don't want to live my life as someone people

feel sorry for. I consider myself a gifted person with much to contribute. I want to be valued for who I am as well as what I can offer to a community.

In retirement, I'm continuing my efforts to make a difference in my community at large and in the greater disability community. That includes volunteering for the ACLU of Michigan's Clerk Engagement Program, which helps ensure that our elections are fair, accurate, and accessible to every eligible voter. Barriers to voting—whether based on discrimination because of one's ethnicity, race, ability, gender, age—don't disappear on their own. Awareness and advocacy are essential.

One way to achieve greater access and reduce discrimination is for state legislators to pass the Michigan Voting Rights Act (MIVRA) when they return from summer recess. Part of the necessity for doing so is linked to the 2013 federal case *Shelby v. Holder*, which saw the U.S. Supreme Court gut a significant part of the Voting Rights Act of 1965, widely regarded as the “most successful piece of civil rights legislation ever adopted by the United States Congress.”

Passing MIVRA will expand on protections previously included in the federal Voting Rights Act, as well as add new protections for all Michigan voters by:

- Providing additional legal tools to fight discriminatory voting rules in court.
- Expanding language assistance for voters with limited English proficiency.
- Ensuring advance public notice of key voting changes so voters can take action.
- Establishing a central hub for election information to increase transparency and promote best practices.
- Securing needed safeguards for voters with disabilities by creating a process to identify and resolve alleged violations of state or federal laws protecting their voting rights.

In regard to that last point, to protect the rights of people with disabilities, MIVRA, when necessary, will allow for the appointment of local accessibility monitors, who can be put in place for up to 10 years if voluntary remedies are not pursued. Accessibility monitors are sorely needed because current laws have often failed to resolve accessibility issues facing Michiganders with disabilities.

Of particular interest to me is improving reliable availability and access to Voter Assist Terminals (VATs). These terminals provide accommodations for people with hearing, visual, physical, and other disabilities, providing them the opportunity to independently vote a ballot in privacy. By law, VATs must be available and in working condition at every polling place in Michigan.

In my experience, these crucial devices have seemed like an afterthought at most polling places. Here are three personal examples from just the past eight years:

- On one occasion, I asked for the accessible voting option and was told that all the places to mark my ballot were accessible—the poll worker motioning to tables set up with dividers for privacy and chairs. After marking and submitting my ballot, I returned to the sign-in area to ask what happened to the special machine that provided options for someone who was visually impaired or otherwise unable to mark a typical paper ballot. “You mean the VAT? It’s right over there,” the poll worker said, pointing to a corner

of the room. “You should have asked to use the VAT.” I explained that it’s unrealistic to expect that someone who asks for an accessible voting option to identify the Voter Assist Terminal by name, and she apologized.

- Another time I asked to use the VAT, which was tucked away in the corner of the large all-purpose room used for three precincts in my ward. Escorting me to the VAT, the poll worker said I was the first to use it that day, which became more apparent when she could not get it to operate properly. She apologized and asked her supervisor for assistance, and they were able to troubleshoot the problem. Afterward, I encouraged them to provide signage indicating the availability and location of the VAT, particularly if it could not be placed in a more visible location near the main voting area.
- In last February’s presidential primary, I took advantage of early, in-person voting at one of our county’s four early voting locations. Poll workers were so eager to welcome and register me that by the time I said I wanted to use the VAT, they had to cancel my ballot and start over so it would work in the VAT. It was an all-hands-on-deck process. It was the third of nine days of early voting, and I was the first voter to use the VAT at that location.

How You Can Help

First, because of the much-needed reforms MIVRA will bring, contact your state senator and urge them to pass this important piece of legislation to improve voting access, not just for people with disabilities, but for all Michigan voters.

Secondly, fully accessible voting includes making sure that the location of a VAT is convenient and well-marked, the process for using it is in plain view, and the device is working properly. What I and others really want is the seamless access and privacy afforded to other voters—without having to ask for anyone’s assistance in the process.

Most voters are unaware that the Voter Assist Terminal is available to anyone, with or without a disability. You can help to normalize such access by utilizing the VAT at your polling place. Inform poll workers you’d like to use the Voter Assist Terminal whenever you vote, and invite others you know to do the same. Your help will be greatly appreciated.



Genealogical Connection for Memorial Garden

Jane Schuyler

When I started to seek information about Larry's and my ancestors, I joined the local [Genealogy Study Group](#) led by Megan Heyl, with her "techie" spouse, Jim. Among the various researching tools that Megan introduced is the [Find a Grave](#) website. As I was using this tool, I realized that the Hope Church Memorial Garden should be included. With affirmation from Consistory, I contacted Megan and Jim to assist us with the project. With assistance from Bruce TenHaken and Amber Crain, Jim took photographs of all the placards hanging in the Memorial Garden hallway. Over the next several days, Megan entered the information for all those interred in the Memorial Garden. In the future, the church office will be able to update the website information.

This may have you asking several questions:

Who may be interred in the Memorial Garden?

The placement of ashes is primarily for Hope Church members and their immediate families. A request for placing of any other person's ashes must be made to the Consistory/Executive Committee in writing and their decision is final. Only human remains will be considered.

Is there a cost?

Funds for upkeep are collected from each placement of ashes and are held and disbursed for that purpose only. The current fee is \$200.

What's the process for placing ashes?

An individual must file a signed application with the Hope Church office indicating acceptance of the rules and regulations. Once approved and a date established, placing ashes can either be a private function or officiated by a Hope Church pastor or by other clergy with a Hope Church pastor's prior approval.

Are ashes scattered and/or placed in a container?

Interment of ashes in a biodegradable container is recommended. Scattering of ashes may be allowed. No permanent containers will be permitted. Hope Church reserves the right to designate in which general area within the Memorial Garden the ashes are to be placed. Placement is permanent; ashes cannot be removed or relocated.

May I place a memorial marker?

Since precise site identification will remain anonymous, individual location markers and other site decorations are not allowed. Hope Church will design and maintain an identification plaque in an appropriate location within the church. Persons desiring their plaques to be adjacent will have the option of reserving space by paying the placement fee together. Hope Church will maintain a permanent registry of ashes placed in the Memorial Garden. The use and maintenance of the Memorial Garden are under the exclusive control of Hope Church.



Drink Up!

Tammi Griswold, Congregational Care and Health

Unless you live in a drought-stricken area, you, like me, may not think so often about the importance of water. It is sometimes brought to our attention as we watch the news and see the reports of wildfires raging across areas of our country. We know our flowers will die, our gardens suffer, and our lawns turn brown without the regular addition of water. But how many of us think about how a deficiency of water in our bodies affects us? Along the way, most of us have learned somewhere that we would likely not live more than three days if we are not consuming water or some kind of liquid. And of course: There is living, and then there is thriving.

A co-worker recently told me she learned that for her age, size, and other factors, she should be drinking something like 84 ounces of water a day! Another told me she generally consumes 64 ounces by early afternoon. On average, our bodies are approximately 60-percent water. Our kidneys, which remove waste from our bodies, need water to function. Our blood, which carries oxygen to our whole body, is 50-percent water. Every cell in the human body is approximately 45 percent water. Insufficient body water content makes our bodies function less than optimally.

When we become dehydrated (your body is losing more water than you are taking in), we start to have problems. A mild (1-2 percent) dehydration can cause dizziness, headaches, fatigue, and the inability to focus, just to name a few symptoms. With severe dehydration, everything starts shutting down.

Those I have talked to who consume appropriate amounts of water proclaim increased energy, better mental acuity, an easier time maintaining weight, better sleeping, and just all around well-being.

By most accounts, eight 8-ounce glasses of fluids—water being the gold standard, although there's also water in milk, soda, tea, and even many foods—a day should suffice. Of course, those of us who exercise (and sweat) may need more, and those with certain medical conditions may need less.

So, if you don't already drink your recommended daily amount, give it a try. Notice any difference? Drink up!



Image from hollandaquatic.org

Images of Beloved Community

Ruth Stegeman, Justice & Reconciliation Ministry

It didn't take me long to learn that the discipline or practice of writing these essays occasioned a kind of delight radar. Or maybe it was more like the development of a delight muscle. Something that implies that the more you study delight, the more delight there is to study. A month or two into this project delights were calling to me: *Write about me! Write about me!*

- Ross Gay, *The Book of Delights*

Ross Gay's sweet little *Book of Delights* encourages us to make it a habit to notice the good, the true, and the beautiful—along with the ironic and absurd—and find joy in them. In the same way, *Beloved Community*, an important concept in our *Racial Justice Commitment*, can be discovered in our daily lives. A bit more difficult to understand than delight, *Beloved Community* is a concept that can be made real to us when we look and listen for glimpses of it in places not perfect but leaning toward a vision of the future for which we yearn.

The Holland Aquatic Center is one such *Beloved Community*, a place of radical hospitality, of diversity and equity and belonging. An inclusive family, not an exclusive club. A place to find the abundance of God's goodness for all.

Grade school children stream off school buses and line up in the entrance, chatting excitedly and nervously about the swimming lessons awaiting them. Mostly brown and black children, our beautiful multi-colored future. When lessons are done, they noisily climb up the giant blue spiral slide and gleefully shriek all the way down.

During school breaks, teenage girls meet at the reception desk, eager to hit the pool to increase their speed for upcoming meets. Skinny

adolescent boys lift weights, committed to bulking up. Fathers and mothers with babies and toddlers head to the zero-entry pool.

The assistants at the front desk greet everyone with a smile and a towel. "Welcome back!"

The over-65 Silver Sneakers crowd shuffles in around 8 a.m., some heading for the pool, others climbing the stairs to the workout center, where people of all ages and colors and shapes and sizes use the ellipticals and treadmills and weight machines. They greet each other by name and share updates on their weekends, taking long breaks for conversation.

Downstairs, geriatric swimmers, their walkers lined up by the fitness pool, exert maximum effort to climb down into the anti-gravity water, hoping to ease their arthritis and increase their mobility. People with intellectual and physical disabilities celebrate their accomplishments at adaptive swim.

Cycling, high intensity interval training, pilates, zumba, yoga, and more meet every level of athletic prowess and taste and interest.

This is the Holland Aquatic Center, supported by robust taxes, committed to a community of swimmers, to "empowering healthy connected lives." Financial assistance offsets monthly fees when needed. All are welcome. Everyone belongs. Abundance, goodness, and hospitality shine through. This is *Beloved Community*.

Where have you glimpsed Beloved Community in Holland? Where have you heard it calling: Write about me! Write about me! All are invited to write a vignette, a sketch, an essayette, or a simple scene for upcoming Salt & Light editions; send your submission to office@hopechurchca.com.

Seeing Faith through Fresh Eyes

Judith Boogaart



On Sunday July 7, Hope Church welcomed Justin and Stephanie Meyer, Joshua Bode, Mohammed Ali Al Shuaili, and a delegation from Oman to our morning worship and fellowship time. Hope Church provides a support share for the Meyers' work at the [Al Amana Centre](#) in Muscat, Oman.

Al Amana has a rich history of collaboration between Christians and Muslims as a place to promote peaceful dialogue and bridge-building between people of various faiths. It offers intercultural immersions for visitors from countries and faith traditions all over the world. This trip to West Michigan was an immersion experience in reverse—with Omanis coming to the U.S. for a 10-day visit.

The Centre uses a conversation method called Scriptural Reasoning, in which people from different faiths gather in small groups to read from their holy scriptures and have a “holy gossip” about what the text means to them. Through this process, they develop empathy and respect for

each other's faith traditions, and are encouraged to work for peaceful and just solutions in their own communities.

The Centre also offers trauma healing led by trained facilitators, study abroad courses, tailored programming for individual groups, and a program called Interfaith Photovoice. This last one is what we were privileged to enjoy on July 7.

Al Amana's partner Interfaith [PhotoVoice](#) designed an arts program that promotes dialogue and harmony among different faith groups using photography. The delegates were given a phone camera and asked to capture images that reflect their personal experiences, beliefs, and emotions related to faith. The resulting Photovoice Exhibit in the Commons (and posted [on our website](#)) was a treasure to view and led to many meaningful conversations among delegates and Hope members.

Several of the delegates chose photos of an outdoor worship they attended and shared how



meaningful it had been for them—despite being very different from their usual worship style. A common theme was how being outside in nature uplifted them spiritually. How often I have said something similar after enjoying the wonders of creation!

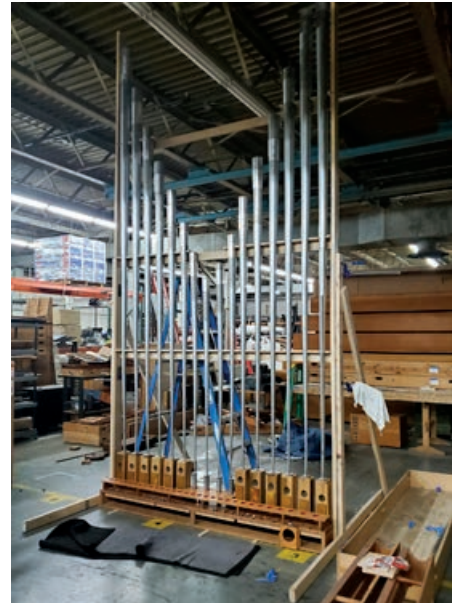
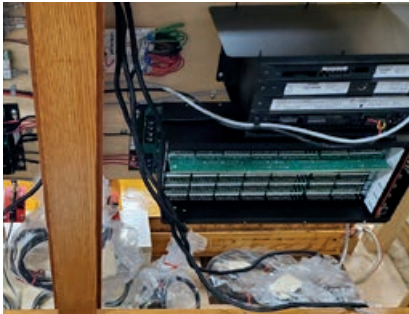
I had a lovely conversation with a young man who loved English literature. We talked about some classics we have read, and the power of story, and how even stories with sad endings can leave you totally satisfied as a reader.

Another young man hesitated about coming to the U.S., because he thought, “I already know what the U.S. is like.” But when he got here, it was different than he expected, and engaging with people here made it feel “like home.”

We thank the Omani delegation for sharing their time, photos, and thoughts with us. Be sure to check out their exhibit to see faith through their eyes and discover common ground.

Renovation Progress; Musician Insights

Rhonda Edgington, Organist and Music Director



Renovations of our pipe organ are underway at the Buzard Factory, in Champaign, Illinois. We received some pictures of their work recently, some of which we can share, along with updates full of technical information that 99 percent of you wouldn't find too interesting! To summarize, they have been working hard on refinishing the console (the piece of furniture with the keyboards), as well as redoing the stops knobs, and the "guts" inside with more up-to-date technology. The pipes have all been cleaned, and the ones with raccoon damage (ask Bruce TenHaken for a complete story!) repaired. The pipes that were a splotchy handmade gold are being repainted. They are currently working on windchests. The Buzard team plans to start reinstallation in September, but it's always easier and faster to tear down than to reassemble, right? While we are hoping for an early October finish date, it may extend later into the month. Look for the view in the sanctuary to start

changing in September, but don't hope to hear the new organ before October. Exciting progress!

We have started to think about what ways we can celebrate the finished organ in the fall, once it's all done and sounding amazing. While details are still being hammered out, I have been learning an exciting French Toccata that I'm looking forward to playing some Fall Sunday. Dan Fisher, our resident composer (and recording artist!) has also been hard at work writing his first organ piece for me to play on the finished organ—a world premiere at Hope Church! And Gordon and I were just pondering about making my Advent recital this year extra special: details to come. We can look forward to lots of organ music in October and beyond.

Until then, we are enjoying hearing from lots of our Hope Church musicians, who are helping make worship with the piano even more interesting. In the last issue of *Salt & Light*,

we had a few Hope Church musicians share about their musical journeys and wanted to hear from a few more this month. Gary and Ellen Rizner (cello and violin) are often seen playing in various configurations, from music with the choir to string ensembles. Tim Cook, who played bass for many years in Early Worship, is a great occasional addition to our 11 a.m. worship, often playing with Perry Landis on guitar, accompanying the choir and congregation.

I asked our musicians about their musical influences and journeys.

Perry Landis: I grew up in a home filled with music, primarily from the swing era, which my father loved. He was a pianist/composer, though not by trade. Music was all around me, but sadly, I chose not to learn any instruments: I didn't think it was "cool." Mostly I didn't want to have to practice! In high school, however, a buddy insisted I join his band, that I could "learn" to play bass guitar. I thought he was nuts, but I was game. Soon

my friend and I became the song leaders for our Sunday School class and youth group. In college, I majored in music composition and performance, with classical guitar as my primary instrument. Exposure to the great works was intensely motivating and exciting, as was the study of theory and music history.

Tim Cook: There were a number of inspirational moments, but the one that comes to mind was being asked to play for Hope Summer Repertory Theater productions. The first of them was *Oklahoma!*; then *Fiddler on the Roof* and the first half of the run of *Man of La Mancha*. These were my first experience of performing in a smaller ensemble, rather than school orchestras. It was also the difference of performing a different kind of music: musical theater rather than strictly classical. These productions were right after I finished high school.

I didn't grow up playing in church; my last year of high school, I joined the Early Worship support and continued with that until 2022.

Ellen Rizner: Hope Church has been an important part of our life in music! Barbara Veurink was a great friend and was unequalled in hymn playing! Cal Langejans got us involved in the choir. Brian Carder was so good at making the music fit the liturgy. He encouraged our kids to play and we watched them grow to appreciate the connection between music and worship. Rhonda is an outstanding performer and a

bundle of energy. The building has been where I taught group lessons and had recitals. Some of my best moments have been in the sanctuary by myself just playing. I also loved watching my students' faces when they heard themselves in that beautiful space. Gary's father's piano is in the chancel now and I am using his mother's violin these days. They loved Hope Church: It feels very full circle.

Tell us about your career, and/or how music was a part of that.

Perry: I worked as an Associate Professor and Lighting and Sound Designer in Residence for the Theatre Department at Hope College. I also composed music for and sometimes performed in productions there during my tenure. Since retiring, I have again been able to embrace music composition and performance, and have been delighted by the invitations to participate in services at Hope Church.

Tim: One or two years after I started working at Haworth, a co-worker approached me: he'd heard that I play bass. He, along with a couple of other co-workers, had a group, and he asked if I'd like to join them. That began an on-and-off involvement in various groups that continues to this day.

Ellen: Gary and I have always been involved in music as a profession and a hobby. We grew up in musical families, and we raised our own musical family. We met in orchestra at Northern Michigan University, graduated with degrees in Music Education, and went out to

change the world through music! We moved to Holland in 1976 when Gary got a job teaching middle school orchestra at West Ottawa Schools. I had been teaching in Alpena and started teaching violin lessons. We needed a church home, so we started visiting different congregations. We only made it to two places. The Sunday we were at Hope Church, Barbara Veurink started her introduction to the Doxology, and that was it. We were done.

Pondering about Music

Some of you may read Rhonda's monthly articles on music in the *Holland Sentinel*. If you don't subscribe to the Sentinel, or if you want to share the articles with others, you can find them all on Rhonda's Substack, a web service through which people publish and share their writing with others. If you subscribe you will receive email notification when new articles are posted. Rhonda explains, "Sometimes I write about concerts I've played or attended, sometimes it's ponderings on various topics in music, or descriptions of musical journeys I've taken. July and August covered my summer creative activities: attending an organ convention, teaching organ lessons, playing concerts, and writing poetry postcards. You can find all my articles at RhondaSiderEdgington.Substack.com."



Refugia

Jackson Nickolay

Over the course of the summer, the Creation Care Ministry at Hope Church has invited us as a congregation to read and dwell in the book *Refugia Faith* by Debra Rienstra. It has been such a gift and a delight to engage this work as a community. I have found Rienstra's work to be both clarifying and comforting. *Refugia Faith* does not shy away from the realities of species extinction, rising global temperature, and the global ramifications of the climate situation we're in. However, it also offers little pockets (or *refugias*) of hope to keep our candles burning and light our way forward to meaningful and impactful change.

Whether or not you had the chance to read *Refugia Faith* along with the Creation Care Ministry this summer, I would highly recommend you also check out Rienstra's podcast *Refugia*. It is an excellent companion to the book, while also being a terrific introduction to Rienstra's work with the concept of climate *refugium*. Structured around a conversational format, the podcast features Rienstra holding conversations with a variety of guests across a range of ecological fields who bring their own specialties and focuses to this theme of *refugia*. The conversations Rienstra has with her guests give brief glimpses into the lives of those who are working hard to create places of *refugia* and rebirth in creation.

For me, these conversations have been particularly encouraging, and I have often returned to them

when needed for perseverance and perspective. It is easy for me to get a little soul weary in the pendulum swing of the climate awareness news cycle. In August alone, my news sources covered the possible extinction of natural vanilla, the possibility of needing to farm water from the Great Lakes for the rest of the country, the connection between the abnormal heat waves and the increase in junk food sales, and the electric grid's culpability in wildfire events. Amidst this press, it is a gift to return to a place of *refugia* and to engage the kind of hospitable conversation Rienstra creates on her podcast and in her book. In listening to these episodes, I find myself welcomed into a time of rest and rejuvenation with incredible minds and diligent souls who are directly involved in creating places of rebirth amidst the global climate crisis. In listening, I have received the sense that I, the listener, am being welcomed into a new space, a space where I get to rest for just a bit, find some refuge, and exit the experience recharged for the work ahead.

Whether prompted by the book discussions over these last few months or on your own time, I do hope that you have the chance to engage these conversations as the summer draws to an end. There is so much of creation in need of our ordained work as stewards and caretakers and *Refugia Faith* has given me a much needed dose of hope and vision for how we can cultivate our own small *refugias* for the flourishing of creation.