



# SALT & LIGHT

a hope church publication

ADVENT 2024



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

Hope Church  
77 West 11th Street  
Holland MI 49423



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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.*

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## EDITORIAL & DESIGN

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*Cover Photo © Michael R. Kolk,*



## The Way of the Heart

“The Way of the Heart” is the theme that emerged from the collaboration of our Worship Ministry members as they planned for this 2025 Advent season. In various ways, direct and indirect, you can get a sense of the heart theme beating through

the lectionary passages. And whether the passages are in the Old Testament or the New Testament, the “heart” image connects back to the Hebrew sense and meaning for the word “heart.” The Hebrew word for heart is “lev” (no connection to the English “love”), and “lev” connects to the core of a person’s thoughts, emotions and desires.

It’s fascinating that the ancient Hebrew culture had a sense that the mysterious physical beating heart inside their chests, at the very center of their bodies, was also an image and location for the core of human identity. And that’s still how we speak of ourselves in this “modern” time. Even as we understand much more now of the physical workings of the heart and know how a heartbeat is the rhythm of physical life, we still also speak of “heart” in our everyday lives in ways that express our emotions and choices and desires. And in speaking of the “Way of the Heart” for our Advent theme, the image of the heart is especially connected to the choices we make as people of faith, as followers of Jesus Christ.

The Hebrew concept of heart understands that we make our choices based on what we most desire, and the heart of faith is to attune our lives to God’s desire for true life for all people and all creation. “The Way of the Heart” is receiving, seeking, following a path toward choices that reflect such desire for what is at the heart of God’s will. And in doing so, God’s Spirit opens us to the gifts and blessings that are often spoken of about the heart: wisdom, courage, generosity, peace, strength and joy.

Spirit’s Blessings to you as we join together in this Advent season to more deeply desire “The Way of the Heart.”

Peace – Pastor Gordon





# Activities during the Season of Advent

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## First Sunday of Advent | December 1

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“Teach me your paths” ~ Psalm 25:24

At **9:40 a.m.**, **Norman Bert** will lead Adult Ed with The Heart of Advent: A Two-Session Study of Advent Lectionary Passages from Luke. No sleigh bells ringing, no wassail cups overflowing, no kisses under the mistletoe. A fig tree instead of holly and evergreens. In place of the Yule log warming the hearth, chaff burning with unquenchable fire. Instead of cherubs singing carols in the snow, a fetus kicking in a uterus. Are you kidding me?! Where’s the poetry? Where’s the joy? What kind of run-up to Christmas is this?! Come and see as we gather around the Advent lectionary passages from Luke’s Gospel, as we seek the Good News in prophecies of nations in distress. On this first Sunday we’ll consider Luke 21:25-36 and 3:1-6.

At **5 p.m.**, there are a number of activities and events to choose from. People of all ages including preschool families can create with Advent and Christmas crafts. All materials and directions are supplied for both younger and older children. Instructors will be available for anyone needing inspiration or encouragement.

In the sanctuary, **Rhonda Edgington** will feature Advent and Christmas hymns for [newly restored] organ, as well as time for **congregational singing**.

At **5:45**, there will be a supper and lighting of the Advent candles.

## Second Sunday of Advent | December 8

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“Guide our feet in the way of peace” ~ Luke 1:79

The second Sunday brings a time to remember the traditions of **St. Nicholas** and his generosity, which reminds us of God’s love and many good gifts. This event is **breakfast at 10 a.m.** in the Commons, and all are invited to attend. Please sign up to attend this fun event, which will include a story for the children. Each child

should bring an extra shoe (it can be wooden!) to be filled with treats. (There is no Adult Ed this week.)

## Third Sunday of Advent | December 15

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“God will guard your hearts in Christ” ~ Philippians 4:7

The second session of Adult Ed’s The Heart of Advent: A Two-Session Study of Advent Lectionary Passages from Luke, led by **Norman Bert**, is at **9:40 a.m.** We’ll look at Luke 3:7-18 and 1:39-45.

After Pizza Lunch, you can share the spirit of celebration and joy with those who find it difficult to join us in person. **Caroling will commence at 12:45 p.m.**; you don’t need a great voice! Just a warm smile to share, along with the poinsettias, gift bags, and cards from the congregation.

## Christmas Eve | Tuesday, December 24

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“Good news of great joy” ~ Luke 2:10

At the 5:30 p.m. service, Christmas carols will be sung and the Christmas Story will be told as we worship the Christ child together. The unrehearsed pageant is a wonderful way for the whole community to celebrate the season as the children act out the events of the Gospel story. All children, toddlers through fifth grade, are invited to be a part of the presentation of the **Christmas story**. Children can pick costumes on the mornings of **December 8 and 15 and at 5:00 p.m. on December 24**—or wear a costume from home. We are gathering angels, shepherds, magi, and sheep. Costumes can be very simple, and Hope Church has accessories to augment. **Children and visiting family and friends are welcome.**

At the conclusion of the **11 p.m. candlelight service** in the sanctuary, we will greet **Christmas morning outdoors in the parking lot** with candles to welcome the Christ child.

# Season of Reconciliation Adult Ed

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In January we will hear from partners in ministry, community, and reconciliation. These presentations will include an overview of current stories of impact and reconciliation, reflection on challenges and opportunities, along with space for questions and discussion.



January 5 - Humanity for Prisoners

## COMMUNITY CARBON FUND

January 12 - Community Carbon Fund



January 19 - Affordable Housing: Habitat for Humanity & Jubilee Ministries



January 28 - Hope/Western Prison Education Program

# Opportunities for Giving

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## Christmas Poinsettias

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For yourself or to give as a gift to a friend or at-home member, order **poinsettias** using the envelopes available in the Gathering Area. Place your order by **December 8** and pick up plants after worship on **December 15**.

## Christmas Cookies and Cards for At-Home Members

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Donate two dozen home-made or store-bought cookies to be delivered with our Christmas caroling. Sign up in the Gathering Area or online at: [tinyurl.com/HC24cookies](http://tinyurl.com/HC24cookies) bring cookies to church by **December 11**.

To give Christmas cards to those with whom we'll carol, add yours to the personalized decorated bags on the pegboard display in the Gathering Area. Add your cards before caroling begins on **December 15**.





## Tree of Light

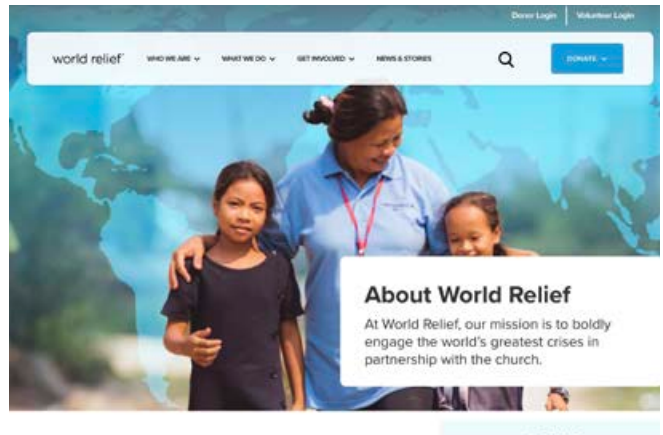
Our goal is **100 gift cards** to distribute within the church and community, and it's simple as 1-2-3-4:

1. Take your tag from the **Tree of Light** in the Gathering Area by **December 15**.
2. Purchase a **\$25** or **\$50** gift card from Meijer, WalMart, or Target.
3. Place the gift card into your *own greeting card* with your holiday greetings and blessings for the New Year.
4. Return the **unsealed** envelope containing your greeting card and the gift card by **Sunday, December 15**.

## Cookies and Cards for Caroling

Donate two dozen home-made or store-bought **cookies for Christmas Caroling**. Sign up in the Gathering Area, or online at [tinyurl.com/CookiesforChristmasCaroling](http://tinyurl.com/CookiesforChristmasCaroling) and bring them to church by **December 10**.

Provide **Christmas Cards for members** who will be visited by carolers on **December 17**. For each one, there is a decorated bag on the pegboards in the Gathering Area. Put your greeting cards in their bags before caroling begins.



## Christmas Offering for Middle East Crisis Disaster Response

Hope Church's Christmas Offering will support the Middle East Crisis Disaster Response, administered by World Relief, a global Christian humanitarian organization that partners with local churches and communities to develop sustainable, locally driven solutions to some of our world's most urgent problems. Learn more about World Relief at [WorldRelief.org/about-us/](http://WorldRelief.org/about-us/).

## White Gift Offering | Epiphany Sunday, January 5

On Epiphany Sunday, bring a personal care product wrapped in white tissue paper. These gifts, intended for both individuals and households, will be brought forward during the offering and donated to [Resilience](#), a local agency assisting all individuals and households caught in abusive relationships and empowering a hopeful future for them.



# Beloved Community

Kristen Gray, Justice & Reconciliation Ministry

In our last issue, Ruth Stegeman issued an invitation to readers of Salt & Light to submit their glimpses of Beloved Community in Holland. Any form is welcome: written word, illustration, or photography. Send your submission to office@hopechurchca.com.

## The Beloved Community\*



\*Public Library = a place of resources, kindness, and safety.

1/9 10/24/24



# Calculating Our Carbon Footprint

By Peter Boogaart, Creation Care Ministry

You could be forgiven, considered normal even, if you couldn't answer the following questions: How many kilowatt Hours (kWh) of electricity did you use last year? How many gallons of water did your household use? How many units of gas (therms) did you use?

In fact, if you can even define the terminology, you're probably one of those obnoxious trivia champions. So just for the record, a therm is 100 cubic feet of natural gas at standard temperature and pressure. A gallon? Think of milk, you buy it one gallon at a time. Water is billed in denominations of 1000 gallons. A kWh is the energy delivered by one kilowatt of power for one hour; sort of like ten 100W light bulbs on for an hour. Your utility bills are determined by how many units of each commodity you consume in a month.

What's even less obvious are the hidden consequences of using these commodities. Even water comes with a lot of embedded energy. Water is heavy; try lifting a 5-gallon pail. Forty-two pounds later, you know what I'm talking about. It takes big pumps and a lot of energy to deliver that water. Electric utility turbines are typically driven by the burning of fossil fuels. So, whether at the power plant or in your own furnace at home, that burning is producing the carbon pollution which is driving climate change.

Climate scientists have been sounding the alarm for years. But recently, their warnings have become more urgent. There's only so much additional carbon pollution the atmosphere can absorb before undesirable consequences result. We've already hit the speed bumps. Science is worried about us going over the cliff.

In the early 2000s, BP introduced us all to the concept of carbon footprint. The metric is a way of calculating one's contribution to the carbon pollution problem. The intent was to visualize the impact of using fossil fuels in such a way as to incentivize reduction. There has been a lot of suspicion that their motivation was to shift responsibility from the corporate world onto individual households. "We just sell the stuff. You guys burn it. It's your fault."

Nevertheless, carbon footprint is a useful metric. I like to think of it in biblical terms; "...before the

law, there was no sin...." We may have entered into a climate crisis in ignorance, but now that we do know we are responsible to do something about it. And maybe not to BP's liking, that responsibility extends to both our personal and corporate lives.

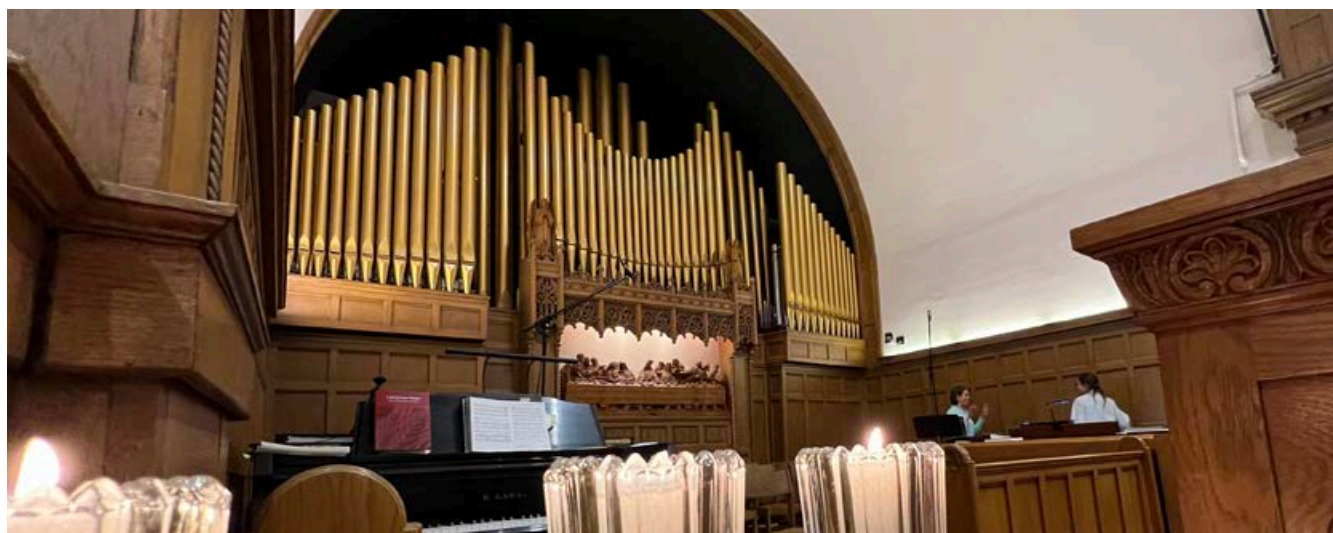
Under the banner of the Creation Care Ministry, Hope Church has launched a Carbon Footprint Team. The team is busy gathering the data needed to calculate Hope's carbon footprint. With data in hand, the team will then begin to define ways in which we can minimize our footprint. In some cases that may mean retrofitting of the building envelope or switching to electric appliances. We'll explore the potential to install solar panels.

We have a way of living which is damaging Creation. But we have the means to emit less carbon pollution and we have the responsibility to do so. I hope you hear in that statement basic Christian theology. Salvation is what happens when people with "ears to hear" listen to God's call; it's what happens when they hear God saying, "You're going the wrong way. Turn around."



# All the Music News!

Rhonda Edgington, Music Director



## The Organ Renovation at Hope Church

To celebrate the completion of the organ project and the return of our pipe organ, Rhonda will hold two special musical events in the coming months. Her usual Advent organ recital will take place on Sunday, December 1, at 5 p.m., with organ music based on familiar Advent hymns, plus congregational singing.

A more elaborate concert is planned for Sunday, March 2, at 3 p.m. in the sanctuary. Rhonda will play a variety of solo organ music designed to show off the colors and sounds of our organ. She will be joined by Carolyn Koebel, percussionist extraordinaire, who with Rhonda has made up the duo Thunder & Wind, performing together since 2019. They have played for HASP and in many area concert series, as well as at the Universities of Syracuse and Northern Iowa, in Chicago-area churches, and for organ conferences. This is exciting and powerful music for organ and percussion from around the world that will fill the space!

If you would like to learn more about the nuts and bolts of the organ renovation project, get ready for a deep dive with the Holland chapter of the American Guild of Organists and representatives of the Buzard organ company, on an evening in February or March at Hope Church. The folks from Buzard (the company who did our organ renovation) will explain to area organists and organ

lovers about the work they did on our instrument. Any members of Hope Church who would like to hear more are welcome to attend; stay tuned for details about when this event will take place.

I have been asked to explain some of the changes that were made to our instrument and what I'm looking forward to now that it's back. In practical and visual changes, the visible pipes were stripped and repainted gold, and the facade was filled in with a new set of pipes. The wood of the console was refinished, and the keys and pedalboard were cleaned.

We have new music desk lights for me to better see, and new electrical "guts" inside the console. One exciting feature of the new electronics is a playback mechanism, where I can record myself, and then go listen to myself while sitting in the pews. (This can be very useful for checking registrations and balances.) Also, the wooden boxes inside the pipe chests, which could be seen with the pipes entirely removed, which open and close to make dynamics had their motors fixed. One side didn't close at all, but now both sides are very responsive. Two ranks (or sets) of pipes were replaced—a flute on the choir division, and a low reed in the pedal. The previous choir flute was not a pretty stop, and our new one is very lovely. The previous low reed was hard to keep in tune, and was also not a pleasant sound. The new one is much more satisfying and fun to use!



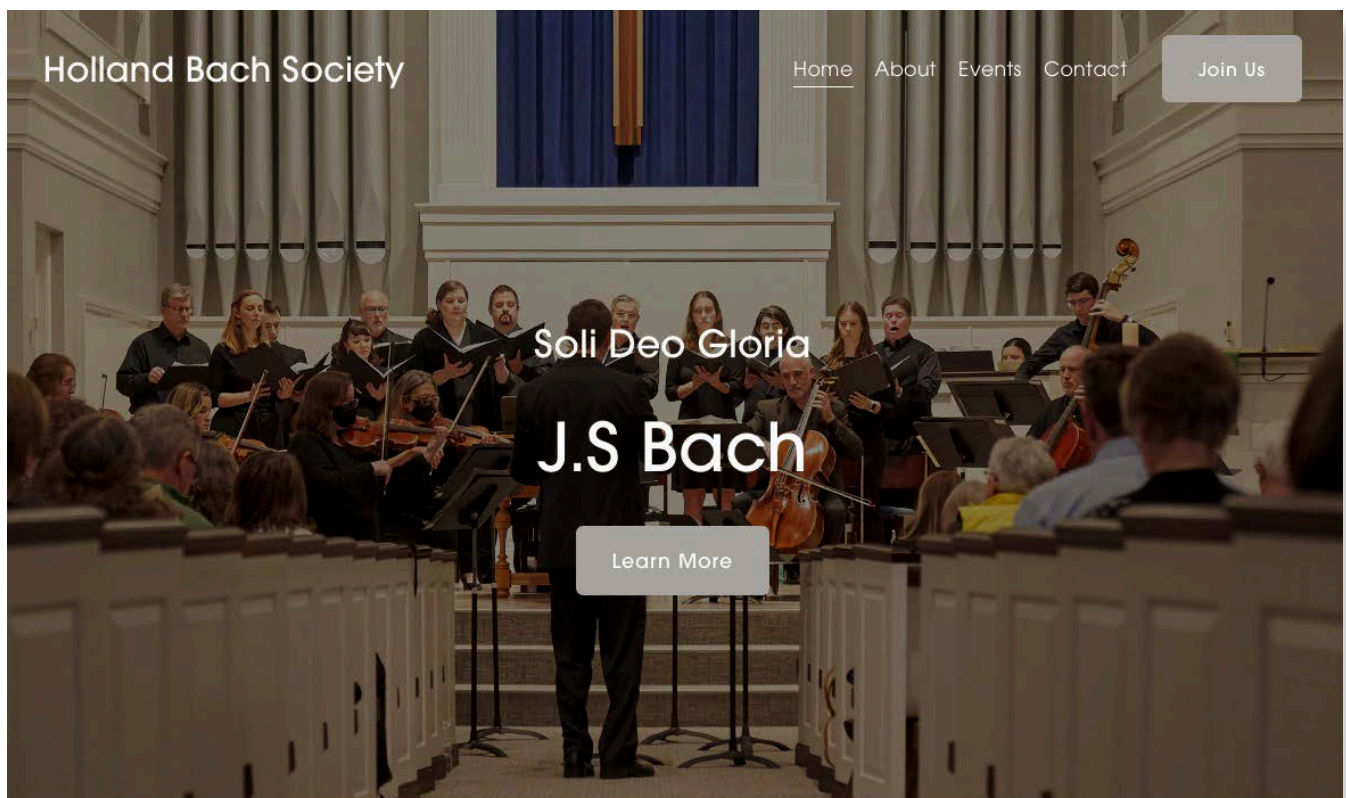
## Bach at Hope Church

The Holland Bach Society, formed by Holland musician Scott Vandenberg (Director of the American Legion Band and Orchestras at Holland Christian), has been performing Bach cantatas in the context of worship services—as they would have been done in Bach’s time—in Holland-area churches for a few years now. We are excited to be able to host this group at Hope Church this year, on Sunday, March 16.

There will be some Thursday evening Lenten programs in March, led by Scott as well as

other musically minded members of the Hope congregation, where we will have the opportunity to learn more about the work being performed this year, Bach’s masterpiece “The St. John Passion.” The Holland Bach Society will bring this piece alive with musicians from the Holland Symphony (including our own Dan Griswold!) and a small, select group of singers (including our Brian Carder!).

We will also hear more music of Bach during worship services in March at Hope Church. Watch for more details about all of these events, and mark your calendar now to join us.



**We are dedicated to sharing the musical works of Johann Sebastian Bach in the Holland/Zeeland area.**

Launched in 2021, the Holland Bach Society exists to cultivate an appreciation for Bach’s liturgical music and to enhance worship in local congregations. Members of this society gather from churches, professional ensembles, and other music organizations in our area. All are invited to experience the beauty and transcendence of J.S. Bach’s most famous and sublime musical compositions.

# Finding Our Way as a Pastoral Search Committee

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By Terry DeYoung and Susanne Jordan

Discerning God's call is not an easy assignment. Early on we were honored to be asked to serve as co-chairs of the Pastoral Search Committee. Weeks later, after the consistory had given its approval to the group we'd recruited, we were planning for our first meeting on July 8. We confessed to each other that, separately, we'd both wondered what in the world we'd gotten ourselves into. It was reminiscent of what Frederick Buechner wrote regarding the audacity of the prophets: "No prophet is on record as having asked for the job. ... Like Abraham Lincoln's story about the man being ridden out of town on a rail, if it hadn't been for the honor of the thing, the prophets would all have rather walked" (originally published in *Wishful Thinking*).

We're glad to report that the 14 other people who serve on the PSC have, so far, made this work manageable, meaningful, and satisfying. We set an ambitious timeline for completing our work and recommending to the Consistory a single candidate to join Gordon Wiersma on Hope Church's Senior Pastoral Team.

How this all turns out remains to be seen. However, as Claire Rumpsa said prior to our October 30 PSC meeting, "I am struck by the weight of responsibility that I feel as a member of the Pastoral Search Committee. There is a deep sense of commitment to do our best to get this right."

Forming a search committee signals an important step in the process of looking for another full-time pastor to meet the needs of Hope Church in the next chapter of its life. Searching for a pastor is always a crucial time in the life of a congregation. Since each church has unique needs, and since each pastor has particular gifts for ministry, it is essential that the church and candidates be involved in a process of prayerful and intentional discernment.

One of the difficulties for many churches is the lack of experience in conducting a pastoral search process. According to the RCA's Pastoral Search Handbook, fewer than one-third of the people on a given search team have ever looked for a pastor before. This may not be the case for Hope Church, given its history, vitality, and

longstanding practice of pastoral leadership teams. Even though half of the current PSC has experience serving on a church search committee, the makeup of any given search committee varies in significant ways with each search.

Another layer of the PSC's work—one we fully support and have reminded ourselves of multiple times—is adhering to this statement at the end of the current job description: "Hope Church RCA does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, or sex (including pregnancy, sexual orientation, and gender identity)." Navigating this within a committee made up of people with a wide range of experiences in hiring can be delicate.

All of this presents an opportunity for a search team to learn a discernment process that will be helpful and effective in its search. At the heart of this discernment process is a deep and abiding dependence on God's call. Pastors and congregations are ultimately not involved in "selling" themselves in an ecclesiastical market, but rather in discovering what God intends for them. The call to a particular congregation is much like an invitation to unite a pastor and congregation as companions in ministry. They commit to work together in faith and work together with grace.

Following introductions during interviews, some candidates have commented favorably about our range of ages and varying histories with Hope Church. Several of us have been part of Hope Church for less than 10 years; others have been part of the congregation for decades. Some are new to the RCA and the Reformed branch of the Protestant church; others have known nothing outside the RCA. Such diversity has been a gift that's served us well and enriched our work; it's also meant we can take nothing for granted.

"As a newcomer not only to Hope Church but also to the Reformed tradition, I have found our approach to action as prayerful, well-organized, consensual democracy," said Norman Bert, who interrupted one PSC meeting in August to ask what a great consistory is. (Norman wasn't the only one who needed an explanation!) "In my time on the PSC, I have experienced Reformed polity as





group-up, not top down. No bishops or popes, and even the pastor—while fully engaged, loved, and respected—is not ‘in charge.’ What’s not to love?”

“As a ‘childless millennial,’ I volunteered because I am a member of a small population of the congregation, and because I am very interested in how the church functions in general,” said Tatjcha Lambers. “I have found our process in the PSC to be strong, focused, and fair, and our dedication to doing it right has been important. I expected it to be a lot of work, but so far it has felt doable, even in the short timeline that we are striving for. I trust my church and the people in it to make the right decisions. As someone who has not served on Consistory, this has been a great learning experience for me.”

Thus far, we are listening well to each other, trusting each other with our candid thoughts, and making decisions that honor everyone involved.

“The PSC is prayerfully, respectfully, and diligently moving through the search process,” said Rayetta Perez. “We listen well to the Holy Spirit, each other, the congregation, and the applicants to ensure a thorough process that in the end will honor the needs of Hope Church for the next season.”

*The Pastoral Search Committee includes Doug Abell, Sharen Arendshorst, Norman Bert, Andy Boyer, Alyssa Cheadle, Kristen Gray, Matt Jantzen, Tatjcha Lambers, Rayetta Perez, Kelly Rosenau, Kevin Rosenau, Claire Rumpsa, Judy VanderWilt, Gordon Wiersma (pastor), Terry DeYoung (co-chair), and Susanne Jordan (co-chair).*

# Coloring Corner

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