



# 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.*

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## EDITORIAL & DESIGN

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## Hope Church Friends

Do you know what the “Annual Consistorial Report” (ACR) is? Some of you who have served on Consistory do know what that is. But I imagine many of you have never heard

of this peculiar sounding thing. The “Annual Consistorial Report” is a report that our Reformed Church in America denomination requires annually from the Consistory (hence “Consistorial”) of each congregation in the RCA. The report involves lots of data, with numbers to report on finances, membership, endowments and property, which are the kinds of things congregations and denominations track over time. But the ACR also includes an interesting narrative section, as it asks each Consistory to reflect on and provide answers to questions such as:

- What are signs of transformation that reflect a vibrant faith in our congregation?
- What does spiritual formation and mobilization for service look like in our congregation?
- What are our challenges, concerns and celebrations?
- How are we engaged in our cultural context and addressing issues of racial and economic justice?

Significant questions! —and it is a blessing and encouragement that our Consistory felt that we had significant answers to share! The ACR is typically completed sometime in February, and that timing placed us very much in the midst of a season of challenge and reflection. Our ACR responses spoke to the challenge of getting our bearings following the resignation of Pastor Jill Russell, along with the impending departures of other staff, acknowledging the need for expressing feelings of gratitude, loss, and uncertainty. At the same time, Consistory was able to abundantly express the many signs among us of a thriving and purpose-guided congregation. The nourishing rhythm of worship and fellowship, with people engaged and connected; the remarkable offerings of our Adult Education program, engaging with

important issues of faithful living; leaning into a congregational commitment to racial justice, as we also carry forward touchstones of Room for All, Accessibility and Caring for Creation; welcoming new households into our church life; advocacy in our community as part of the Unifying Coalitions in Ottawa County, seeking to be a faithful voice in a challenging political climate; renovations in our facilities that benefit not only us but also our Child Development Services community partner—all of these are expressions of our calling as followers of Jesus Christ to “do justice and love

mercy as we walk humbly with our God.” (And if we were able to submit an addendum to this year’s ACR we would report: “The Affordable Housing Project has been approved! Thanks be to God!”)

Thank you to all of you for being the flesh and bones of our ACR. It’s a report that is more than statistics and a list of activities; it is a reflection of the lively and life-giving community of faith that is Hope Church RCA. Thanks be to God.

Peace – Pastor Gordon

## Consistorial Report on Our Life and Spiritual Health

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*As described in Pastor Gordon’s introduction, this is the 2024 report, submitted in the first quarter, from Hope Church to the denomination. In its review of the document before submission, Consistory members recommended we share the narrative content as a view of our life together.*

### ***What signs of transformation have been visible in the life and ministry of your congregation this year?***

Participation and the vitality of in-person events have recovered from the effects of the pandemic, which we see in worship, education, discipleship, and social events. We have an active volunteer community serving on committees, ministries, and task forces, a high level of engagement, too, that shows that the Hope Church community is more than a weekly Sunday worship service. We continue our faithful work on inclusion, including the development of an anti-racism statement that we intend to finalize this year. We partner with sibling faith organizations like Maple Avenue Ministries and with community organizations to take our mission into our community. A new Unifying Hope team is examining and facilitating our faith commitment to public and civic engagement.

### ***How is your congregation actively developing passionate and reproducible disciples who live and love like Jesus? mobilizing emerging leaders for service in the church and in the world? embracing your mission to the world and sharing the good news of the gospel with everyone?***

We offer multiple opportunities for spiritual formation, education, small groups, and connections in the community for living our

faith. We have remained tenacious in pursuing a disability housing project in our community, investing not only our time but our resources and property. We include voices and stories of reconciliation in our services between Advent and Lent, which are powerful in shaping the congregation. We’ve worked with area nonprofits to share compelling information during our Adult Education series to address food insecurity, racial justice, the formerly incarcerated, and more; we’ve provided education about White Christian Nationalism as a threat to faithful followers of Jesus.

We use a variety of communications channels to be a voice in our community, including social media, advertising, and sponsorships; our messages are based on Micah 6:8, to do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with our God. We use our facility as outreach by welcoming community groups. We serve as a polling place during election cycles and host meetings for organizations as diverse as the Citizens Climate Lobby, Camp Sunshine, The Audubon Society, and Women’s Service Day.

### ***In what ways can your congregation more intentionally live out the call to cultivate transformation in Christ, equip emerging leaders of today and tomorrow, and engage in Christ’s kingdom mission in the coming year?***

# Consistorial Report, Cont'd

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We will continue our spiritual formation, education, and engagement opportunities, which includes groups like Men's Breakfast, Women's Circles, and Gentlemen of a Certain Age, all of which have long histories and are self-organizing. Our youth groups' activities in our community and on trips to other locations provide shared experiences that help our youth develop in their faith. We also expect to complete the adoption of our anti-racism statement and to incorporate it in our public witness.

## ***What challenges, concerns, or celebrations does your congregation have right now?***

We celebrate the vibrancy of our shared congregational life. In an era when churches are facing declining membership and budget deficits, we are blessed by positive trends in both areas. We have regularly welcomed new members who are drawn to our witness of inclusive love.

We are challenged by a transition in pastoral leadership given Rev. Russell's recent resignation. We also have some church staff transitions upcoming, and will be challenged to be future-focused in designing for what we pray to become.

## ***How does your congregation reflect the racial and cultural context in which you conduct your ministry? What are you doing to build bridges that develop and deepen mutual ministry that is multiracial and multicultural?***

We remain a mostly white church with a lot of Dutch ties even as we pursue anti-racism. We build bridges by engaging with other churches and area nonprofits that have built multicultural communities and can help us to be strong allies. We host Child Development Services daycare in our facility five days a week, which brings the diversity of Holland into our building. We also offer office space to Washington School Neighbors, a nonprofit neighborhood organization. We invite pastors from other backgrounds and communities to our pulpit to share their voices and perspectives, welcoming and encouraging them to say what they believe we need to hear. We can't do everything ourselves, but we can partner, facilitate, and resource.

## ***How have those who serve in the spiritual formation or teaching arena of your***

## ***congregation received ongoing or continuing education this year?***

We provide funding for our pastors and other leaders to attend conferences, purchase books, or pursue other educational opportunities of their choosing. We encourage and support our pastors to engage with area clergy organizations, including the Unifying Pastors of Ottawa County, which brings ecumenical voices into our view of spiritual formation. We organized a sojourn at Iona, which was meaningful for one of our pastors and a number of our members. We have been represented at APCE by lay leaders who bring back information to share and incorporate, as appropriate, into our programming.

## ***Has your congregation hosted or participated in an anti-racism training this year?***

We've had a year of discernment organized by our Justice and Reconciliation Ministry, working toward discernment about and development of an anti-racism statement. This has included book groups, recommended readings and viewings, Great Consistory discussions, Adult Education sessions, and an interactive wall for everyone to share thoughts and observations. We are blessed to have university faculty and strategic planning consultants who planned and organized this series with the help of ministry members.

## ***What barriers exist in your facilities that may prevent people with various disabilities from full participation in all areas of church life? How is your congregation working to improve accessibility and hospitality?***

We published three articles in a series in *Salt & Light*, our periodical publication, by Terry DeYoung, who was a champion for inclusion in the RCA until his retirement. Our physical facility has incorporated accommodations for disabilities, as Terry notes in his articles. We have barrier-free access to all of the public areas of the facility. We have the T-coil loop system for hearing assistance in our two main meeting rooms, and offer closed captioning for Adult Ed sessions. We have ongoing education about how to be hospitable for people with various disabilities. We understand that inclusion is a continuing project, not a destination, so seek to be open to learning from those with disabilities (especially developmental and sensory) how to make them entirely included.



***Does your congregation offer a food pantry or other local hunger program? Does your congregation support a local food pantry or other local hunger program? Is your congregation engaged in advocacy for food justice?***

We continue a longstanding partnership with Community Action House, providing food collection and donation, volunteers, and education. This has been a strategic

partnership in supporting their excellent work rather than duplicating services or fundraising appeals. Community Action House has been a pioneer in providing services with dignity for recipients, and has expanded beyond food to housing and financial security. We also have members with connections to Bread for the World, and have found it meaningful to organize letter-writing campaigns in support of public policy that addresses food insecurity.

## Meet the Musicians

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*Rhonda Edgington, Music Director*



Eric Sooy, percussionist

Julie Sooy, flutist



Dan Griswold, violist



Claire Rumpsa, flutist

I wanted to talk with a few Hope Church musicians who have been and will be gracing us with their musical talents, especially during this transition time while the organ is out. They are Julie Sooy (flute), Eric Sooy (percussion), Claire Rumpsa (flute), and Dan Griswold (viola).

Julie previously taught music at Hope College and is now a career coach with West Michigan Works! She also directs the West Michigan Flute Orchestra. Eric Sooy is President and Founder of Black Swamp Percussion. Claire Rumpsa works for a non-profit focused on leadership development and peace-building on the island of Ireland. Dan Griswold is Classis Coordinator and Stated Clerk of Holland Classis, RCA. He plays

with the Holland Symphony Orchestra, the Holland Bach Society, and the Vintage Parlor Orchestra in Grand Rapids.

**Tell us about a moment in your development that inspired you to delve more deeply into music.**

**Julie:** I played piano in third grade, viola in fourth grade, and flute in fifth grade. When I started flute, I took lessons from a neighbor lady, Julie Working. She was incredibly encouraging and probably is the one responsible for my deep love of flute. She had a way of building me up that made me really work hard. She snuck me in the back door to solo-and-ensemble when I was in fifth

grade, saying I was a sixth-grader when I wasn't! When I got a blue medal and nice comments, I was totally hooked on competing and excelling. From then on, I practiced endlessly and competed in every possible competition.

**Eric:** I first took piano lessons in grade school because my mom forced me to. Then, having served my mandatory sentence at the piano, I was able to start drums in seventh grade. Like many young drummers in the late 70s, I was enamored with Neil Peart, drummer for Rush. But actually, I am grateful for my early piano lessons. Playing with musicians who are better than you is also a great inspiration and motivator.

## Musicians, Cont'd

**Dan:** In the Fall of 1972, Mr. Bosela came to the elementary school music class I was in, showed us each of the string instruments used in an orchestra, and gave an open invitation for us to start learning one of them. I knew right away that I wanted to play viola, partly because it was different! When I told my mom, she wondered a bit how this clumsy kid would manage playing a musical instrument. (She didn't tell me this until many years later.)

**Claire:** I grew up playing the piano and flute. I remember the first time I got to play a flute when I was 9 years old, and I was immediately captivated by the sound of the instrument. The flautist James Galway is from Northern Ireland, so he was a big influence on my musical journey. He always ended his concerts by playing "Danny Boy" and "The Belfast Hornpipe," which are two of my favorite songs to play.

### Did you grow up playing music in church?

**Eric:** My church-playing experience mostly involved the Christian rock band "Morning Star." It was started by my brother and some of his friends, and when their drummer quit, he asked me to play. We did mostly originals and some covers. We played at church services, outside gatherings, and youth group gatherings.

**Dan:** That day in third grade began a wonderful journey of growth in music, with opportunities not only to develop as a violist but also to explore other instruments: guitar, cello, electric bass, violin, voice. So much of this activity has been in church: Sunday services, special events, even leading a choir for over two years.

**Claire:** My piano teacher was an organist in Down Cathedral in Downpatrick, Northern Ireland. He taught piano in the nave of the Cathedral, which had incredible acoustics. St. Patrick was buried at that Cathedral, so there would often be tourists wandering around as I was learning to play a new piece of music. (The Cathedral itself is hundreds of years old, so there would often also be an occasional mouse running around!) My mum is a priest in the Church of Ireland, so I was often invited to play at weddings, concerts, and Taize services.

## A Witness to Reconciliation

by Ruth Stegeman

Several years ago, when Steve and I were in Trafalgar Square, we stopped at nearby St. Martin-in-the-Fields to attend a choral eucharist. Among other memorable aspects of that experience, we were drawn to the east window's distorted image of a cross in a stainless-steel grid. Others will interpret this artwork differently, but to me it speaks of a broken world and warped church. It's beautiful, yes, but also a fitting image for my darkest moments of doubt: How might I live faithfully in today's chaotic culture? Can I even remain Christian?

But on March 24, when the Hope congregation courageously affirmed our Racial Justice Commitment with a resounding yes vote and sent the document to Consistory for review, I experienced a moment of hopefulness, a glimmer of possibility, a witness to reconciliation, and I was proud that Hope is a church to which I belong.

It was almost two years ago when the Hope Consistory entrusted the Justice and Reconciliation Ministry (JRM) with the task of shepherding an anti-racism commitment toward endorsement. Following the congregational vote advising the Consistory to adopt, the Consistory unanimously did so at their April meeting, making Racial Justice one of four touchstones for our common work.

Energized by the March 24 vote, Justice and Reconciliation Ministry recently got busy reviewing the list of implementation ideas shared at the March 24 meeting. We asked: What are we doing already, and what might we do next? As it turns out, we are actively engaged in several items on the list. Consider the following examples:

- Joining the Juneteenth celebration with a Hope Church booth (and new canopy!) at Kollen Park
- Using multi-hued wood for our Children in Worship figures
- Visiting Maple Avenue ministries for worship (youth)
- Confessing the sin of racism in our prayer of confession



Image of the east window of St. Martin-in-the-Fields by David Castor, Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons.

- Stewarding our annual Community Partners budget to support justice organizations, such as I AM Academy, LAUP, and Lighthouse Immigrant Advocates
- Designating funds to Black music organizations as reparations for the use of Black Spirituals

The implementation ideas list is a living document, open to creative involvement at many levels. Over the summer months, JRM will continue planning additions for the 2024/2025 program year, unique in that it's not only a critical election year but also the first year after affirmation of the Racial Justice Commitment.

Though anti-racism can occur as part of a plan, it also happens informally, through action,

conversations, and shifts in mindset. As I reminded our JRM members last week, justice is not just us. That is, racial justice is not just the responsibility of JRM. Other ministries and committees can integrate racial justice efforts into their work. And individual Hope members can align their thinking and action with our Racial Justice Commitment in ways that help usher in Beloved Community: courageously and respectfully speaking against racism, making public comment at commissioner meetings, volunteering with community organizations, and more.

Likely, you have ideas. Please share them with JRM and let us know how we can support your efforts. Do join us in the messy work of witnessing to reconciliation in a broken world.



**“Voting and participating in the democratic process are key. The vote is the most powerful nonviolent change agent you have in a democratic society. You must use it because it is not guaranteed. You can lose it.”**

—John Lewis



Image: Lorie Shaull from Washington, United States, CC BY-SA 2.0

## Anti-Racism: The First Steps

*Bob Jerow, Justice & Reconciliation Ministry*

On March 24, 2024, Hope Church held a congregational meeting to consider adopting, as a congregation, an anti-racism statement. It would be understandable if you are now wondering what's next. On the preceding page in this edition of *Salt and Light*, Ruth Stegeman shares a number of answers to that question of “what's next?” Building on Ruth's work, I'd like to encourage you to join the Holland Juneteenth Celebration.

An anti-racism commitment calls us to be allies for racial justice. As such, we connect with, learn from, listen to, and are led by our BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color) partners. Such ally-ship carries within it gratitude for and celebration of diversity, through creating opportunities for diverse relationships and community partnerships. As we take our first steps, a helpful guide to our journey is found in the “Arc of Racial Justice” found in Jemar Tisby's book, *How to Fight Racism: Courageous Christianity and the Journey toward Racial Justice*. The arc consists of three areas for growth: **awareness**, **relationships** and **commitment**.

A great first step for all of us would be to attend this year's Juneteenth Celebration in Kollen Park on June 15. The Juneteenth holiday commemorates the day in 1865 when the enslaved people of Texas finally learned that slavery had been abolished and that they were free. Juneteenth has become not only a time to commemorate Black liberation from the institution of slavery, but also a time to highlight the resilience, solidarity, and culture of the Black community.

I promise at the Juneteenth Celebration you will experience a vibrant community celebration (awareness) with plenty of welcoming souls open to engaging relationships. Experience the rhythm of live music, the flavors of delicious food, and the joy of community as Holland commemorates Juneteenth together! Let's make a commitment to honor history, celebrate resilience, and embrace the spirit of Juneteenth! Freedom! Come shop from over 70 vendors, food trucks, makers, artists, crafters, and hobbyists. Bring your kids! There are a ton of fun activities for all ages. Be sure to stop by

the Hope Church tent and get your picture taken with a life-sized poster of John Lewis! The Juneteenth Celebration is produced by the I AM Academy, led by Lindsay and Henry Cherry, and all proceeds support programs and opportunities for Black youth in West Michigan.

The Justice and Reconciliation Ministry chose the John Lewis Voting Rights Act as our focus for this year's booth at the Juneteenth Festival. The right to vote is the bedrock of all other rights and freedoms in a democracy, and was the focus of Congressman John Lewis's life's work.

In the words of the Brennan Center for Justice, the Voting Rights Act of 1965, regarded as the legislative jewel of the civil rights era, “was enacted as a comprehensive tool... to ensure that states followed the 15th Amendment's guarantee that the right to vote not be denied because of race.” It was enacted after national outrage over the televised brutal attack on marchers by Alabama State Troopers on the Edmund Pettus Bridge. That march was led by



a young John Lewis in his role as the leader of the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC).

Under the supervision of the Department of Justice, in the years after the passage of the Voting Rights Act, the disparity in voter registration rates between white and black voters dropped from nearly 30 percentage points in the early 1960s to 8 percentage points a decade later.

Beginning 2013, the Supreme Court significantly weakened the Voting Rights Act in the *Shelby County v. Holder* decision, eliminating the requirement that states with a history of voting rights discrimination get preclearance from the Justice Department for changes to state voting rules and voting district boundaries. In 2021, with *Brnovich v. Democratic National Committee*, the Court made it harder to sue to stop discriminatory practices in voting rules and redistricting. Since *Shelby*, 29 states have passed 94 restrictive voting laws. At least 29 laws were passed in 11 states that had been subject to preclearance, either in whole or part, at the time *Shelby County* was decided. Consequently, between 2012 and 2020, the white/black voting participation turnout gap grew between 9.2 and 20.9 percentage points across five of the six states originally covered by the Voting Rights Act (as reported by the [Brennan Center for Justice](#)).

To address the changes resulting from the Supreme Court's decisions, a new voting rights bill has been introduced into congress, the **John R. Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act**. In brief, this act would;

- Update the formula used to determine which states qualify for preclearance of voting rights changes based on recent evidence of discrimination, eliminating the Supreme Court objections to preclearance.
- Make certain types of voting-rule changes subject to preclearance nationwide, because such practices have been used in the past for the purpose of discriminating against minority populations.

For a complete summary of the proposed legislation, see the [Brennan Center for Justice website](#).

What can you do? Return to the Arc of Racial Justice: **awareness**, **relationships**, and **commitment**. Use what you have learned to jump start your curiosity to learn more (awareness). Use the relationships in your life to encourage others to become aware and consequently to contact their members of the House and Senate to move the John R. Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act to law, and to vote accordingly. And finally, make a **commitment** to write your representatives, too, and vote!

If you miss the Juneteenth Celebration, the John Lewis display will be in the Commons from June 16 – 23. Take your picture with John Lewis. A petition to Congress in support of the John R. Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act will also be available for you to sign.

In his last message before his death, John Lewis stated: “Democracy is not a state. It is an act, and each generation must do its part to help build what we called the Beloved Community, a nation and world society at peace with itself.”

## Ruby Bridges

*“Racism is an adult disease, let’s stop using our children to spread it.”*



Image: Uncredited DOJ photographer, restored by Adam Cuerden, Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons.

Ruby Bridges was a 6-year-old little girl when she became the first Black student to integrate Louisiana public schools in New Orleans. On the day that she was escorted into the elementary school by Federal Officers, irate white parents were outside the school yelling and protesting. After she entered the building and was escorted to the Principal's Office, the white parents entered the building and pulled their children out of the school. She spent the entire year as the only student in the building with her own personal teacher.



## Pub Theology

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*Pastor Phil Quinn, Pastor of Discipleship*

Perhaps you've heard talk of "Pub Theology" and wondered what goes on at such a gathering. We'd love for you to stop in and participate sometime, or maybe even pass along the word to someone you know who is looking for a space like this.

Hope Church Pub Theology is a progressive space for adults from all walks of life and ideologies to come together and discuss perspectives on God, philosophy, and faith, and what it looks like to integrate our beliefs and values into how we engage daily life. Each Wednesday evening, we gather at Brew Merchant in Washington Square for pizza (provided), drinks (which participants are welcome to purchase from the bar), and conversation that explores a wide variety of topics selected beforehand by the group.

Pastor Phil often sends out information about the topic to be discussed in advance, along with an article or two and some discussion prompts to get the conversation going when we gather. We have enjoyed participants from a number of generations coming together, from college students to grandparents and everything between! This mix of perspectives and life experiences allows conversation and learning that is enriching to all involved.

Pub Theology unapologetically explores conversation topics connected to Christian theology, but we welcome (and are grateful for!) the perspectives and insights that participants of other or no faith affiliations bring to the table. Topics this year have included barriers faced by women and LGBTQ+ ministers, the role of Satan in our theology, exploration of a sex-positive Christian ethic, and a number of other engaging subjects. We also have had a number of playful and experiential gatherings, like this

year's Purim observation. The group divided out parts and playfully read aloud the book of Esther together, complete with booing, cheering, and all sorts of delightful color commentary.

Pub Theology has a core group of about a dozen regular attenders, though there is no expectation to attend every week. We also regularly welcome new participants, and introductions happen at the beginning of every gathering. It's always a good week to drop in for the first time.

Pub Theology is proud to be loudly anti-racist, anti-oppression, and pro-love. We celebrate and welcome people of all orientations, gender expressions, ability levels, races, ages, creeds, educations, life experiences, and backgrounds.

A few important things to know that Pub Theology is not – it is not quiet. We gather in a bar that has other patrons and sometimes events, and it can be difficult to hear. We do our best, but if you know you don't do well in loud spaces, Pub Theology may not be for you. We do hold a boundary against the use of any hurtful language, but we are no strangers to profanity.

And though we strive to make Pub Theology a safe space to process challenging ideas and often handle delicate topics, it is not group therapy. When things are stirred up that need deeper or more intentional attention and care, Pastor Phil is happy to meet separately with anyone and potentially help make connections with other resources for further healing and growth.

If you would like more information, or to get on our mailing list for topics and announcements, please reach out to Pastor Phil at [pquinn@hopechurchrca.org](mailto:pquinn@hopechurchrca.org).



# The Intern Experience: Exploration, Acceptance, Growth

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*Ella Williams, Hope Church intern*



Going into this internship, I didn't fully know what to expect. I hadn't ever been to Bible Pride or to a Hope Church service. Lynn Japinga recommended me for the internship after I had been in her Christian Feminism class. Before that class, I was falling away from organized religion and had some

negative ideas associated with the church. Her class showed me that there were other people who were affirming Christians and had many of the same questions I had. Hearing about Hope Church gave me even more hope that a church I would be comfortable in was possible, and I grasped for the opportunity to explore this.

Throughout this year, I have explored my faith, felt accepted into the Hope Church community, and grown in so many ways. I want to share about some of my most memorable moments involved with Hope Church and Bible Pride this year, and some of the ways being a part of this community has helped me to grow.

Being a part of Bible Pride has pushed and stretched me in so many ways. The way that it is structured currently is that we decide on a topic to cover, and Pastor Phil brings his resources and knowledge about different perspectives on the topic. From there, we all chat about our questions, revelations, and any and all thoughts about the topic. With the wide variety of folks that attend, everyone has their own set of knowledge and interests. It has been fascinating being part of a group where everyone so fluidly moves from being knowledgeable about something to not being afraid to ask questions on the next topic. In this way, this group has really pushed me to grow in being comfortable with not knowing. Asking questions can feel really scary to me. The Bible Pride community thrives on questions and not knowing. People bring what knowledge

they have and we talk, typically not looking for a definitive answer, but instead a new perspective.

Through Bible Pride, I have met people who have become some of the people I trust most on campus. I have felt safe to be vulnerable with this group and share many parts of myself. I have met people who have unintentionally pushed my boundaries, and through that I have started to learn how to uphold them. I have learned about the Bible, the importance of Biblical context, and about translations. I have grown so much in my faith and have felt closer to God than I ever have before, even though I have more questions than I've ever had. I have learned, mostly from observing, how to lead a discussion as a facilitator of conversation, not needing to be an expert. Bible Pride has provided me with community, filling a space in my life that I didn't know was empty.

Another part of my intern experience has been building a relationship with Pastor Phil. Phil has become one of my best friends and mentors here. We meet weekly for coffee and to talk. Phil is someone who makes me feel seen for who I am, which is so valuable as a college student navigating this weird place in life. I have learned from him in so many ways.

I have so many more memorable experiences from this year joining the Hope Church community that I can't list them all. Pub Theology has provided a space for me to hear more perspectives than I ever thought possible on biblical topics. It also has allowed me to be surrounded by wise people in the community, most of whom have taken me under their wing in some way. On Sunday mornings, Bruce [TenHaken] has been a consistently friendly and kind face to me, even when I pester him with millions of questions when I am on admin duty. On my first Sunday at Hope, the structure of the church was very unfamiliar to me, but a couple sitting behind me helped me figure it out and made me feel welcome. These are only a fraction of the experiences that led to me experiencing community here in just a single year. Although I will be home for the summer, I can't wait to come back next year to continue to grow at Hope Church.

# Kitchen Renovation Focused on Hospitality

Lois Maassen



*Hosting Pizza Sunday at Hope Church is a breeze with the newly updated kitchen.*

In mid-April, the renovated Hope Church kitchen was celebrated, along with the family of Dorcas Haworth, in whose honor the project was supported. Paul Elzinga and Dan Fisher led the project, with significant support from Mary Schregardus (Dorcas's daughter), a host of Hope Church members, and skilled outside resources.

"When I saw the order of magnitude this was going to be, I said we need to get Jim VanderMolen at Elevate Studio involved in this," Paul said; Jim was the lead architect of the significant facility renovations completed in 2017. "[We] soon brought on Comprehensive Engineering when we saw the mechanical needs," Paul continued, describing the assembly of the team.

Dan said, "This project had a lot of challenges to it. One of them is certainly the design and

construction that Paul was alluding to. The other part of it was how do you coordinate the key people internally to come up with a design that lots of people have input on, and that makes sense, and that people agree on? And there are a lot of different people in Hope Church with different interests in the kitchen."

Part of the process was to catalog exactly what the kitchen contained, and then to gather frequent users of the kitchen to understand what improvements could be imagined. The group identified a few objectives, which Dan described as wanting to "make it beautiful. We wanted to make the flow of materials and flow of the work much, much more organized and better than it was before. We wanted to make a real high efficiency production facility in terms of how the work within the facility flows. So that was one."





Twice over three decades, the family of Dorcas Snyder Haworth has funded renovations of this kitchen in her honor.

Dorcas was born in 1914 as the ninth and youngest child of an Evangelical United Brethren pastor and his wife in Culver, Indiana. Because of her father's illness, she was taken in by a married older sister in Kalamazoo; because her brother-in-law was the Dean of Men at Western State College (now Western Michigan University), Dorcas was offered a college education and majored in Home Economics.

GW Haworth and Dorcas met at Western and the two became teachers, he in Holland and she in Zeeland—though she resigned after their marriage in 1938 (single women were preferred). The couple raised five children, for whom Dorcas was the rock, teaching her four girls to sew and to can in a warm and supportive atmosphere.

Dorcas and GW were both faithful Christians and deeply involved in the life of Hope Church. Dorcas took a leadership role, sharing both her spirit and her skills, in hospitality and in the kitchen, for many years before her death in 1978.

The 1995 Dedication Festival for the first kitchen renovation included these lines:  
*We dedicate the kitchen as a place to bring signs of your strength and health.  
May Christ come to make our humblest meal a welcome offering for all who hunger.*



The plaque presented at the dedication ceremony now hangs in the renewed space.

# Kitchen Renovation, Continued



*The renovated kitchen offers more space for ease and safety of movement and clear accessibility.*

Paul elaborated, “A major criticism before was the narrow width of the space between the center island and the oven and stove. Another thing definitely on the radar right away was the ugly floor, that red and white, black square tile that was not very cleanable or wearable. Floor upgrading was a huge part of it.”

“Another big thing,” Dan added, “was the heating, air conditioning, and ventilation system in that space. We had a wall-mounted air conditioning unit that was on a little clicker thing. It had a heating system in another room. It had another ventilation kind of a system for the oven when that fan turned on; it just didn’t make sense. So we completely got rid of the air conditioner in the room, and redesigned all of the heating and ventilating and air conditioning system into something that makes logical sense.”

“The dishwasher needed to be totally restored,” Paul recalled. “We debated on whether to buy a new one or restore this one.”

Dan noted that before the renovation, the collection of serving carts was often in the way.

“We made a place for them. In Commons One, right outside the door of the kitchen, we put in a new cabinet with a little garage for the five different serving carts, which makes so much more sense. We also had big trash cans and recycling cans sitting in the workspace, but we redesigned things so all that fits underneath the stainless steel counter that feeds the dishwasher.”

Accessibility emerged as a theme throughout the renovation process. Dan said, “One of our members asked, ‘What have you done for handicap accessibility?’ And we realized we needed to include that thinking in our process. We have an accessible counter and provided more space to maneuver around the whole kitchen. Michael O’Connor, our project manager from E&V, has a daughter with disabilities; he affirmed our team for considering accessibility.”

The project was completed with sensitivity to our responsibility to sustainability, too. Paul explained, “A box truck and trailer load of outdated stainless steel trays, shelves, coffee makers, cooking utensils, dishes, and much more was picked up by



a Zeeland company and taken to their recycling center. All of the items were sorted, cleaned, and reconditioned. Items were then made available for sale through their retail outlet and through various auctions in the West Michigan area—much better than taking up space in landfills.”

“It was really fun to work on this project,” Dan said. “We had a lot of great team members, each of them bringing different skills to the table—certainly Mary bringing her skills in terms of kitchen design and how to make things look beautiful, down to the detail of spatulas and spoons and everything else. Paul brought his experience with construction, and relationships, and networks with E&V and the architects and others. You’ve got a lot of internal resources, Bruce [TenHaken] and Joyce [Teusink] and Jocelyn

[VanHeest], and everyone else—Kathy Green and Kyle Vohlken come to mind—contributing from a user’s point of view, which is really wonderful. None of us individually could have done this, but collectively with all these different skills coming together and working together so well, we came up with some really good solutions to the different issues and challenges that we had.

“We had quite a bit of help from Hope Church people at different stages,” Dan noted. “People came in for a few hours or a couple days or whatever, but people came in and they worked hard, unloading stuff from the kitchen, putting stuff back, moving things around, and coming up with ideas. And I think people had fun, which was really nice.”





## Holistic Approach to Food Access in West Michigan

*Nathan Magrath, Manager of Communications and Outreach at the Alliance to End Hunger*

*Anne Saliers, chair of the Community Ministry, appreciated this article, which highlights the leadership demonstrated by our community partner Community Action House. We reprint it with permission from the [Alliance to End Hunger](#).*

When I entered [Community Action House](#) for the first time I was immediately struck by how welcoming, professional, and community-oriented everything was all at once. I was greeted by a receptionist at a front desk and shown to an area to wait for my colleagues—Alliance to End Hunger president Eric Mitchell and a fantastic supporter of both the Alliance and Community Action House, Carol Myers. Just sitting and waiting gave me a truly fascinating look into all that went into this organization. I could see a grocery store straight ahead of me, private consultation rooms for guests of Community Action House, a demonstration kitchen to my right, and even a room for child programs behind me.

Before we get into the particulars of Community Action House, we should take a quick look at the community in which it is situated. Ottawa County—where my own family currently lives—is



one of the fastest-growing counties in Michigan. While traditionally very agriculture-

heavy, the county is exploding with subdivisions and businesses as the influence of nearby Grand Rapids steadily grows. Holland, Michigan is located on the shore of Lake Michigan on the western edge of the county. Historically a legacy of Dutch immigrants, the small city is a popular tourist destination in West Michigan, especially during the spring Tulip Time Festival and the summer “beach weather” months. It is also home to Hope College, a well-known liberal arts college in the Midwest (and coincidentally my alma mater).

Holland and the rest of Ottawa County are also reflective of what so much of America is witnessing on a food security level. As wealth flows in, the tide does not always raise all boats. The community has ample examples of urban hunger, rural hunger, and migrant hunger. Hope College sits only a couple blocks from neighborhoods of families just trying to get





*Alliance To End Hunger Staff - Source <https://alliancetoendhunger.org>*

by. In Ottawa County, 22,000+ individuals are food insecure, and limited affordable housing options means that families who are struggling have few options for making ends meet.

Community Action House has evolved and developed since its inception in the 1960s to address the unique needs of the community and has grown to work across several key focus areas: dignified access to essential needs, connection and resource navigation, financial empowerment, and voice/dignity for their guests. On my visit I was particularly struck by the holistic approach of one of their newer programs, the “Food Club & Opportunity Hub.”

The “Food Club” is an in-house grocery store that looks exactly like any other grocery store. There are departments for fresh produce, fresh and frozen meats, canned goods, breads, and more. Action House has adopted a very unique approach to help fill a common gap in communities. While traditional food access operations solve emergencies, few solutions exist to meet ongoing needs in a sustainable, dignified,

and empowering way. In other communities, food is either free at a pantry or full price at the grocery store. At Food Club, guests invest a membership fee based on their household size and income, and in return they can select fresh produce, meat, dairy, and other food that works best for their family’s cultural and dietary needs. Last year, Food Club served 3,500+ families.

The model blew me away. First and foremost, the Food Club gives members a level of dignity that is so desperately needed by those working hard to provide for their families. Folks can come in, get what they need without pressure on what they can or cannot receive, and leave after an ordinary checkout process. Through the intentionally adjacent “Opportunity Hub,” members also have access to critical resources—health and nutrition cooking classes, financial education, tax assistance, and a team that can provide connection to community resources offered by other agencies. Through their other programming—Financial Wellness, Street Outreach, a Community Kitchen, and more, their team is ready to meet guests facing any challenge, and walk alongside them to help build stability.

By the end of my visit I really came to know the organization as not just “for the community” but actually an integral part of it. As a true testament to this I heard one final story about Community Action House working with the local transportation department to ensure there was a bus route that stopped at the Food Club & Opportunity Hub, to lower barriers to food access for those who rely on public transportation.

Communities across the country have had their fair share of hardship over the past few years, and this community is no exception. However, I am proud to have Community Action House serving the neighbors in my community, and I look forward to seeing their work expand here and serve as a model for food access efforts in other communities.



# Evidence-Based Principles of Effective Persuasion

David Myers

As we enter a season of heightened engagement in civic—and not always civil—discourse, the Unifying Hope team encourages attention to productive communications. This excerpt is from David’s Macmillan Learning-hosted blog, [TalkPsych.com](http://TalkPsych.com), where you can read the entire essay, including more about self-education.

I can read your mind. I see your worried spirit. I sense that, when assessing today’s U.S. political divide and voter sentiments, you feel astonished at what so many others believe and embrace. If only you, and your preferred candidate, could persuade well-meaning but misinformed people to embrace truth and value decency.

Election triumphs require persuasion, which we social psychologists have long studied. Our experiments confirm ten strategies:

1. *Frame messages that speak to your audience’s viewpoint and values.* Associate your message with their preexisting perspective. “Don’t mess with Texas” [says](#) the effective litter-reducing signage aimed at the leading litterers—18 to 35-year-old macho males. For a business audience, a climate-protecting policy could explain its economic benefit.
2. *Harness the influence of multiple credible sources.* Use communicators that your audience will regard as expert, trustworthy, and likable. And better three speakers each making one argument than one person making three arguments.
3. *Exploit the power of repetition.* Barack [Obama](#) understood what experiments have documented—repetition feeds an illusion of truth: “If they just repeat attacks enough and outright lies over and over again . . . people start believing it.” Donald [Trump](#) understands: “If you say it enough and keep saying it, they’ll start to believe you.” Even cliches, when repeated, will persist in people’s minds. So will repeated truths, crisply expressed: “The Biden Boom.”
4. *Invite public commitments.* Once people voice or sign their support, they tend not only to have stood up for what they believe, but also then to believe more fervently and durably in what they have stood up for.
5. *Engage emotions.* Appeal to the heart. Effective political appeals often elicit both negative emotions (warnings about a scary opponent) and positive emotions (patriotism, pride, and hope).
6. *Create visual images.* People have much better memory for scenes than words. Even an irrelevant photo—of, say, a thermometer alongside a claim that “Magnesium is the liquid metal inside a thermometer”—can make assertions seem more believable. If you describe falling unemployment or an increasing stock market, portray the spoken words visually, with rising or lowering arm motions.
7. *Connect with people’s social identities.* Present your candidate as one of “us,” as someone with whom your audience can identify.
8. *Inoculate your audience against future opposing arguments.* Effective persuasion not only debunks misinformation, it “prebunks” such. It defuses the other side’s case by acknowledging and refuting it, thus preparing people to hear the opponent’s message, and to counter argue.
9. *Focus communications on those undecided or disengaged.* Don’t waste limited time and resources on those with strong preexisting views. The future is decided by the muddled middle.
10. *Prioritize face-to-face appeals.* In a mid-twentieth century field experiment, Michigan researchers Samuel Eldersveld and Richard Dodge divided citizens not planning to support an Ann Arbor city charter revision into three groups. Among those exposed to mass media appeals for the revision, 19 percent changed their minds and supported it, as did 45 percent of those who received four supportive mailings, and 75 percent of those visited personally.

Finally, and even more important than any of these ten evidence-based persuasion principles, is one more: the power of self-persuasion. Get people to rehearse and verbalize your argument.

When supporting a candidate, focus less on the crushing brilliance of your thinking than on what your audience is thinking. Remember: Your aim is not to score argument points, but to persuade.





# Unpacking the Obstacles to Addressing Hearing Loss

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*Dr. Karen Van Doorne*

Early in my career in audiology, I thought sharing facts mattered. I was all about sharing what I had learned, hoping to help people hear better and to be a part of something good. But, like everything in life, there are more “parts of the elephant,” and, I learned, not everyone is motivated by facts.

My enthusiasm for finding solutions to providing better hearing for those that crossed my path didn't stop, however. I needed to dig deeper, to understand what motivated people to either pursue or decline the option in front of them, treating hearing loss. And a lifetime of learning began.

The facts were easy. The other part, well, not so much. As enthusiastic as I was for them to be on the other side of better hearing and find success, I learned a lot from all those crossed arms and glares at those first appointments. Unpacking that was a lifelong career experience, and one I enjoyed. Because it wasn't the facts, including that untreated hearing loss has a significant effect on the entire family and social support system, both physically and psychologically. It was what lay deep inside.

It was what having a hearing loss meant to them. But also what they had been through before I met them in the office.

Hearing loss is often misunderstood. It's not visible and occurs slowly; we don't easily notice it in ourselves. It's hard to admit our flaws as well as changes in our ability to navigate the world. Having others notice our challenges is equally humbling. On repeat. So, changes in our behavior happen unconsciously as we tend to not want to be engaged socially (it's just too hard to hear in a background of noise), so we want to stay home. Or perhaps others don't speak clearly (it's them, not us). Maybe the TV is perfect for us, but others

are blasted out of the room. Or you are criticized for interrupting... again... because you didn't hear the story someone was telling. Or you bring up a subject that was just discussed. You become quieter in a group as you've become aware your comments may be ill-timed. This is the slippery slope that untreated hearing loss provides. But how we got here is maybe part of the journey.

In my experience, some are motivated by facts, but most need to have some experience with those “I'm-not-doing-so-well” moments to understand the need for self care and that first hearing exam. And here's the rub. It may confirm you have hearing loss—let's call it what it is... a loss. You'll have to make changes. Again. But for the sake of gracefully engaging with others, enjoying your kids, grandkids, work partners, church services, maybe it's worth it? Acknowledging grief is a part of it. You've lost something. Unless we can accept this, we can't accept hearing devices. Spend a bit of time acknowledging what this must feel like.

Taking care of hearing loss removes a burden; it may lead to a happier marriage or appreciation of music if that's your love. It's engagement we are looking for, a route to being fulfilled and connected as humans. It is necessary to our emotional and spiritual health to be the best we can be for ourselves but also what we give to our immediate and greater family.

If there is better acceptance and understanding of the whole human, to both the physical hearing loss as well as what's behind the experience of it, we can give grace. When we encourage others to seek hearing care, maybe some of those roadblocks can be removed.

And those, over 50+ years of career learning, are the facts as I see them.



## Look a Wolf in the Eye

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*Peter Boogaart, Creation Care*

Think of someone you wish you had known, perhaps someone you admire. Would you be different today if you had been in their presence? My choice would be Aldo Leopold. He's remembered today most for his 1949 book *A Sand County Almanac*.

Were there to be a pantheon of American environmental heroes, Leopold would be among them, joining others like John Muir, Rachel Carson, and Senator Gaylord Nelson. I like to think of their faces, sculpted somewhere in the Black Hills of South Dakota, on a Mount Rushmore of their own.

Leopold didn't aspire to be famous. He was just a U.S. forester doing his job—proper management for maximum return. He knew the equations of management: fewer wolves = more deer = better deer hunting. Acting on those principles, he one day did shoot a wolf. As the wolf lay dying, it locked eyes with Leopold and that fierce stare, one spirit to another, forever changed him.

Leopold's understanding of forestry opened up to a new way of seeing. The forest was a home to those who lived there—alive with mutually supportive relationships. You might say that the wolf told him what he needed to know: "Harmony with land is like harmony with a friend; you cannot cherish his right hand and chop off his left."

Knowing, however, is something of a burden. One can never indulge in the comforts of naivete again. As Leopold said, "One of the penalties of an ecological education is that one lives alone in a world of wounds... An ecologist must... be the doctor who sees the marks of death in a community that believes itself well and does not want to be told otherwise."

I don't know what Leopold's religious affiliation may have been; but I like to think that he would have been comfortable in the presence

of Christians. After all, we are the people who say that our lives were changed by an encounter with the Spirit; that we are changing our way of living because of that encounter; and that we know that our relationship with the created order is out-of-order.

We are the people for whom the comforts of naivete are no longer available. We might say with Paul that before the law there was no sin but now our sin is ever before us. Our burden is that we know all these things but prefer to be told otherwise.

Gospel is not a recalibration of one's cosmic legal standing. Gospel is, for those with ears to hear, a voice from God which says, you're going the wrong way; turn around. Gospel is being called to a way of living; a way of being the doctor who sees the marks of death in a community and acts to heal the damage.

In the natural world, the marks of death are everywhere:

- Worldwide, 90% of the stocks of large predatory fish, such as sharks, tuna, marlin, and swordfish, are already gone.
- As many as 30-50% of all species face extinction by 2050.
- The emission of carbon pollution from the burning of fossil fuels is altering climate in life-threatening ways.

Nevertheless, we are the people who know that God is working to make all things new. We are the people who know that death has been defeated. You have been called to a way of living; a living that brings renewal and abundant life.

So, in whatever ways are available to you, keep turning around.