



# SALT & LIGHT

a hope church publication

LENT 2025



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

Hope Church  
77 West 11th Street  
Holland MI 49423



## CONTENTS

Beauty Will Save the World	2
Four Tuesday Evenings in Lent	3
Mark Your Calendar	3
Spiritual Formation Through Continued Learning	4
Connected with One Another Welcoming New Members	6
Make Yourself Heard—by Everyone	10
Putting Miles on the Hope Church Bus	11
In These Times... Seeking Beloved Community	12
Hope[ing] Our Way Toward a Beloved Community	15
Supporting Our Neighbors	16
Reading for Black History Month	17
In the Beginning	18
Coloring Corner	20

## 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](https://HopeChurchRCA.org)



## EDITORIAL & DESIGN

Lois Maassen – Editor  
Michael Kolk – Creative Director

*Cover Photo: Lenten Rose, Frederick Meijer Gardens and Sculpture Park  
© 2023 Michael R. Kolk*



# Beauty Will Save the World

“Art in Lent: Beauty Will Save the World” is the theme that emerged from the collaboration of our Worship Ministry members as we planned for this 2025 Lenten season. In conjunction with the art evenings planned for four Tuesdays in Lent, as well as our devotional material from Salt titled “Lift Up Your Voices,” we sensed a theme of beauty and creativity that will lead us through this season together. As is noted with our devotional, “All of creation,” wrote St. Hildegard of Bingen, “is a song of praise to God.”

There are deep concerns and anxieties of the heart that are pervasive around the world. Issues of global warming made evident in the wildfires of California, tenuous peace between Palestine and Israel, the ongoing humanitarian needs due to war and famine, as well as political maneuvering that places people in danger. There is much that might worry us as we head into this season.

And yet. And yet beauty calls to us, touches us, moves us even more deeply in the heart. The arts remind us that there is goodness and grace readily apparent if we but pull our attention away from the tyranny of the urgent and the “outrage-industrial complex.” We seek more life-giving and life-enriching ways in this world. Through this season of Lent, recognizing, of course, the fallenness of our shared humanity, we choose, also, to explore and engage with those life-giving forms of creativity that might draw us closer to the heartbeat of our Creator. Through music, spoken word, and communal art-making we seek to turn our attention to these pockets of goodness, grace and life we find in this world.

Creator’s blessings to you as we join together in this season of Lent to seek beauty that will save the world through art.

– Pastor Gretchen

# Four Tuesday Evenings in Lent

*Rhonda Edgington, Music Director*

In times that feel especially perilous, the arts can be a way to remind ourselves that beauty still exists in the world, and it can be a part of our lives, both personally and communally. Join us at 7 p.m. on **March 11, 18, and 25** and **April 1** for this year's Lenten evening series, "**Beauty Will Save the World.**" Our focus on the creative arts will include two sessions on music, one on the written and spoken word, and one on visual art. We'll gather in the beautiful, contemplative space of the **Hope Church chapel** for these sessions; you may attend one, some, or all.



**March 11** will be an introduction to Bach's St. John Passion. **Scott Vandenberg**, Director of the Holland Bach Society (as well as of Instrumental Music at Holland Christian High School and Holland American Legion Band), will be with us to introduce the

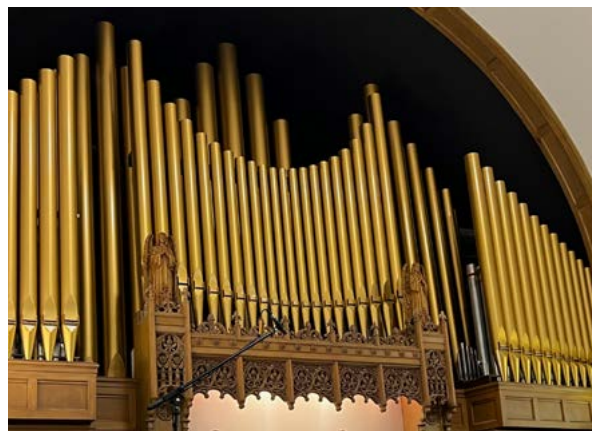
work, the background of the piece's creation, and the hymns on which it is based. That will prepare us to better appreciate the work when the Holland Bach Society presents it at Hope Church on Sunday, March 16, at 3 p.m.

**March 18** will be another session on music, led by our own **Dan Griswold**, also a member of the Holland Bach Society orchestra, as he talks as both a pastor and a musician about the theological and musical underpinnings and structure of the St. John Passion.

**March 25** will be an evening of poetry and prose, with Hope Church writers reading their own works and works of others. We look forward to hearing from **Laurie Baron, Jessica Koster, Hannah Barker Nickolay, Kay Hubbard, Norman Bert, Audrienne Hill, Karmen Kooyers, Curtis Gruenler**, and others.

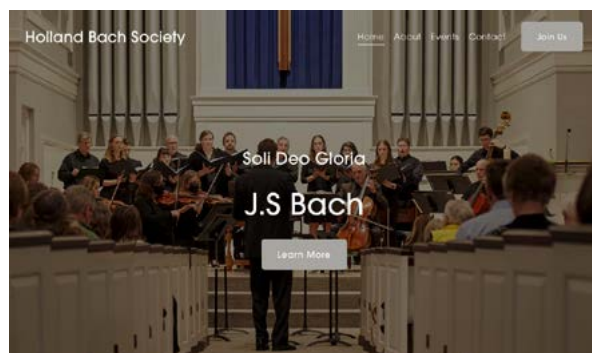
On **April 1**, Hope Church member artists **Kari Miller** (of Miller Fenwood Art Restoration) and **Emily Christensen** (of Cultureworks) will lead us in a participatory art experience, no experience necessary. This evening is best suited for those 13 years and up. Look for a visual in the Gathering Area in the coming weeks to showcase what we will create.

# Mark Your Calendar



*Organ Celebration Concert*  
**Sunday, March 2, 3 p.m.**  
**Hope Church**

We will celebrate the completion of our organ renovation with a concert for organ and percussion, with Rhonda Sider Edgington and Carolyn Koebel, the duo called Thunder & Wind, performing music from around the world for organ and a multitude of percussion instruments, from congas to marimba to Japanese Taiko drums. This is an exciting program, featuring a wide variety of sonorities, and Carolyn and Rhonda's fun and easy rapport together and with their audience will be sure to charm and entertain.



*The Holland Bach Society*  
**presents J.S. Bach's St. John Passion**  
**Sunday, March 16, 3 p.m.**  
**Hope Church**

The Holland Bach Society seeks to cultivate an appreciation for Bach's liturgical music and to enhance worship in local congregations. They hire the finest musicians from the Lakeshore area to bring historically informed performances of Bach's music to West Michigan as part of local worship services.

# Spiritual Formation through Continued Learning

Jane Schuyler, Adult Education Ministry

**Adult Education opportunities are intended for spiritual formation through biblical study and critical examination of cultural, social, and moral issues from a Christian perspective. Join us in the Commons at 9:40 a.m. on Sundays!**

## February 16 and 23 American Slavery and the Dutch Reformed Church

### HERSTELD HERVORMDE KERK

The Dutch Reformed Church arrived in America

in 1608 when the Dutch West India Company imported it and slave labor to its colony, New Netherland. These two sessions, presented by **Linda Walvoord de Velder** and **Ron Mulder**, will consider the relationship between the church and slavery, including how, when, and why slavery came to be questioned during different periods of time. The first session will focus on 1628 to 1790, while the second will span from the American Revolution through the Civil War.

## March 2 Contexts and Trends of Global Christianity



**Pastor Gretchen Schoon Tanis** and **Phil Tanis** present on the global church covering post-Christian Europe to

minority Christian countries around the world. Phil is the former executive secretary with the World Communion of Reformed Churches in Hanover, Germany, and Gretchen is the former pastor of RELISH, the Reformed English language congregation in Hanover, Germany.

## March 9 Psychological Science Meets the World of Faith



**David Myers**, social psychologist, summarizes his contributions to dialogue between psychology and religion. David has danced on the science-faith boundary by

- explaining to people of faith the value and insights of psychological science,
- comparing big ideas about human nature found in both psychological science and biblical/theological literatures, and
- documenting some curious and paradoxical links between faith and human flourishing.

## March 16 and 23 How Is God at Work in the World? The Problem of Evil and Human Suffering



The **March 16** session, “The Problem of Evil,” presented by **Steven Hoogerwerf**, Hope College Senior Research Professor and Associate Professor of Religion Emeritus, provides an overview of the problem of evil and some of the responses to this enduring

dilemma. In brief, the problem is “**How is it possible that there is so much evil and suffering in a world governed by a good and all-powerful God?**” The responses, typically called theodicies, propose to answer this question and resolve the dilemma. These theodicies often take the form of comfort phrases, and we’ll look at how many of these phrases seek to explain and defend God in the face of evil and suffering.

In the second session, on **March 23**, Steven will address **“How is God at Work in the World?”** When people attempt to explain how there can be so much evil and suffering in a world governed by a good and all-powerful God, the answers they give almost always imply an answer to the question “How is God at work in the world?” Is God in total control, so that everything that happens is part of God’s perfect plan? Or did God create a world that operates with some independence, so that God is not controlling everything that happens? How would this view create spaces for us to resist and respond to evil? This session explores a few ways theologians have re-imagined God’s power and providential care and suggests how practical responses to evil provide an alternative to traditional theodicy.

### March 30 Lighthouse Immigrant Advocates



While most immigration law offices focus exclusively on legal services, Lighthouse

Immigrant Advocates (LIA) offers a unique service model that includes holistic case management, community education, and advocacy. LIA exists to bring stability to West Michigan families and communities through legal services to immigrants and refugees, advocacy on behalf of immigrants and refugees on the local, state, and federal levels, and community presentations.

### April 6 Immigrant Integration



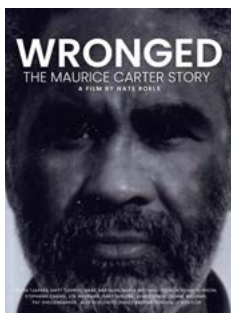
Jennifer Van Hook, Penn State professor of sociology and demography and director of Population Research Institute (PRI)—and Judy Vander Wilt’s daughter—will present. Jennifer uses demographic methods to estimate the size, characteristics, and dynamics of the

unauthorized foreign-born population. She also focuses on the health and well-being of immigrants and their children. She is currently working on a project that uses linked US Census data to better understand the assimilation process as it unfolded for Mexican immigrants across the twentieth century. Together with James D. Bachmeier she is the author of *Texas-Style Exclusion: Mexican Americans and the Legacy of Limited Opportunity*.

### April 13 and 27 Creation Care Ministry

Acknowledging creation care as an act of discipleship, the Creation Care Ministry presents two sessions to assist participants in their stewardship of the earth.

### April 27 Special Event!



During Pizza Sunday on April 27, Mark Hartman from our community partner, Humanity for Prisoners, will show the film, *Wronged: The Maurice Carter Story*. So, grab some pizza and join us in the Chapel for the 43-minute documentary.

### Looking Ahead



On **May 4**, Deborah Haarsma will address **“Wonders of the Universe and Multiverse.”**



**Judy Parr** and **Tom Ludwig** will present **“From Ageing to Sageing”** on **May 11** and **18**.

# Connecting with One Another

## Welcoming New Members

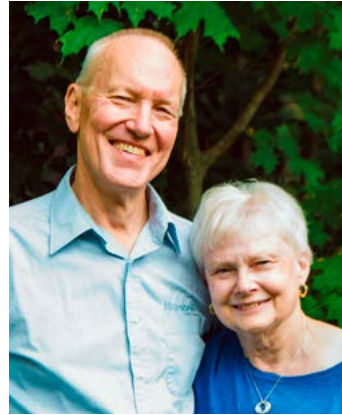
*During 2024, these people joined the Hope Church community; we're so happy to welcome them!*



**David Anderson**

David is a native Chicagoan (north sider) who's also lived in Maine twice and in a town some 20 miles north of Boston. He says their happiest time as a pastor's family (his wife, Isolde, and daughters, Katrin and Marta) was spent in Evanston, Illinois, from 1986 to 92. Holland, home since 2003, continues to grow

on Dave, who's been a bookseller, art director for a medical publisher, special education aide, and medical transcriptionist/language specialist. He loves jazz, old movies, baseball history, and thrifting.



**Barry and Deb Bandstra**

Barry and Deb Bandstra hail from the south side of Chicago, Evergreen Park and Roseland respectively. They have been living in Holland since 1983, where they raised three sons, and are now the grandparents of three grandsons. Before retirement, Deb taught English Language Learners at Holland Christian High School, and Barry taught Hebrew Bible at Hope College.



**George and Sibilla Boerigter**

Five years ago George and Sibilla decided to retire back here in Holland where George was born, where he met Sibilla, and where they first started their married life. Sibilla is a graduate from Calvin and George graduated from Hope, Western Seminary, and USC. Faith and service have been the guiding principles of their life. George pastored two churches before transitioning to becoming a business executive. He started a small business in Hudsonville that has become a leader in the police lighting industry. Sibilla has taught school, stayed home to raise their three sons, and been involved in a host of church and community organizations.



**Stephanie and Phil Doeschot**

Phil and Stephanie Doeschot are retired RCA pastors who graduated from Western Theological Seminary, served ministries in Des Moines, Iowa, then returned to Holland to serve at Camp Geneva and Conference Center (Phil) and the Chaplain's Office at Hope College (Stephanie). In 1989 they moved to the St Louis area to plant a church for the RCA, from which they are now retired. They purchased a home in Holland in 2009 and have spent as much time as possible restoring the home and enjoying the lakeshore area. Phil and Stephanie both love gardening, hiking, photography, beach and boating time, and caring for their grandchildren when back in St. Louis.



**Susan Lukaart and Steve Eckert**

Married for 29 years, Steve and Susan have five married children, eleven

grandchildren, and one great grandson. Steve is retired from a fulfilling career in social services, and Susan from a unique career in education. Retirement has allowed time for camping, reading, motorcycling, golfing, and work in the yard at their home in Allendale. They have followed Jesus all their lives, growing exponentially the last 30 years. Joining fellow believers at Hope Church to do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with God resonates with them.



**Matt, Amy, Luke, and Will Jantzen**

Amy, Matt, Luke, and Will Jantzen have attended Hope Church on and off since moving to Holland in 2018. Amy (she/her) grew up in Elmhurst, Illinois, while Matt (he/him) is from Vermont. Luke (he/him) and Will (he/him) hail originally from Durham, North Carolina, having joined the family during the time that Amy and Matt were working and studying at Duke Divinity School. Amy is a community connector and institution builder extraordinaire, and Matt is a political theologian and Christian ethicist who leads the American Ethnic Studies program at Hope College. Luke and Will love all things having to do with the beautiful game of soccer.

**Joellen and Steve Hoogerwerf**

Originally from Grand Rapids, Joellen and Steve met in their senior year of high school, attended Hope College, and were married in 1977. Their careers have taken them to various places in the country, making their



way back to West Michigan in 1992. They recently moved to a condo in downtown Holland and love their new “urban” lifestyle, walking almost everywhere they need to go. Their children, Lisa and Colin, live in Zeeland and Grand Rapids, respectively, with their spouses; each has two little boys. Four grandchildren keep life full and active. Joellen enjoys sewing and quilting, is an avid reader, attempts to play pickleball, likes to go for coffee with friends, and volunteers for CAH and Ottawa Reads. Steve has been an avid boater since getting his first 8-foot rowboat in seventh grade. He has taken to the water in sailboats, powerboats, kayaks, and canoes. Steve has also dabbled in gardening, woodworking, camping, and hiking. Steve and Joellen frequently attended Hope Church during college and seminary and were members for a time after moving back to Holland; they are happy to be back among many old and new friends.

**Joseph MacDoniels**

Joseph arrived in Holland in late August 1972 with his late wife, Rosie, and two young children, Kelly Marie and Todd, to serve as Assistant Professor of Communication at Hope College. First living in Holland Heights, they became members of First United Methodist Church. Two more children joined the family: Jeff and Katheryn (Kate). Joseph retired from Hope College faculty after 29 years as Emeritus Professor of Communication in 2001 and subsequently was Visiting Professor at Eastern University in Philadelphia, CIMBA, a consortium program of twenty-nine universities in Italy, St. Louis University, and at Saint Mary’s College in South Bend, Indiana. Following Rosie’s death in 2011, Joseph reconnected with Hope Alumna Thelma “Tommye” Leenhouts—who grew up in Holland and Third Reformed Church—after she had retired from the US Department of Education. Married in 2013, the two divide their time between Holland and Washington, DC, where she has her home, and Joseph is an Adjunct Faculty member at George Washington University.



# Connecting with One Another, Cont'd

## Welcoming New Members



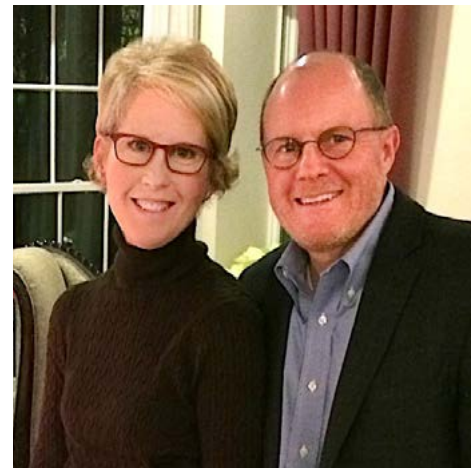
**Jim and Linda Marshall**

Linda and Jim raised their two daughters in Petoskey and in 2020 reunited them and their families as Holland residents. Linda has long been involved in caregiving, helping run Jim's psychology practice, and church volunteering. Jim's clinical practice focused on treatment of trauma and relationships, and evolved into teaching and advocating for 911 professionals' wellbeing and their optimal care of at-risk citizens with mental illnesses. Linda loves painting, hikes outdoors, time with family and grandkids, and singing. Jim, a drummer, hopes to reestablish a jazz combo locally.



**John and Mary Mulder**

John and Mary moved to Freedom Village in Holland in 2024. Mary is the daughter of Mary Ruth Hakken and Harry Hakken, both well-known members of Hope Church, which Mary joined during her teenage years. John and Mary met at Hope College and were married at Hope Church in 1968. John finished his theological degree and his Ph.D. in history at Princeton University and joined the faculty at Princeton Seminary, until in 1981 he was called to the presidency of Louisville Seminary, where he served for 21 years; Mary served as "the President's wife." Mary earned her master's in English from the University of Michigan and a Ph.D. in English rhetoric and composition from the University of Louisville. She taught at Camden County Community College in New Jersey and at Jefferson Community and Technical College, where she also directed the Writing Center. Her happiest contribution to the world is being the mother of two children and four grandchildren.



**Kris and Chris Mumford**

Chris and Kristin made Holland their permanent home in 2016. They have three grown sons, two granddaughters, and one grandson, spread out from Pennsylvania to the Grand Rapids area. They remain busy with their manufacturing rep business for food service and beverage equipment. Spending time with family, boating on Lake Mac and traveling are their favorite things to do.





**Steve and Jean Norden**

Jean and Steve moved to Holland two years ago after 38 years in Dublin, Ohio, where Steve was the Founding Pastor of New Hope Reformed Church in Dublin, now located in an adjacent suburb, and Jean worked part time for Dublin City Schools. Jean is a Holland native, and Steve was raised in Japan as the child of Reformed Church in America missionary parents. They are parents of three sons and daughters-in-law and grandparents to four grandchildren. They enjoy their family, travel, the great outdoors, music, HASP, and sporting events.



**Mike, Kris, and Benjamin Pikaart**

Mike and Kris have lived in Holland for 25 years, having lived in the DC area for eight years following graduate school. Kris grew up in West Michigan and Mike grew up in Rehoboth, New Mexico. Mike is a professor of Biochemistry at Hope College. Kris is an early childhood school social worker for Holland Public Schools. They have 4 adult children: Nick (married to Sara) lives in the Detroit area; Karis lives in Denver; and Kate lives in Grand Rapids. Benjamin is a student at Hope College.



**Timothy Van Bruggen**

Tim was raised in Holland and attended West Ottawa schools and Hope College before embarking on a dual vocational career as a business administrator and worship leader. Most recently, he administered a small Christian community theatre. He is father to two sons, Trystan and Matthew. Tim's journey with Christ has taken him from Rose Park Reformed Church to the Assemblies of God, then to a Wesleyan Church, Anglican, and now back to the RCA. He is excited to join the family of Hope Church both as part of the staff and a congregant and is glad to be part of this marvelous community that takes seriously the injunction of Micah 6:8.



**Cassandra, Eric, Grayson, and Katie Van Tassell**

Eric and Katie moved to Holland in 2019 and very shortly welcomed Grayson to the world. Cassandra was born in 2022. Eric is a faculty member of the Theatre and Dance Departments at Hope College, where he teaches lighting and sound design. Katie works in medical records at Holland Hospital and has relished playing in the Hope Church bell choir. Grayson is typically accompanied to church by his stuffed animal friend Mr. Giraffe. Cassie loves to "sing" during the service or spend time in the nursery.



## Make Yourself Heard—by Everyone

*Editor's Note: Cindi Veldheer DeYoung shared this information at a recent Consistory meeting, and I thought, as a person who also experiences some hearing loss, that it was important to share it periodically with the Hope Church community. —Lois Maassen*

### The Basics

Clarity and volume (in that order) are both important. Hearing aids amplify sound, but they don't make it clearer. This is why microphones are used in several of our meeting rooms—so if you're offered one, please use it! If you have a loud voice, you don't necessarily have a clear voice at volume. Not using a microphone means that people using the induction loop system are left out of the conversation. And on the topic of microphones: Please don't tap it to see if it's live, or set it down on a hard surface.

Especially in a group setting, minimize interruptions, which can include side conversations, fiddling with papers, tapping a pen or pencil, or—Cindi's pet peeve—eating from a crinkly chip bag. Imagine that sound amplified in your ear! Pagers and cell phone rings are distracting to everyone, but can be especially so for people with amplified sound.

For some hearing-challenged people, lip- and expression-reading are critical components of understanding your speech. Face the listener and don't obstruct your face while speaking clearly yet naturally. Even during prayers, it's helpful if your face remains visible.

### A Few Specifics

1. Speak clearly without rushing or speaking too quickly.
2. Gain the person's attention before beginning to speak.
3. Minimize interruptions and provide contextual clues for conversation topics. Side conversations and interjections can be very difficult to follow.
4. Rephrasing a sentence can be more helpful than repeating the sentence. Don't say, "Never mind," because it feels dismissive of the one seeking to understand.
5. Hold one another accountable. Take turns reminding each other of these guidelines; it's exhausting for the hard of hearing person to always have to ask people to be attentive to good speaking practices.



#### **In-Service Hearing Assistance**

A T-coil loop system is available for hearing aid users for direct broadcast to hearing devices. Portable receivers and headsets are also available for check-out.



## Putting Miles on the Hope Church Bus

*Bruce TenHaken, Hospitality Manager*

Through the generosity of our members, Hope Church was able to purchase its own passenger bus this past year. The bus made its way to Holland from Seattle, Washington, via Elkhart, Indiana, where the interior was modified to its current configuration of fourteen very comfortable seats. The interior entry is spacious to accommodate wheelchairs and walker storage as passengers are seated. The bus is equipped with an air-suspension system that allows for the vehicle's body to be raised and lowered for the convenience and safety of passengers entering and exiting on the automated ramp way. The bus is also equipped with heat and air conditioning for the comfort of riders.

While the intent of the bus was to transport members without access to personal transportation, it has also been used by the Hope Church youth group locally. Recently it was used in transporting the N family, as they made their way from different parts of the world to the Detroit Airport, where they were reunited and brought to Western Michigan to begin their new lives in the United States. The N family has appreciated that the large bus accommodates all family members in one vehicle as they toured and became

acquainted with the Holland/Zeeland area. They have taken shopping trips and gone to agency meetings assisting with their resident status.

Currently, seven volunteer Hope Church members take turns driving the bus on Sundays and for occasional other Hope church events. **Mark Sneller, Ben Sikkink, Robert Jerow, Scott Rumpsa, Larry Schuyler, Keith Derrick,** and, occasionally, **Bruce Ten Haken** drive the bus. All have chauffeur licenses, which was not required to drive a bus of this size; Hope Church chose to require a bit more "rules of the road knowledge" for driver and passenger safety.

Residents of the Warm Friend, Freedom Village, Quincy Place, and a few at home are picked up Sunday morning prior to worship and returned home after worship. The drivers have recently decided it would be possible to offer two return bus trips, accommodating both those who want to stay for fellowship after the service and those wanting to return for meals at their residence.

If you know of anyone needing transportation to and from Hope Church Sunday services please contact Bruce Ten Haken at the Hope Church office or via [btenhaken@hopechurchrca.org](mailto:btenhaken@hopechurchrca.org).

# In These Times... Seeking Beloved Community

Jane Dickie, Justice & Reconciliation Ministry



During Advent, after the 2024 election, congregants were invited to share their small acts of seeking justice, loving kindness, walking humbly. The invitation read:

In these times of challenge and uncertainty it is easy to become disheartened. But sometimes, all we need to foster hope is to hear the stories of how others are facing these challenges in their own lives.

We invite you to take a moment, grab a sticky note, write down and post on the board something you are doing to stay hopeful as you follow Christ. Your simple acts could encourage others!

“He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?” – Micah 6:8

In other words, what are we doing individually and corporately seeking Beloved Community?

I write this reflection on January 20, 2025, the day that we celebrate the life and legacy of Martin Luther King Jr. and observe the inauguration of the 47th President of the United

States, Donald J. Trump. It seems the perfect time to look in more detail at what we mean by Beloved Community and to see what our own Hope Church community said about what they were doing now and into the future.

## First, what do we mean by “Beloved Community”?

A *New York Times* opinion piece which ran July 30, 2020, written by John Lewis, reprinted on the occasion of Lewis’ death explains:

I was searching for a way out, or some might say a way in, and then I heard the voice of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., on an old radio. He was talking about the philosophy and discipline of nonviolence. He said we are all complicit when we tolerate injustice. He said it is not enough to say it will get better by and by. He said each of us has a moral obligation to stand up, speak up, and speak out. When you see something that is not right, you must say something. You must do something. 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.

---

*Ordinary people with extraordinary vision can redeem the soul of America by getting in what I call good trouble, necessary trouble.* 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 went on, “Though I may not be here with you, I urge you to answer the highest calling of your heart and stand up for what you truly believe. In my life I have done all I can to demonstrate that the way of peace, the way of love and nonviolence is the more excellent way. Now it is your turn to let freedom ring.”

## **Second, what did our community suggest as appropriate responses in these times as we seek the Beloved Community?**

---

First, people proposed a particular state of mind, a way of being that could bring a sense of peace and hope. They included:

- Give thanks
- Love
- Smile and wave
- Breathe slowly
- Sing!
- Take a quiet walk in nature

Then they offered small acts growing out of a general sense of hope and gratitude, like:

- Entertain small children while waiting in lines
- Express gratitude to service workers: Tip!
- Tip really well
- Find ways to connect with others who feel stressed and then smile and breathe
- Give encouragement to a friend or coworker
- Offer to bring groceries to an ill friend
- Talk to people In person
- Call a friend instead of texting
- Tell people you like their attributes when you like them

Next people saw the power in finding good accurate information sources:

- Listen to NPR and PBS for news
- Read more and use social media less
- Read some banned books
- Share books

With eyes open to see injustice, political and social actions were recommended:

- Stop shopping on Amazon
- Shop locally owned businesses, small businesses, and businesses owned by people of color
- Reduce water waste
- Send emails to members of the House of Representatives and Senate on behalf of Nature Conservancy
- Contact State of Michigan politicians with prompts from the Sierra Club to take better care of the earth
- Support politicians who pledge to take care of the earth, our home

## **Congregants recommended joining with others, supporting organizations that seek justice, and expressing kindness and generosity:**

---

- Share your wealth
- Support missions: volunteer, donate, contribute where help is needed
- Quilt as therapy and then donate to Community Action House and Resilience for people who need a comforting blanket
- Donate to organizations that support those most threatened: Latin Americans United for Progress, Lighthouse Immigrant Advocates, the American Civil Liberties Union to protect civil rights
- Volunteer at Community Action House Food Club
- Feed Bible Pride and support LGBTQ Folks

This congregation was seeking the Beloved Community during the Juneteenth celebration, as we educated people about who John Lewis was: Civil rights activist and politician who served in the United States House of Representatives for Georgia’s fifth Congressional District. He worked with Martin Luther King Jr. and he helped lead the Freedom March from Selma to Montgomery in 1963. He introduced the John Lewis voting rights act. And as we saw injustices, we promised to get into “some good trouble” too.

What are you doing “in these times” to maintain a sense of hope and move forward with action? Remember that you are not alone. Your Hope Church family is with you.

# In These Times... Seeking Beloved Community

Images courtesy of Hope Church, RCA © 2024



---

# Hope[ing] Our Way Toward a Beloved Community

---

Bob Jerow, Justice & Reconciliation Ministry

In his introduction to *The Art of Happiness, 10th Anniversary Edition*, Howard Cutler, M.D., co-author of the book with the Dalai Lama, writes that one of the Dalai Lama's core beliefs is supported by scientific research: "There is an inextricable link between one's personal happiness and kindness, compassion, and caring for others.... Studies have found not only that happier people tend to be more caring and more willing to reach out and help others, but that by deliberately cultivating greater kindness and compassion, a person will experience increased happiness."

I write here to affirm the above "truth" as I have observed it within the Hope Church support group for the Afghan refugee, Z.P., and to connect their efforts, as a concrete example, of Dr. Martin Luther King's call to create a *Beloved Community*, one characterized by "a nation and a world society at peace with itself." In the previous article, Jane Dickie connects the idea of a Beloved Community with a state of mind that brings a sense of peace and hope and results in small acts of generosity and kindness.

In May of 2023, I wrote a progress report to the Community Ministry in which I expressed thankfulness for a group of women, supported by Hope Church, dedicated to providing Afghan refugee Z.P. with essential support as she transitioned to her new home. My conversations with the group left me impressed with the care and concerns expressed at the time, but even more so with the obvious joy that has resulted from their conversations with Z., and the stories she has shared with them. They are a happy group.

In a more recent update, written shortly after Z. had moved to a new, more affordable apartment, owing to the generosity of her new landlord couple, I was able to observe that she has come such a long way on her journey to a life in a new place. She is clearly a much healthier and happier human being than the one I first met as we started this journey. This is in no small part because of the work of her Beloved Community of support, and the hard work she has put in herself. Very recently, Z. was able to cook an Afghan meal of celebration for those who have helped her along her path. It brought her great pride to create and share a meal of thanksgiving for her new community linking old and new.

*"There is an inextricable link between one's personal happiness and kindness, compassion, and caring for others."*

- Dalai Lama

## Addendum: Let no good deed go...

---

Some time ago now, my friend Diane called me wondering if I could help with another Afghan family. M. and Y. are a young Afghan couple who had a premature baby in the neonatal unit at DeVos Children's Hospital. They were driving every day from Holland to GR after M. got out of work at 5:00 p.m. Y. was really depressed that she could not spend more time with the baby. She does not drive, so she had to wait for her husband to take her. The baby was at DeVos for a month. I asked our Hope Church administrator to put the need in the volunteer blog. Almost immediately, Sara Alsum-Wassenaar responded that she knew a number of Holland residents who worked in Grand Rapids. Sarah took control, met with the family, and organized a car pool, meeting the family's need to get Y. to Devos for the month.

...or should I say, one good deed may lead to yet another Beloved Community.

# In These Times... Seeking Beloved Community

---

## Supporting Our Neighbors

---

*Betsy Snider, Justice & Reconciliation Ministry*

Those of us attempting to represent Hope Church through the Justice & Reconciliation Ministry would like you to consider supporting local, minority-owned businesses. If, as I once read, “each dollar you spend is a vote,” perhaps spending with intention is a way we can strengthen our connection to our minority community and act in a way that says, “I’m glad you are here, and I vote for your success.”

Further, what seeds of goodwill will be planted if we reveal that we are from Hope Church, a place that cares about all our neighbors. What ripple effect will these small acts create? The list below is just a start. If you know of other minority-owned businesses, please forward the information to Betsy Snider at [sniderbsnail@gmail.com](mailto:sniderbsnail@gmail.com).

**Margarita’s Mexican Restaurant**  
495 W 17th St.

**Rock’n’ Thai Cafe**  
3006 W Shore Dr., Unit 10

**Gallardo Tree Services LLC**  
(616) 928 5795; [gallardotreeservice.com](http://gallardotreeservice.com)

**Teriyaki Madness**  
3155 W Shore Dr, Ste 30

**Cuban Food Catering**  
[cubanfoodcatering@lindahabanera.com](mailto:cubanfoodcatering@lindahabanera.com)

**Thai Avenue**  
8516 Homestead Dr, Unit 101, Zeeland

**El Rancho Mexican Restaurant**  
12659 Riley St. and 770 E 16th St. Unit A

**Up Leaf Cafe**  
12371 James St., Suite 40

**Jhomary’s Paradise**  
441 Washington Ave.

**Wok Me Up Food Truck**  
(variety of locations); (616) 218 8716  
[wokmeupfoodtruck.com](http://wokmeupfoodtruck.com)

**Lemongrass Thai Sushi**  
977 Butternut Dr. Unit 3

**Havana Grill**  
12059 Felch St., Unit 1

**Nadine’s Fish Tips N’ Wings**  
1111 Washington Ave, Unit F

**Sammy’s Nails**  
380 Central Ave, Unit 2

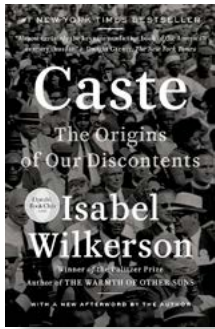
**Robinson’s Popcorn**  
(616) 298 8014; [robinsonspopcorn.com](http://robinsonspopcorn.com)



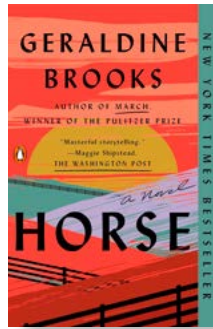
# Reading for Black History Month

Pat Bloem, Justice & Reconciliation Ministry

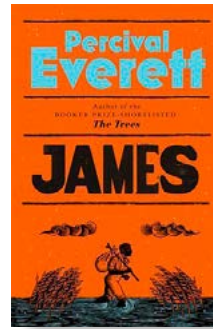
In our monthly meeting of the Justice & Reconciliation Ministry, members discussed our current reading and the fact that during these snowy days of January we've been engrossed in powerful novels, essays, reflections, and well written histories penned by or about African Americans. Perhaps in honor of Black History Month, you will be interested in sampling these recommendations as well, all texts that address the African American experience:



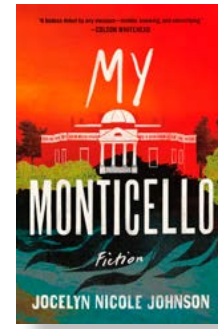
**Caste: The Origins of Our Discontents**  
by Isabel Wilkerson (2020)



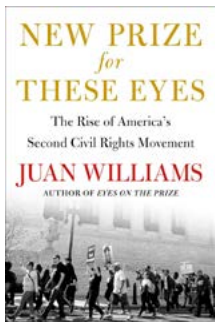
**Horse**  
by Geraldine Brooks (2022)



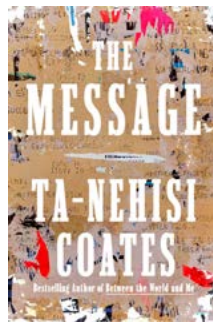
**James**  
a Novel, by Percival Everett (2024)



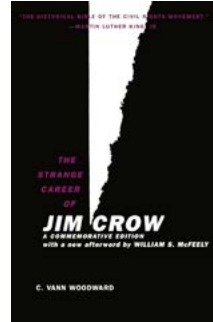
**My Monticello**  
Fiction, by Jocelyn Nicole Johnson (2021)



**New Prize for These Eyes: The Rise of America's Second Civil Rights Movement**  
by Juan Williams (2025)



**The Message**  
by Ta-Nehisi Coates (2024)



**The Strange Career of Jim Crow**  
by C. Vann Woodward (2001)

**Our Anti-Racism Vision Statement:**  
Hope Church is committed to racial justice as a core expression of our faith as followers of Jesus Christ. In a world of racial inequity and injustice, we seek a faithful path that resists complicity and strives toward justice. We are partners for racial justice as we pursue Beloved Community for all people.

# In the Beginning

By Peter Boogaart, Creation Care Ministry



Vancouver Island, B.C., CA, courtesy of Michael Kolk © 2024

In the big inning  
David Justice  
dropped  
a routine fly ball,  
and that made  
all the difference.

The World Series  
could have  
turned  
out  
differently,  
but it didn't.

David Justice' miscue in the 2024 World Series created a lot of grief for Yankee fans. Just when everything seemed to be going well, the Yankees lost their mojo. How could there have been such a sudden shift in their fortunes?

Systems analysts have an answer, albeit rather unsatisfying for Yankee fans: every baseball game has an uncertain outcome. The final score is a product of a dynamic mix of player interactions. Since every player performs differently in each game, the final score is always the outcome of their intermixing contributions at that one moment in time.

Biologist E.O. Wilson describes natural systems in similar dynamic terms. Systems, he says, can be viewed from two different perspectives. Flying over a tropical jungle is one view. From altitude, everything looks the same—lots of trees. On the ground, however, everything is unique. Each hectare has its own identity, its own community of life.

Jungle communities are shaped by local history and local soils. Pressure for change can come from any direction: wildfire; a tree-gashing windstorm, or the sudden demise of a keystone species. Each disturbance creates opportunity for new species to move in. Ecosystems are always a unique product of a particular moment in time.

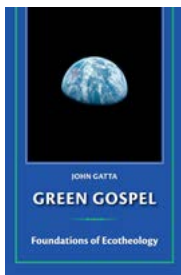


Image: Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore, courtesy of Michael Kolk © 2023

Disaster and opportunity are conjoined. Although it may not be obvious from the air, multiple local systems are more enduring than one mass monoculture. Life is best lived in communal relationships.

“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep ...”

The Genesis creation story can also be read from two perspectives. At altitude, the succession of days looks like a mason building a brick wall—each day/brick contributing to a predesigned whole. Up close however, it looks more like God is assembling the members of a community. What that community may be will depend upon the ways in which each member accommodates its neighbors.



In his book *Green Gospel: Foundations of Ecotheology*, John Gatta ponders our ways of knowing God. Ask yourself, is knowing even possible? Maybe using just intellect is too limiting.

However, if you explore knowing in the sense of knowing your family or the place where you grew up, then there is a way. Knowing is intimate knowledge that emerges from interaction within relationships.

Gatta suggests that this way of knowing is evidenced in our understanding of the Trinity. Somehow in the mystery of it all, the interaction of three identities melds into the reality of one being.

The birthing imagery of the Genesis creation story implies that Creation is a representation of God's own self. Somehow, within the mystery, all of Creation is united with God in an intimate and relational way.

Our being here on Earth is irrevocably, for good or ill, lived out in relationships with every other created being. Endangered species lists and cancer alleys are indicators of failed relationships; somebody dropped the ball.

Creation Care is really just an invitation to self-assessment. The operative question? What's the status of your relationship with all the other members of Creation? So, when some disturbance in life forces you to confront a broken relationship—stop, pause, and turn around. At that moment you may hear Jesus saying, “...whatever you did for one of the least of these... you did for me.”

The world's communities and life systems need you as much as you need them. The game's not over. Next inning, things can turn out differently.

# Coloring Corner

This coloring page celebrates the life of John Lewis, who dedicated his life to advancing human rights. He encouraged us to "Get in good trouble, necessary trouble...." The iris commonly means wisdom, hope, trust, and valor.

