



SALT & LIGHT

a hope church publication

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OUR FAITH

Hope Church is called by God and equipped by the Holy Spirit to be a witness to the unity, reconciliation, and justice given in the saving grace of Jesus Christ. These touchstones drawn from the Belhar Confession give voice to the historic Christian faith in our time and place.

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Creative Spaciousness in the New Season



It's been a long time since I've been a student, but my kids are still in school—Jon will be a sophomore in college, M.E. a sophomore in high school—so my brain still operates a bit in “school year” mode. And I love it! I appreciate the anticipation of the school year. When we lived in Hannover, the kids and I used to take one day to go shopping for school supplies and some new

clothes and anything else required for the school year. (Trust me—that was a major undertaking in the early years of living in Germany where they require house shoes to wear in the school, rain boots, rain clothes, gear for cold weather, etc.!)

I really like school and office supplies, so it's always fun for me to think about what might be needed. I am taking that same energy into our new program year for Hope Church!

I am anticipating this new season with excitement because I have now been a pastor here for more than six months, and we have our new Associate Pastor Jackson on board! Throughout my search process I commented on the formation of my leadership and collaborative style. During my days as a student, I participated in organized sports. I recognize now how much that shaped me as a team player. I wanted to give my best to be a positive influence on my team, while also helping others use their gifts and skills to the best of their ability so that they could shine and the team could thrive. I recognize church isn't a sport, but I believe my excitement for the program year comes from the understanding that our team is fully in place now! After a season of transition in many areas of staffing, we now have people in place, and we're ready to live into a new season of creative spaciousness.

And in that creative spaciousness, I am looking forward to things that are coming up in the coming months. New education opportunities, new ways to give of our time and talents with various groups in the church and community, new endeavors that are on the horizon. I invite you to join me in using your gifts and skills to bless this community and, in doing so, helping others thrive as they share their gifts with you—to the glory of God! It is a bit like opening a pack of new pens or cracking open that new journal: Possibilities abound.

- Pastor Gretchen

Growth and Inspiration: Fall Adult Ed

Jane Schuyler, Adult Ed

Two-part series: *The Barmen Declaration*



Karl Barth



Dietrich Bonhoeffer

A. The Barmen Declaration: What Was the Barmen Declaration and Why Is It Important?

September 7



Dr. Steve
Bouma-Prediger

In the 1930s many of the churches in Germany bowed down to Hitler, while others refused to raise their hands in salute to a dictator. This latter group was led by Karl Barth and Dietrich Bonhoeffer, among others, and was called the Confessing Church—confessing because it was based on a confession of faith in God, not allegiance

to a human ruler. In 1934 the Confessing Church drafted the Barmen Declaration. What was the Barmen Declaration and why is it important?

Steve Bouma-Prediger leads this session.

B. The Barmen Declaration: What Can We Learn from the Barmen Declaration as We Face the Challenges of Today?

September 14

Culture watchers today observe that in some countries the Church is facing a similar situation to that of the Church in Germany in the mid 1900s. These folks argue that the Church can and should learn from the Barmen Declaration. Are they right? What can we learn from the Barmen Confession as we face the challenges of today?

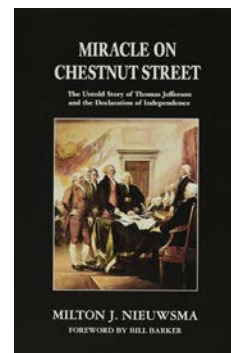
Steve Bouma-Prediger leads this session.

Jesus and Thomas Jefferson

September 21

The Declaration of Independence contains among the most inspired words in the English language: “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal.” What inspired Thomas Jefferson to write these words? How do they reflect his religious views? Was Jefferson even a Christian?

How relevant are his ideas 250 years later? Hope Church member **Milt Nieuwsma** examines these and other questions as he introduces a new young adult version of his book *Miracle on Chestnut Street*. Complimentary copies will be available for class members to give their kids and grandkids.



Two-part series: *Pilgrimage*

A. The Art of the Pilgrimage

September 28



Rev. Dr. Douglas
Brower

Though pilgrimage has a strong Christian (mostly Catholic) history, it turns out to be a near-universal human phenomenon, with people across religious and cultural backgrounds setting out and seeking meaning in the experience. **Douglas Brower**, author of *The Traveler's Path: Finding Spiritual Growth and Inspiration through Travel*,

will describe religious pilgrimage in many of its forms—as well as the growing phenomenon of secular pilgrimage—before describing his own experience with the Camino de Santiago in Spain and Portugal.

B. Stories of Pilgrims

October 5

Douglas Brower will moderate a panel of individuals who have experienced various walking pilgrimages: Phil Doeschot, Bob and Susanne Jordan, Larry Mulder, and Marlin Vis.

Adult Education, Cont'd

The Sabbath Way

October 12

Travis West believes we've misunderstood the Sabbath and this has led to abandoning it as an essential practice of Christian discipleship. We often either reduce it to nothing more than a "day off," or we stuff it so full of rules and regulations that it becomes a mechanism of control instead of a day enabling abundance of life. Speaking about the Sabbath in light of his new book, *The Sabbath Way: Making Room in Your Life for Rest, Connection, and Delight*, Travis will suggest Sabbath is not just a practice, but a posture we adopt toward life every day of the week. Come to learn how to follow the prophet Isaiah's advice to "call the Sabbath a delight."



"Partisan" and "Political," "Party" and "Policy"

October 19

Our faith in Christ calls us to love of neighbor, and that calls us to engage with the issues that impact the well-being of our neighbors. That engagement brings us into the realms of politics, policies, and politicians—and questions of partisanship—all of which can be complicated territory for a faith community. We'll explore together the current landscape of "love-your-neighbor issues" and sort through the challenge of how to engage faithfully, wisely, legally!, and hopefully.

Lessons from the Land

October 26



Author, journalist, and RCA minister **Jeff Chu** shares reflections on faith, grace, and hope based on his recently published book *Good Soil: The Education of an Accidental Farmhand*. The book is a memoir about his time at Princeton Theological Seminary's Farminary, a 21-acre sustainable farm that doubles as a classroom. There,

Jeff not only learned about growing produce and raising chickens but also gained fresh insights into Scripture, relationship with God and neighbor, and honor for creation. (This session will be live-streamed but not recorded.)

Two-part series:

Being Mortal: Approaching Death with Dignity

A. Healthcare Ethics in End-of-life Care

November 2



Dr. Steven Hoogerwerf

Medical ethics are an important component of medical care, along with its physical, social, and spiritual dimensions. This session, led by **Steven Hoogerwerf**, will focus on areas of medical ethics that are especially relevant as patients near the end of life—although many of these apply to medical care across

the age spectrum. Some of the specific areas of medical ethics we will look at include patient autonomy, the principle of beneficence, declining and withdrawing life-sustaining treatment, the role of a patient advocate, pain medication and the principle of double effect, passive and active euthanasia, and "do not resuscitate" orders. Understanding how these are part of patient care can help patients and families understand their options and make decisions that reflect their own moral values.

B. Healthcare Decision-Making Near the End of Life

November 9

Many of us have—or have heard of—Advance Healthcare Planning. Advance Directives, sometimes called Living Wills, are one way to approach the end of life with dignity. Chaplain **David Blauw** will help participants understand what such documents seek to do and discuss areas of conversation which can honor one's values as age or illness progresses. Examples of Advance Directives will help guide the discussion and equip people to have important discussions

with their loved ones about potential future healthcare decision-making.



Dr. Tom Boogaart

God is Always Near at Hand

November 16

A slow reading of the creation account in Genesis shows how the Creator is intimately connected to creation. The people of Israel depicted God as Spirit/breath, breath expanding as words, and words congealing as world.

The biblical cosmology connected spirit and world and anticipated the modern one that connects energy and matter. The people of Israel experienced God as always near at hand. Every breath, drink, meal, and canopy were sacraments, infusions of divine power to sustain life. The loss of this biblical cosmology has contributed to the weakening of the Christian church and to the indifference of Christians to the collapse of the created order. **Tom Boogaart** leads this session.



Dr. Deborah Haarsma

What Would Life beyond Earth Mean for Christians?

November 23

In recent decades, astronomers have discovered thousands of planets orbiting other stars and are eagerly looking for signs of life on those planets. What would it mean for humanity to discover intelligent life beyond earth?

Would it change our view of God? Of ourselves? When modern astronomical findings are considered alongside ancient Christian theology, we come to a deeper understanding of God, the universe, and what it means to be human. Astronomer **Deborah Haarsma** explores these discoveries and questions with us.

A Sneak Peek to Advent

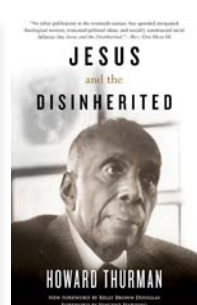
On November 30, **Barry Bandstra** will lead the session, “Names for God in the Old Testament.” This is followed on December 14 with “Angels in the Hebrew Bible and in Advent Narratives in the Gospels.”

Experiencing Sacred Ground

Larry Terlouw

This season, the Justice and Reconciliation Ministry team is sponsoring a small group experience as part of Hope Church’s commitment to being and acting as an anti-racist congregation. The experience, titled Sacred Ground, is a film- and reading-based dialogue series on race, grounded in faith. Eight adults will walk through chapters of America’s history of race and racism, while weaving in threads of family history, economic class, and political and regional identity.

The eleven-part series is built around a powerful on-line curriculum of documentary films and readings that focus on indigenous, Black, Latino, and Asian/Pacific American histories as they intersect with European



American history. The core literature includes two books: *Waking Up White* and *Finding Myself in*

the Story of Race, by Debby Irving, and *Jesus and the Disinherited*, by Howard Thurman.

Sacred Ground is part of the Episcopal Church’s long-term commitment to racial healing, reconciliation and justice in our personal lives, our ministries, and our society. In this series we are invited to peel away the layers that have contributed to the challenges and divides of the present day—all while grounded in our call to faith, hope, and love. We are invited to listen to the stories of fellow humans of diverse cultures, with their sorrows and joys. We are given the opportunity to lament, repent, and understand as needed. As we share our own stories and explore our responses, we hope to move together in new directions and write a new story of human relationships as we live to develop a beloved community.

Adult Education, Cont'd

Strange, Frightening, and Beautiful

Norman Bert



Revelation 13:16–14:4 on Papyrus 47 (recto; c. 250 AD)

“My spirit cannot accommodate itself to this book. For me this is reason enough not to think highly of it: Christ is neither taught nor known in it.” So wrote Martin Luther about The Revelation of John. And surely it’s a strange book. Shocking images abound—

the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse, the Great Whore of Babylon, 666, the Beast, the great Dragon, not to mention horrendous disasters—men hiding for fear, blood flowing as deep as a horse’s bridle. But does any book of the Bible have a more glorious depiction of God’s majesty than John’s vision of the heavenly court? And what a beautiful description of the church, a city coming down from heaven to earth, a city whose light is the Lamb, a city fed by the water of life, flowing from the throne of God! It’s probably safe to say that no book of the Bible, outside of the Psalms, has inspired more hymns.

A small group here at Hope is spending two months studying this strange, frightening, and beautiful book. They are discovering that, indeed, John the Revelator was truly a prophet—not a foreteller of the future, but rather a seer whose vision penetrates the confusing events of our world to explain what God was doing in his world then and there and what God is doing in our world here and now. And yes, contrary to brother Luther, Jesus Christ shines brightly through these pages—not to mention in our troubled present-day world.

A Longing for Connection

Pastor Jackson Nickolay



Last week I had the delight of attending my brother’s fifteenth birthday party. It was a great time! My sister, my brother-in-law, and my new baby-niece were there. My mom and step-dad were there and I got to see both of my brothers as

well. We played some party games, a little bit of Minecraft, and it was such a gift to be able to celebrate my brother for his birthday.

You may (or may not) be surprised then to learn that when the party was done, we all waved goodbye, wished my brother a final happy birthday, and one by one we closed out of our respective Zoom meetings and computers and went about our days.

That’s right, the entire birthday party was on Zoom.

This has become somewhat of a regular occurrence for our family. Most of my family still resides in the North Woods of Minnesota; my sister and I are the outliers. While I have traveled across two great lakes to Michigan, my sister has crossed a far greater distance to live all the way across the sea in Ireland. So, Zoom family gatherings have become somewhat the norm for us.

This sort of family gathering is much more common in our communities these days. As societal circles widen and seek to span states and countries, the ways in which technology can meet the need for connection and relationship across vast distances is truly astounding. This can be (and is) a marvelous and very good thing. If my family were to exist even 100 years ago, the likelihood of communication let alone true community with my sister across the sea would be very difficult, perhaps even impossible.

And yet, for many folks (certainly for me) there is a tension, a need, and a longing for a



Image by Kolk Creative, generated with Adobe Firefly.

more in-person connection. This is the kind of connection that can only happen over a shared cup of coffee, a meal shared together, a board game played around a table, or a late-night conversation on the back porch. We still desire to share space with one another and to be seen and known. While the ease of access to connection through technology is marvelous and can meet some needs for connection within our minds and souls, it can still leave something lacking for our bodies. There are also unintended consequences inherent in online communities which can isolate, insulate, and prevent opportunities for new ideas to be exchanged or intergenerational relationships to develop and form.

Leaning into this tension around connection is something the Church is uniquely gifted to engage with. So many pieces of being a part of a faith community go beyond a mental need for connection and help us make that crucial connection of mind, body, and soul even when engaging online. Whether we are gathered around a table for Pizza Sunday, drawn together in worship in the sanctuary and online through shared liturgy, or working side by side with our friends and neighbors to promote justice, reconciliation, and unity in our community, the church (and especially Hope Church) offers meaningful ways to connect both in person

and online. The church also works to break down barriers and provide opportunities for intergenerational relationships to form and be defined by shared faith, support, and curiosity toward each other's lived experience rather than a shared algorithm.

As I embark on a new season as Associate Minister for Faith Formation at Hope Church, I see this as an integral part of my role. I hope to join in the already ongoing work of cultivating a vibrant constellation of interconnected relationships that are focused on our shared identity as beloved children of God through opportunities for connection across generations and lived experience. This is work that I'm excited to engage in and looking forward to joining in with you all.

In a few months the entirety of that family Zoom birthday party will be here in Holland. My sister is visiting from Ireland, I will get to meet my niece in person for the first time, and I will have the chance to show my brother-in-law the city that Hannah and I have called home for years. I know that before long we will return to sharing life via Facebook Messenger, which I will continue to be grateful for. But for now, I look forward to having the chance to enjoy the company of their physical presence and to introduce them to some of the folks that Hannah and I are so excited to be in relationship with.

Connecting with One Another

Welcoming New Members

In the Spring of 2025, these people joined the Hope Church community; we're so happy to welcome them!



Abby Wolters

Abby moved to Holland in 2023 to start seminary at Western Theological Seminary.

She and her husband were married in July 2024 and began

searching for a church for them both. They chose Hope Church as a good place for Abby to come under care for ordination and because both wanted a church that was affirming and supported their beliefs. They have found Hope to be a welcoming space and are excited to get better connected.



Dave and Deb Genzink

Dave and Deb Genzink celebrated 50 years of marriage this summer, the first five years of which were spent working in health and agriculture education in Haiti. The first of their three boys was born in Haiti. They worked in South Florida for six years before returning to Holland. Dave's

calling in retirement is building houses with Habitat for Humanity, walking alongside new immigrants, and mentoring business owners in Haiti to grow their businesses and create jobs. Deb enjoys environments where she can use her nursing skills and Spanish, traveling via train, plane and cruise ships, her book groups, beaches, and visiting with many new neighbors on my front porch. They both love spending time with their 13 grandchildren.



Nettie Van Duinen

Nettie Van Duinen's family immigrated to Southern California from the Netherlands in 1963, when she was 13. She was raised Christian Reformed but after 10 years of soul and God searching, she was confirmed in the Catholic Church in 2001. Her long-time West Michigan connections led her to move to Michigan in 2014 after retiring from the special education field. She looks forward to helping with the resettlement of refugees and plugging into ministries that provide both opportunities for service and continued spiritual growth.



Jacob and Leona Nyenhuis

Jacob and Leona Nyenhuis, married in 1956, have four daughters, 9 grandchildren, and 10 great-grandchildren. Leona was a deacon at Fourteenth Street Church and was the first woman to serve on the executive

committee of the council. She attended Hope College as a non-traditional student majoring in Art History and minoring in Women's Studies. Leona has served as a docent at various art museums and has been honored for her work as a seamstress. Jack was active in the CRC and served as an elder. Jack has earned degrees from Calvin College and Stanford University. He taught at Wayne State University, Hope College, University of California (Santa Barbara), the Ohio State University, the American School of Classical Studies in Athens, Greece, and at Green College, Oxford. Jack has authored or edited 12 books. He joined the Van Raalte Institute in 2001 and served as its director for 15 years. The home of the Van Raalte Institute was renamed the Theil-Nyenhuis Research Center in 2023, honoring Jack and Leona.



M.E. Schoon Tanis

M.E. Schoon Tanis (Mary Elaine, named after her grandmothers) lived a decade of her life in Hannover, Germany, although she was born in Holland, Michigan. She is entering 10th grade at Holland High School, is learning electric guitar, likes to spend time with friends, loves to listen to music, and

reads young adult fiction. Her favorite sports team is Arsenal (from London); she played on the JV Girls Soccer Team at Holland High School this spring. She also loves to travel! She came back to Hope Church (where she was baptized) because of her mother, Rev. Dr. Gretchen Schoon Tanis, and has always had an active role in the churches her mother has served—including taking confirmation class in German.



Jon Schoon Tanis

Jon Schoon Tanis was born here in Holland but spent 10 years growing up in Hannover, Germany. He is studying at Hope College, pursuing a double major in Creative Writing

and Communication as well as a double minor in German and American Ethnic Studies. He loves movies and music and is a DJ on Hope College's student radio station, WTHS 89.9. You might also find him downtown, where he works as a Cheese Monger at the Culture Cheese Shop.



Brooke & Jessica Koster

Brooke & Jessica Koster were married in August 2024 and moved to Holland, where they live with two cats and love to spend time reading, camping, trying to garden, and taking cats to the beach—that is, when they're not doing homework. Jessica is a third-year student at Western Theological

Seminary. She grew up in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho, where she did not in fact grow potatoes or ski very often but instead read a lot of books. She was an English major at Taylor University in Indiana, graduating in the spring of 2020. In the fall of 2021 she moved to Grand Rapids because she liked it and got a job at a painting company. She began attending an RCA church, where she met Brooke on the worship team. Brooke is a librarian and grad student at Dominican University working on her Masters of Library and Information Science. She grew up in Grand Rapids, Michigan, where she spent many summers reading, going to the beach, and chasing her brothers with sticks. She was a Human Services major at Grace Christian University, and graduated in the fall of 2022. After leaving the church she grew up in, she joined the same RCA church as Jessica and the rest is history.



Ashley Badour

Ashley Badour grew up in Bay City, Michigan, with her Mom, Dad, twin sister Nicole, and younger brother Billy. She went to Delta College for two years, then transferred to Kendall College of Art and Design in Grand Rapids. She graduated with a BFA in Graphic Design in 2019. Ashley is a full-time Web Designer at Featherlight. Ashley now lives in Holland with her twin sister Nicole and their dog Coconut. She started attending Hope Church last fall.



Nicole Badour

Nicole Badour grew up Catholic in Bay City, Michigan. She has a twin sister, Ashley, and younger brother, Billy. Nicole attended Delta College and transferred to Western Michigan University, where she graduated with a bachelor's degree in mechanical engineering in 2021. She is a quality engineer at Clarios in Holland. Nicole enjoys spending time with her sister and their dog, Coconut, and collecting vinyl records.

Theological Thoughts about DEI(A)

By Terry DeYoung and Gordon Wiersma

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) is under threat, and the evidence is all around us. DEI has been front and center in Ottawa County since the Ottawa Impact majority of the county Board of Commissioners eliminated the entire DEI department during its first meeting in 2022. The actions of the current Trump Administration have gone much farther, extending to business, commerce, and institutions of higher learning.

Many Christians who have aligned themselves with the current administration have voiced their support for these efforts. Search online for “theology of DEI” or “the Bible and DEI” and you’ll find lots of negative assessments that help to explain the demonization of DEI.

- “We shouldn’t try to reconcile Christianity and Marxism” and “Christians should be very concerned about anyone trying to baptize Marx into the church.” ([A Biblical Evaluation of DEI](#))
- “Most DEI programs are rooted in contemporary [critical race theory](#), a deeply unbiblical ideology that Christians must reject. This fundamentally unbiblical understanding... is so ubiquitous that I’m not very comfortable with Christians even using the phrase ‘Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion.’” ([DEI Done Right: Disentangling Christian Community from Critical Theory](#))
- “Once accepted by a Christian institution, DEI will replace the Christian morality of any institution which accepts its premises.” ([Is DEI Biblical](#))

Hope Church certainly has followed a different path, embracing many of the goals and objectives of DEI efforts. Along with many other Christians, we see diversity, equity, and inclusion as reflections of biblical principles, advocating for inclusive practices that honor the inherent dignity of all individuals.

Given the current opposition to DEI themes from both religious and political quarters, we affirm that it’s important to express a constructive theology of DEI efforts. In offering these thoughts, we hope that we can all be supported in affirming the language of diversity, equity, and inclusion as values that resonate with our Christian faith

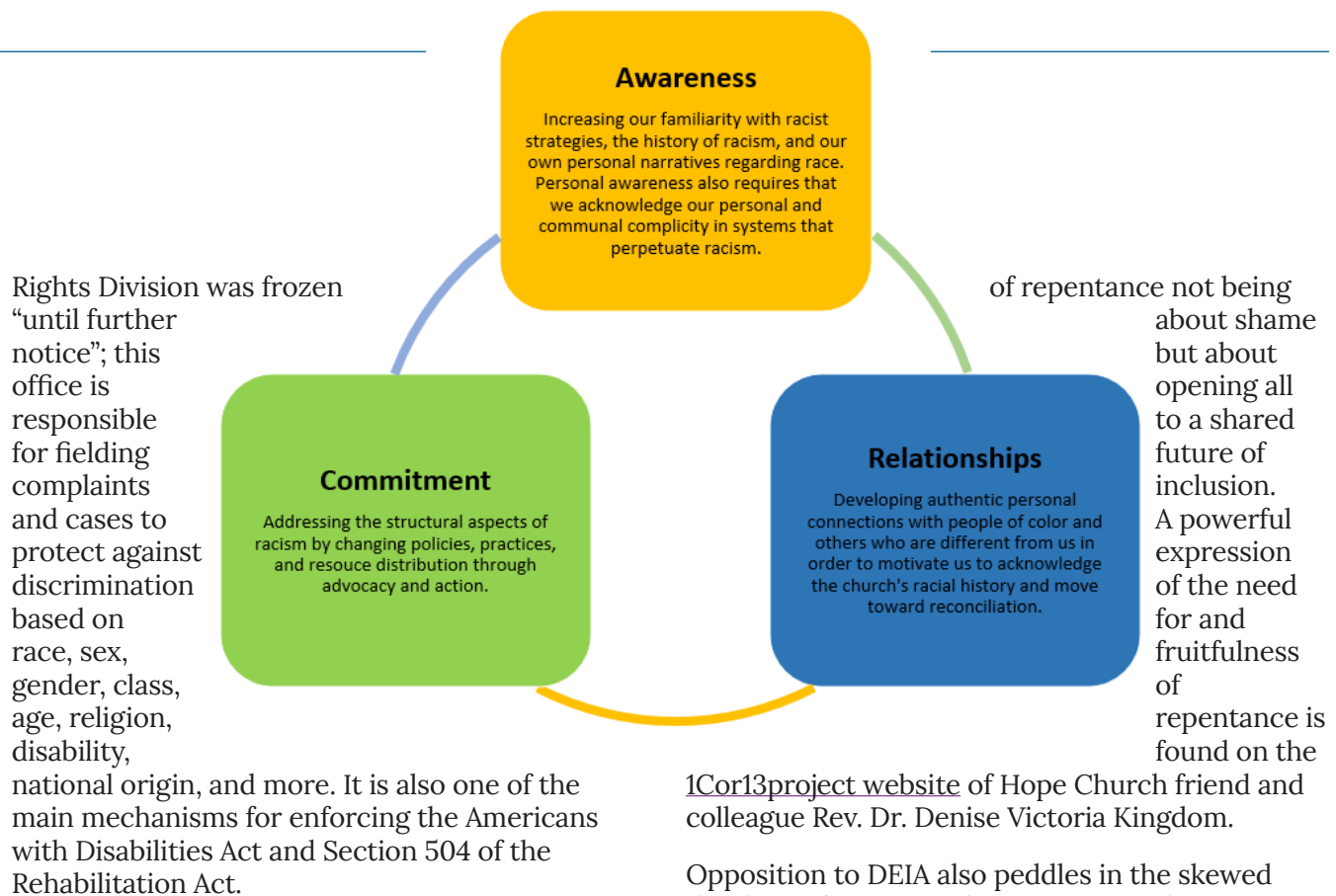
Terry: Throughout my 14 years as the RCA’s coordinator for Disability Concerns, I sought to specifically include and name disability in any conversations of diversity, equity, and inclusion, because people with disabilities were usually overlooked in such discussions. When I’d ask consultants leading diversity workshops about this, they were apologetic. They said that people in the disability community absolutely deserved to be included with other marginalized groups (people of color, women, LGBTQ+), but then those same consultants struggled in their efforts to add disability to their presentations. This ongoing failure to even name disability in DEI conversations has led many disability groups to revise DEI to DEIA (Disability, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility). I’m pleased that Hope Church had the foresight many years ago to establish an Accessibility Ministry.

On January 20, following President Trump’s inauguration, an anti-DEI executive order, “Ending Radical And Wasteful Government DEI Programs And Preferencing,” was issued. It threatens to eliminate basic accessibility for people who live with disabilities and includes sections like this one:

The Director of the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), assisted by the Attorney General and the Director of the Office of Personnel Management (OPM), shall coordinate the termination of all discriminatory programs, including illegal DEI and “diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility” (DEIA) mandates, policies, programs, preferences, and activities in the Federal Government, under whatever name they appear.... Federal employment practices, including Federal employee performance reviews, shall reward individual initiative, skills, performance, and hard work and shall not under any circumstances consider DEI or DEIA factors, goals, policies, mandates, or requirements.

Among other actions in the first week of the Trump Presidency, the “Accessibility” page and all American Sign Language (ASL) content was removed from the White House website. ASL interpreters are no longer included at emergency press briefings. The Department of Justice Civil

THE ARC of RACIAL JUSTICE



[1Cor13project website](#) of Hope Church friend and colleague Rev. Dr. Denise Victoria Kingdom.

Gordon: What Terry describes here are political policy decisions by the current administration, and this gets at the heart of how our theology as Christians interacts directly with public policy and advocacy. Jesus expressed the heart of our faith as “Loving God and loving your neighbor as yourself.” And it is in the realm of public policy that much of the substance of “loving our neighbors” is played out. Hope Church over many decades has been nourished by the Spirit with a faith that calls our attention to those who have been marginalized, and in doing so has opened our hearts to receive the abundance this provides for all.

This helps us to recognize the broken theology that is at the core of much “Christian” opposition to DEIA efforts. Such opposition lacks a capacity for repentance and promotes a worldview of scarcity. Commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility does draw on the crucial faith practice of repentance, in which God calls to confess what is broken, to turn from what is deadly, and to move toward what is life-giving for all. But demonization of DEIA portrays any such repentance as being about shame, negativity, divisiveness, and ingratitude. Such rejections of repentance are antithetical to our faith. We have the opportunity to express the dynamics

Opposition to DEIA also peddles in the skewed theology of scarcity. This scarcity can have attractive names like “exceptionalism,” “security,” and “prosperity,” but at the heart it holds the view that people/communities/religions/nations must be pitted against each other to see who “wins” rather than connected in mutuality where there is enough for all. As pathways are created to receive the gifts of all God’s children and as we are able to see God’s world created with enough for all, Hope Church has experienced deeply that DEIA efforts are in truth grounded in abundance.

For Hope Church the work of scholar/theologian Jemar Tisby has been formative in engaging the work of justice that leads to abundance. Tisby’s teaching on leaning into awareness, relationships, and commitment (action) is developed as a racial justice model but is applicable to all justice efforts centered in valuing DEI.

As we come back to the policy issues/decisions that Terry described at stake in the current political realm, we can be guided by this theology of DEIA in how we seek to carry out love for our neighbors. Current efforts to undercut DEIA focus on avoiding “shame,” denying history, and portraying inclusion as weakness. We know a more excellent way, the love of God and neighbor that empowers healing, connection, and abundance.

Why Creation Care?

By Peter Boogaart, Creation Care Ministry



In the introduction to his commentary on the Gospel of Mark, Ched Myers references the concept of “reading site.” He calls attention to the fact that each one of us has been formed and shaped in a particular culture, particular moment in history, and a particular social environment. “Reading site” is the me that I bring to Scripture.

“Reading site” is like mental/social DNA—it’s the cognitive grid through which we process the events and challenges of our lives. Even our place of birth is a factor. An old environmental adage captures this point well: “Tell me where you were born and I’ll tell you who you are.”

More than typically understood, geography is destiny. Prairie people, because there are no visual limits all the way to the horizon, tend to be uncomfortable in confining places. City people, conversely, are uncomfortable without visual cues around them; open space is unsettling.

Whatever your “reading site” may be, you can’t help yourself; that’s your starting point for understanding what you hear the Scriptures saying. The conundrum of reading Scripture, however, is that it isn’t necessarily going to validate your site.

Myers says that those of us who were born in the “West” were formed and shaped by unspoken, self-validating assumptions about progress, individualism, wealth, and political power. This is hardly a picture of the Jesus who said that “Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head.”

Those of us who started with the Creation Care

Ministry back in 2001 struggled with an opening, largely unspoken, question: Are we the Sierra Club for politically progressive Christians or is Creation Care an intrinsic expression of Christian identity? Instinctively we were saying yes to identity. Practically, it was necessary for us to dig more deeply into our Christian faith.

Scripture says that “In the beginning...” creation is a re-presentation of God’s own identity. All the elements, plants, animals, and living beings are held together in an interrelationship that God calls good. The human quality, however, of knowing both good and evil threatens the Creator’s intent.

The opening Biblical narrative charts the progressive unraveling of those initially healthy relationships: marriage (Adam and Eve), family (Cain and Abel), nations (Tower of Babel), and ultimately the natural world itself (Noah’s flood). The Biblical narrative tells this same story over and over again—different characters and different locations, but always the same story. In our era, it wouldn’t take much imagination to see the climate change crisis in the same terms.

Behind the drama, however, is another story; one in which God is restraining evil and working toward total reconciliation. In God’s world the fields are fruitful and bountiful; there is enough food for everyone and you don’t even have to pay for it. In God’s world gold has so little value that you may just as well pave the streets with it. In God’s world, nobody goes to war.

We call ourselves Christian because, in the midst of our destructive ways, we heard God, through Christ, say: “Stop. Turn around; you’re going the



Images courtesy Kolk Creative. Above: solar panel farm along HWY 36W, MO. Below: Tallgrass Prairie, Manhattan, KS



wrong way. Join me in making all things new.” Creation Care is our spiritual work. Advocating for healthy soil is spiritual work; likewise for species preservation. Making all things new is cleaning up pollution. Enough for all is clean energy.

Just as God placed Adam and Eve in the Garden, God has placed each of us in this time and place in order to work toward the restoration of all manner of relationships. You might even say that this invitation is intended to be our new “reading site.”

Climbing to Beloved Community

By Josh Bochniak



Images courtesy Scrapyard Climbing Collective

When Scrapyard Climbing Collective, a rock climbing gym in downtown Holland, opened its doors in 2019, it wasn't just to offer a place to climb—it was to create a space where people experience welcome and belonging.

From the beginning, Scrapyard has been about more than climbing holds on a wall. It's a space where strangers cheer each other on, where kids from across the city share experiences, where first-timers are welcomed with encouragement instead of judgment. Rock climbing might be what brings people in, but the sense of community is what brings them back. In many ways, it embodies the same values found in Hope Church's vision of the **Beloved Community**: a place of radical welcome, mutual care, and shared growth.

At Scrapyard, we've seen firsthand how powerful it is when people from different backgrounds and life experiences come together to support and challenge one another. That's why we've built our programs and policies around accessibility. From our **Better Together Membership**, which allows individuals to self-select reduced-rate memberships based on financial need, to our

free **After School Hangout** for middle and high schoolers, our goal has always been to tear down the barriers that keep people from participating—just as Hope Church seeks to do in its justice and reconciliation work. These programs are supported by our members through our **Better Together Community Fund**, allowing individuals to support this vision beyond their usual membership dues. It's a vision that cuts across conventional ideas about business: inviting people into a worldview focused on abundance rather than scarcity.

We know that climbing—like community—works best when it's collaborative. You don't need to be very strong or have the fanciest gear to belong here. You just need to show up and be part of something. Whether it's a middle schooler discovering their strength for the first time, a college student challenging themselves to do something out of their comfort zone, or an adult returning to movement after injury, Scrapyard is a space where everyone's story matters. Among other ideas, the reality that we were all beginners once allows individuals to embrace a process of

challenge and support that leads to connection rather than judgement.

Much like Hope Church's focus on listening first and uplifting local voices, we've tried to build our community in conversation with Holland itself. That means working with local youth organizations, providing mentorship day passes, and inviting feedback from the people who walk through our doors. It also means acknowledging that our industry—like many others—has work to do when it comes to representation and equity. We're not perfect, but we're committed to growing in the direction of justice, access, and inclusion.

There's a story we love to tell about a climber who came in hesitant and quiet, unsure if this was "their kind of place." A few visits later, they were laughing with new friends, working on challenges

with strangers, and eventually becoming a mentor to others. It's not a rare story. It happens here all the time. Because when you create a space where people are seen, supported, and invited to challenge themselves—not just physically, but relationally and emotionally—you create something powerful.

Scrapyard may be a climbing gym, but its heartbeat is community. And in that way, we're proud to say our story runs alongside the vision of Hope Church's Beloved Community—a place where people come as they are, and where together, we become something more.

If you are interested in learning more about Scrapyard Climbing Collective or contributing to our Better Together Community Fund, visit www.scrapyardclimbing.com.



Coloring Corner

God creates the world.

Genesis 1:1—2:25

