



SALT & LIGHT

a hope church publication

LENT 2026



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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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Embedded in Our Hearts and Souls

If you ask me sometime, I will be happy to sing our theme song from my childhood youth choir: “Sometime you will see me, my flag is flying high; I’m spreading smiles and laughter to the people passing by. If you should chance to ask me just how I got this way, I’d be more than glad to tell you. and this is what I say...” Perhaps you have similar songs or hymns that spring up unbidden from your heart and mind at various times throughout the year. Music, lyrics, tunes have a way of weaving themselves into our lives. In the best possible way when we think of our spiritual music, that music has a way of sustaining us at the best and hardest times of our lives. Christian music and lyrics embed themselves into our hearts, souls, and minds and have a way of rising to the surface just when we need it.

In the coming Lenten season, we will offer times not only of singing but for praying, as well. Prayer is also a spiritual exercise that opens our hearts, offering a different expression of our experiences; it helps us to receive gifts from the Spirit. Tuesday evenings, March 3, 10, and 17, we will offer three different variations on songs and prayers. We hope you will join us! We will begin our evenings with light snacks at 6:45 p.m. and then journey through songs and prayers from 7 - 8:00 p.m. Through the singing of old hymns and new, through prayers written and spontaneous, we hope this will be a spiritual exercise for all of us as we seek to open our lives anew to God in our season of Lent.

- Pastor Gretchen

Lent: A Season of Songs and Prayers



February 15 | Shrove Sunday

We are shifting from Shrove Tuesday to Shrove Sunday! All are invited to a Mardi Gras / Shrove Sunday Celebration following worship from **12:15 - 1:15 p.m.** in the Commons. We'll share a pancake lunch, with some activities and music, celebrating God's gift of celebrations! Come enjoy this time of fellowship. [Sign up online](#) or in the Gathering Area.

February 18 | Ash Wednesday

We'll have an Ash Wednesday supper at 6 p.m. and worship at 7 p.m. To begin the season of Lent, Hope Church is grateful to join with neighboring congregations First United Methodist, Maple Avenue Ministries, and Holland UCC for both events. [RSVP online](#) or in the Gathering Area by February 15 for the supper (and [here to volunteer to help](#)).

The worship service in the sanctuary will be led by pastors from participating congregations

and include scripture, music, prayer and an invitation to receive the imposition of ashes. The imposition of ashes is an ancient symbol of repentance and blessing that calls us into the Lenten season of renewed faith and discipleship through the story of Jesus Christ. We look forward to an evening of fellowship and worship as we enter into the season of Lent together.

Lenten Tuesday Evening Series *A Season of Song and Prayer*

Our Tuesday gatherings will draw on the spiritual practices through which God's Spirit sustains us. Music and lyrics are often held within our hearts in deep ways, even beyond our conscious memories; prayer can open us to express our hearts to God and to receive the Spirit's grace.

Refreshments will be served at **6:45 p.m.** in the Gathering Area, and then we'll gather at **7 p.m.** in the beautiful, contemplative space of the Chapel for these sessions. Attend one, some or all.

Lent: A Season of Song and Prayer, Cont'd

March 3 – Taizé and Prayer

We will be led by local musician Bob Batistini, who is well versed in the music and spirituality of the Taizé Community in France. Bob will share some of the history and practices of the Taizé Community, and we will have a prayer service of Taizé music and contemplative prayer.

March 10 – Traditional Hymns and New Lyrics

Rhonda Edgington will accompany us as we sing some of our old favorites! And we'll sing some familiar old tunes with contemporary lyrics. There will be a suggestion sheet in the Gathering Area for you to suggest your favorites in advance. Our singing will be interspersed with times of prayer.

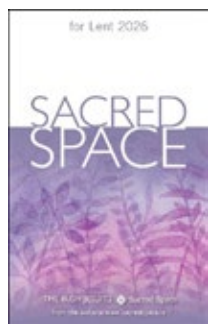
March 17 – Contemporary Songs for Worship

Pastor Jackson Nickolay will lead us in singing music being written for the church today, with beautiful melodies and substantive lyrics. The songs will reflect the music being used in the newly begun Chapel Service. We will again intersperse the songs with communal prayer.

Lenten Devotional | *Sacred Space* and *The Beatitudes*

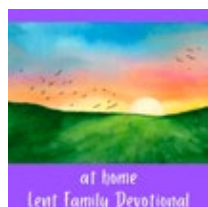
Two options are offered:

Sacred Space for Lent, by the Irish Jesuits, invites



readers to develop a closer relationship with God during this season of prayer, fasting, and service. This daily guided prayer experience is a simple but profound way to journey through the season. You'll find weekly topics for meditation and prayer, as well as daily Scripture readings and brief reflections to ponder.

The Beatitudes: Family Devotional, from



the Presbyterian Church USA, has beautiful artwork, conversation starters, and response activities. This devotional from our friends in the PCUSA is a wonderful resource for all ages.

Easter Lily Orders

Purchase a lily in memory or honor of a loved one, for yourself, to give as a gift to a friend or an at-home member, or to plant in your garden. Pick up an order envelope in the Gathering Area, and turn in your order and payment by Sunday, **March 22**. Those honored or remembered with lilies will be listed in the bulletin. Lilies may be picked up after the 11 a.m. service on **Easter Sunday, April 5**. Lilies for at-home members will be delivered on or after Easter.





Holy Week

March 28 | Palm Cross Making

On this Saturday, from **10 a.m. to noon**, you can join in a tradition from St. Thomas Reformed Church, US Virgin Islands, by learning how to fold palm leaves into crosses for distribution on Palm Sunday. For all ages! Watch the bulletin and emails for more details.

March 29 | Palm Sunday

The 11 a.m. service in the Sanctuary (no Chapel service) will include a dramatic Reading, “Worship for the Way of the Cross,” which weaves together scripture, music, dance and song to draw us into the gospel narrative from the triumphal entry of Palm Sunday to the passion of Jesus.

April 2 | Maundy Thursday

At 6 p.m. we’ll gather for a Seder Dinner. This traditional Jewish practice remembers

the events of the Passover told in the book of Exodus. There will be a potluck meal as part of the Seder, so please bring a dish to pass. [Sign up online](#) or in the Gathering Area (volunteers are also needed; [sign up here](#)).

The Tenebrae Service at 7:45 p.m. will follow the path of Jesus’ passion through the Last Supper and includes communion, prayer, scripture, and music.

April 5 | Easter Sunday

Join us at 9:40 a.m. for an Easter continental brunch as we celebrate Christ’s resurrection! Alleluia! Come join us in the Commons and bring something to share, such as cinnamon rolls, coffee cake, fruit, donut holes, or whatever you’d like to share. Volunteers can help with set-up and clean-up; [join the volunteer effort here](#).

At our 11 a.m. Easter Worship Service, we will celebrate the Risen Lord! Christ is Risen!

Adult Education: The Meaning of Home



The Adult Education Ministry has selected “Home” as the theme for Lent. Where is home? What does it feel like to leave home? Can one go home again? How does one find home? Have you ever received a letter from home? How do you welcome someone home? Do all the spaces in a home provide for everyone? How much square-footage creates a home? What does it mean to “be home?” What might push one from their home? Please come willing to share stories, memories or associations you have with home! All sessions are from **9:40 – 10:40 a.m.** in the Commons.

February 22 | Coming Home: Bittersweet Discoveries



As a child, Christy Berghoef ran barefoot on a small farm on the south side of Holland, Michigan. In early adulthood, she moved to Washington, DC, where, as her world expanded, her views stretched and grew as well. After decades away, she returned to the forty-acre farm of her childhood. Join her as she reflects on the age-old expression, “You can never go home again.” We’ll explore themes of home. What is home? How do we know when we are home? Is home something we take with us when we move? How can we help make others feel at home? Christy is the author of *Rooted: A Spiritual Memoir of Homecoming*.

March 1 | What Is Affordable Housing?

Nathan Poel, along with Terry De Young, present on what affordable housing is, what tools and resources are available to build and maintain housing, and the work of Dwelling Place in meeting the need for safe, dignified, and affordable places to live throughout West

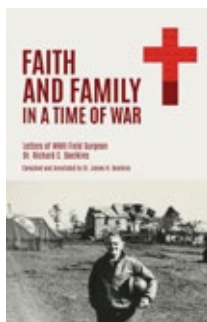


Michigan. Community Land Trusts (CLTs) and other shared equity housing models will be included in the discussion. Nathan

is the Director of Real Estate Development for Dwelling Place of Grand Rapids.

March 8 | Faith and Family in a Time of War: Letters of WWII Field Surgeon Dr. Richard C. Boelkins

James Boelkins will share selections from letters his father wrote home while serving as a field surgeon in WWII. The letters chronicle his long hours of surgery in field and evacuation hospitals



amidst the tragedies of war, revealing the challenges of living in foxholes, operating on devastating wounds, and enduring fear, homesickness, and illness. The letters reveal the critical importance of mail from home in sustaining his morale and unwavering faith in God.

March 15 | Welcoming the Strangers in Our Midst



There are strangers in our midst. Indeed, we all have been strangers at some time in our lives. The RCA Commission on Theology has recently drafted a document designed to help us think about how we can welcome the strangers in our midst. When many people today are homeless, how do we become good homemakers for ourselves and for others? Steve Bouma-Prediger will facilitate this session.



March 22 | Free to Be You & Me: Inclusive Residential Design



What is inclusive design and how can we start creating spaces

that work better for everyone? This panel discussion will feature the Veldheer DeYoung and the Saliers-Johnston households, and how they approached their residential home improvements to provide more welcoming environments where we can be free to be you and me. They will be joined by local planning and design consultants, Nick Rolinski, RA, and Har Ye Kan, AICP.



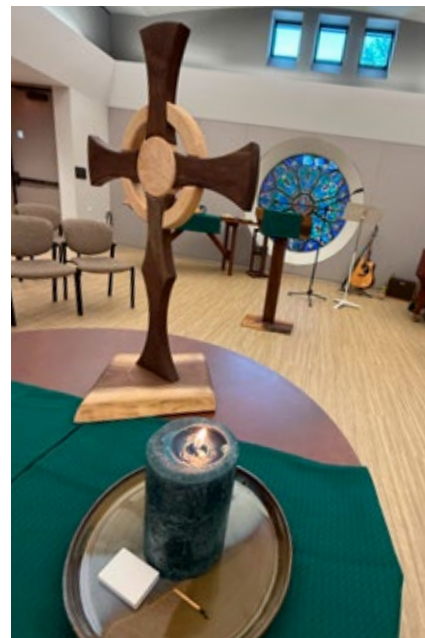
March 29 | Building Small: For Affordability, Quality, Community, and Legacy

Housing needs and growth pressures are driving a major expansion of housing inventory in Ottawa County, and our response will have an impact on the region's character, for better or for worse. Character is an important priority for Christians, because it helps to uphold the dignity of all community members, promotes pride and stewardship of place, and aligns with our human need to create beauty (we create because we are made in the image and likeness of God, the Creator).

Building a little smaller is one valid way for us to pursue affordability and sustainability goals, without sacrificing character and quality. Smaller packages allow us to keep alive the best building and craft traditions of our regional housing vernacular, without breaking the bank or spending recklessly on upgrades or frills. The County's Small-Footprint Home Development Concept advances this idea with sixteen free home designs, which feature familiar and local design elements identified throughout the area. Paul Sachs, Director, Ottawa County Department of Strategic Impact, and Nicholas Rolinski, Registered Architect, will present the project, including its process, stakeholder insights, and outcomes.



Adult Education will resume on April 12 (the week after the Easter brunch) with Paul Heusinkveld presenting "Dutch Emigration: An Appeal Based on Faith, Family, and Famine."



Chapel Service Comes to Life

Pastor Jackson Nickolay

In January this year, after much thought and care in planning, Hope Church launched a new worship expression. The Chapel Service has begun meeting on Sunday mornings at 11 a.m. (concurrent with the Sanctuary Service) and has already begun to bear fruit within our community.

The process of bringing this service to life has been filled with moments of gratitude. Though I joined in the process comparatively recently, it was a delight to find both that much thought and care had gone into the development of the Chapel Service already and that there was still such welcome to join in the process.

In early conversations with the other pastors, we shared the vision and the dream for what we thought could emerge: a worship space born out of a moment of congregational strength that could expand Hope's welcome and enable another posture of worship and invitation to dwell with God in community. I'm grateful for how we cultivated openness both in our planning and our implementation that was willing to explore, hold onto ideas, and then—when the time came—to try them out on their feet.

I think back to the early communal planning meetings I had with folks who were willing to give of their time and energy to be part of the visioning. During that time, we talked through

the importance of stillness in worship, of resting in the word, of empowering the congregation to add their voices to the worship offerings, and of the centrality of communion celebrated each week.

I'm glad for so much laughter, wonder, and joy with people on staff, consistory members, and so many volunteers as we planned, tinkered, and implemented the ideas that were percolating.

Then, the joy of finally getting to share in this service as a community has been such a gift. This service enables all those involved in it to engage in their own ways and add their voices into the moment of worship: getting to hear prayers spoken from the congregation in our bidding prayers, turning to our neighbors to share what the Spirit has made known to each of us, and, in moments of connection and community both in the Chapel and in the Gathering Area with our whole worshiping community, it has been a delight to share what we hear in the scripture.

Lastly, I'm grateful to share in this journey and for the chance to follow what the Spirit is doing at Hope Church. The Chapel Service will continue to morph and grow as we set in new rhythms and practices and explore what it's like to expand the welcome of Hope Church. I look forward to seeing and learning about what it will become.

Shining the Spotlight on Children in Worship

Judith Boogaart

It is a weekly ritual. Every Sunday during worship at Hope Church, the pastors invite children to gather at the front of the sanctuary for a Word with the Children. Then they light the Christ Candle and one of the children carries it out of the sanctuary, leading the way to Children in Worship.

This program has been part of Hope Church's children's ministry for decades, but some people may not be familiar with what happens when the children enter their worship space. I spoke with a few of the parents and children who participate in Children in Worship to hear about their experiences.

Paul Pearson describes it as “an almost Montessori-style” gathering, where the leader doesn't just read the Bible story of the day but “tells” it using simple wooden figures and scenery. Afterwards, children can make a craft that relates to the story.

“It's interesting and engaging,” says Laura Pearce, “a way to introduce and reinforce the stories in the Bible. The singing, praying, and craft time are all tied to the theme of the story.”

Katie Van Tassell agrees and says her children like to gather with their friends in a circle to hear the stories. She likes the emphasis on “wondering” to really get the children's imagination going. During the response time, if a child does not like doing crafts there are many other ways to engage with the stories: coloring or drawing, doing activity pages, reading, or retelling the story themselves using the figures from the story boxes.

Katie shares that during the COVID pandemic, when churches were not meeting in person, she had trouble finding a way to present the stories of the Bible in a way her children would remember and internalize. When services resumed, and their family came to Hope Church, she was thankful for this program that engaged her children in such a fun way. She now feels they as parents have good support to help their children learn about God and their faith.

Laura likes the focus on introducing and reinforcing the Bible stories, but she also appreciates how Children in Worship helps build

a community at church for their children. “I can't say enough about how Miss Jocelyn and Mr. Michael lead Children in Worship.” She points to how Miss Jocelyn keeps the atmosphere in the room calm and controlled, using encouragement and modeling kindness when someone needs reproof. Here the children learn how to gather in a group and act respectfully towards each other.

Katie adds that the child who carries the candle becomes the special helper for that day. That gives each child a chance to feel especially valued, and through helping others they learn new skills.

The parents agree that summer church school has a slightly different feel—more like a Vacation Bible School, with more songs and more conversation about how we as followers of Jesus might behave in response to the stories. They appreciated the theme of justice used last summer. The leaders encourage children to recognize when unjust behavior happens and decide to do something about it, such as befriending a classmate when someone bullies them, or being kind when you see others being unkind.

When I ask how their children respond to Children in Worship, Laura says “They like it, and I never have trouble getting them to come to church.” (Paul and Katie both nod at that.) “At home I overhear them talking about or retelling the story from the past Sunday, so I know they are engaged and remembering them.”

And the kids? “Being with friends is fun,” says Emerson. “I like the stories and songs, but I like the crafts, too.” He adds, “I like coming to church as long as I can go upstairs instead of staying downstairs.”

Serafina adds, “It's fun! Miss Jocelyn does most of the leading, but Mr. Michael helps a lot too. I like drawing the best!”

The leaders invite parents to accompany their children to Children in Worship whenever they wish. It's the best way to see exactly what your child is learning and how they respond. In fact, the invitation is for anyone who wants to learn more about this important part of our children's ministry.

Connecting with One Another

Welcoming New Members

During late 2025, these people joined the Hope Church community; we're so happy to welcome them!



Ruth Langkamp

Having grown up in Chicago as the second of six children, Ruth brings a deep appreciation for community, hospitality, and good conversation. She finds joy in reading, cooking, hosting friends around the table, and exploring the beauty of creation through backpacking. Ruth serves as the Associate Director of Discipleship and Church Innovation for the Reformed Church in America, helping congregations align their mission and vision—especially in how they empower and include youth and young adults. A graduate of Calvin University and Western Theological Seminary, she is currently under care of the Holland Classis as she journeys toward ordination to become a Minister of Word and Sacrament. Ruth continues to seek and celebrate God's ever-unfolding good plans in her life and ministry.



Vern and Gail Morris

Vern was raised in Allegan, attended local public schools and a nearby CRC church. After graduating from high school, during the height of the Vietnam war, he traveled to Chicago to attend school, intending to complete as much of his education as possible before he was drafted. Following military service, he returned to Chicago to work, then completed degrees in mechanical design and engineering in Kalamazoo. He and his wife, Gail, settled in Holland, where Vern had a long career as a design engineer predominantly in the automotive industry. Before retiring, he had the meaningful experience of revisiting Vietnam, Thailand, and Cambodia. Gail had grown up in Holland, where she attended a local CRC church and completed her senior year dividing her time between Holland High School and Hope College. She majored in German and Business at Western Michigan University and worked for 16 years in education and then in corporate human resources, marketing, and sales. Their daughter, Deanna, works abroad as a senior program officer with the United Nations. Recently retired, Gail is exploring what comes next while volunteering at HASP, enjoying life in Holland and the welcoming community at Hope Church.



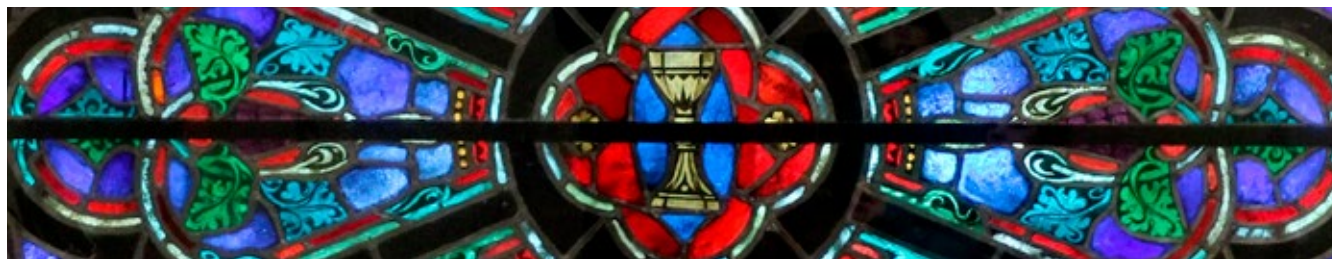
Laura, Emerson, and Serafina Pearce

Laura lives in Holland with her husband, Tony, and their two children, Emerson and Serafina. After meeting in Indianapolis, they came to Holland eight years ago. Laura first chose Hope Church to try based on proximity to their home and alignment with their family's views on God's love being for all people. Thanks to Children in Worship, she has been able to make sure Emerson and Serafina can come and learn as well. Laura is originally from the Finger Lakes Region of New York and still has family there. For them, Holland is the perfect blend of Lake Michigan (where Tony grew up) with Lake Macatawa (which feels more like Laura's area of New York). In addition to her work at MillerKnoll, Laura has enjoyed getting involved in the community through various organizations including Holland Educational Foundation and Tulip Time.



Jim and Sandra Griffin

Jim and Sandra have been married for 34 years and have called West Michigan home since 1998. They are the parents of three children—Courtney, the mother of all four of their grandchildren; Xander; and Val. Val was active in Hope's youth group before heading off to Western Michigan University this fall, a shift that has forced her Central Michigan University-alumni parents to "join the dark side." Jim works as a computer programmer for Lake Michigan Credit Union and is currently finishing his second master's degree. Sandra holds a degree in elementary education but has been out of the teaching field for several years. Both Jim and Sandra are deeply involved in Holland Community Theatre (HCT) and can typically be found working on whichever production is underway. Jim also serves on the HCT board and plays a major role in the tech team, specializing in lights and sound. Sandra loves directing the children's summer show (she's slated to direct *Frozen Jr.* in 2026) and enjoys performing onstage. All three of their children have been involved in theatre, and two of their grandchildren have now appeared on the HCT stage as well. For the Griffins, theatre is truly a family affair.



What Is REST?

Judy VanderWilt

Twice a month on the calendar of events sponsored by Hope Church is a listing for REST. This event occurs on the second and fourth Mondays of each month from 11 a.m. - 12:30 p.m. in the Hope Church Chapel. But what is the purpose of this event and who attends?

REST is an acronym for:

R = Relax
E = Empathy
S = Share
T = Thanksgiving

At the group's inception, about 12 years ago, the focus for the group was to provide support for persons who were caregivers for a family member and/or persons who had recently experienced the death of a loved one. For many years, Ginger Clark, Hope Church's parish nurse, led this group. Ginger's leadership provided a time for spiritual rest along with a listening ear and helpful resources.

It is now several years since Ginger's retirement, and the group has continued to meet regularly and its membership has continued to grow. At each meeting, one of the pastors begins by sharing a reading, a poem, a prayer, or other meaningful expressions of hope and grace for those in attendance. Following that,

persons are invited to share what's on their minds. During the time of sharing, the group experiences moments of laughter as well as times of tears.

At a recent gathering, 12 persons were gathered and each was invited to share what participation in REST means to them. Here are their comments:

"REST has brought me support, hope, and friendship when it was greatly needed in my life. Also, information is shared to help with coping with the loss of loved ones."

"I was a latecomer to REST and was warmly welcomed. People are wonderful listeners without giving advice."

"REST is a place of support and strength where we bring our joys and sorrows. We share our achievements and setbacks."

"REST is a special time to reminisce about our loss and pray for each other in our grief."

"REST means support and kindness. The group really knows me, understands my pain, and accepts me. We also have fun together."

"REST offers unconditional support and encouragement. I have built new friendships and appreciate the perspectives

of others. The group exhibits a joyful spirit."

"I was too busy for REST while my husband was alive, but after his death I wanted to help others who are going down a similar path. REST has given me support and comfort. I still need REST to receive care and to be a way of giving care and support to others. It has become a beloved community for me."

"I have found REST to be a warm, nonjudgmental group where I can speak what's on my heart. It provides ongoing support beyond the crisis months after loss."

"Members speak in turn, sharing not only stories of grief, but also life moments, plans, good times, and family news."

"REST has strengthened my connection to Hope Church. The opening messages from the pastors are helpful and positive."

You can tell, as these comments suggest, that care for one another is central, even as participants rely on God's grace and comfort to sustain them. If you think REST might be a group for you, join us on the second or fourth Monday of each month at 11 a.m. If you have further questions, contact Judy VanderWilt (judyvanderwilt@gmail.com).

A New Model for Community-Driven Housing

Bob Jerow, Disability Housing Task Force



In my remarks at the groundbreaking ceremony for the Hope Church portion of the affordable housing project, I noted that there are 383 emails in a folder documenting our team efforts. The first one was from David VanDoorn, dated September 29, 2018, inviting Peter Boogaart and me to join a newly formed Disability Housing Task Force. These emails document the many meetings, conversations, and presentation preparations, in essence the highs and lows shared on this journey.



Pastor Gordon began his remarks at the groundbreaking by reminding us of the origins of the project in a conversation Pastor Jill had with Marge DeBlaay concerning the future for her son, Michael DeVries. “As a household, it was seven years ago that they challenged us to support them in housing for special needs that are scarce in our community. At that time our Pastor Jill Russell challenged us to see that as a baptismal

commitment—a covenant of grace in which God calls us to support one another.”

In the fall of 2018, Pastor Jill took her vision to the Disability Concerns Ministry, which voted to establish a Disability Housing Task Force to take the work to the next level. The Consistory approved the formation of this task force after reading the 6-page summary (with 11 appendices) that Judy VanderWilt created to summarize the year-long research the Disability Concerns Ministry had conducted. The initial work of the task force (DHTF) was to create a vision grounded in the Biblical imperative that we are all part of the community of God’s beloved children, and that God has given us what is needed to create beloved community together. This vision for the housing development was informed by values including belonging, self-determination, inclusion, personal growth, safety/security, and mutuality.

Over the seven years, our vision for what supportive housing would look like evolved, but the current vision was the product of a meeting in which Ryan Kilpatrick, of Housing Next, challenged Pastor Gordon to grow our vision from a house to an apartment complex involving our neighbors, the First United Methodist Church (FUMC, that would include affordable apartments. Shortly after, our development partner, Dwelling Place, joined, and their expertise, sound counsel and diligent work has been critical to the success of our combined efforts.

One of the byproducts of this new, more expansive vision was the need to build a new playground for our partners, the CDC's Head Start Program. With the leadership of the CDC, some zoning help from the City of Holland and our developer, Dwelling Place, we hired a contractor for work that would meet federal government standards for playgrounds. More meetings! Oh, joy!

One of the low points in our journey was the failure of our combined project with the FUMC to receive a necessary grant from the Michigan Housing Development Authority. The failure of two attempts within a very competitive application process took years, and ultimately led the FUMC, with regret, to withdraw from the project. As Pastor Gordon remarked at the community shovel event held on the Community Action site that preceded Hope's event, "We would not be out here today without their [FUMC's] original commitment to a housing project, and they have been loyal encouragers and celebrators with us. We are grateful for the love and commitment of FUMC for our community."

It was through the commitment and work of Dwelling Place that, from this lowest of points in our journey, we were overjoyed to learn that Dwelling Place had created a new housing project application to the Michigan State Housing Authority. They combined our development with the Community Action House housing development proposal, strengthened by the addition and support of the Little River Band of Ottawa Indians. Success! And in this moment, the members of the Disability Housing Task Force express our gratitude that as a congregation, led by the Consistory, you have hung by us and been nothing if not encouraging and supportive.



On December 7, 2025, a group of hardy Hope Church congregants braved winter cold to witness the shovel ceremony celebrating the beginning of construction. Gratitude was the word of the day.

Pastor Gordon opened remarks by expressing that, "As followers of Jesus Christ, these apartments are a tangible expression of loving God through loving our neighbor. They are an embodied expression of hope for our community." Co-Chair Peter Boogaart reminded us that what began as a vision for a future for Michael, had blossomed into a gift for many who share Michael's challenges, in addition to those in need of affordable housing. Pastor Gordon concluded "That is a big deal for this congregation to do, and it is the kind of giving that will flourish into blessing: we are blessed to be a blessing, and God will bring good fruit from the dwelling places that emerge on this ground."



The youth of Hope Church made a dent to start the construction, and now the real work of site preparation has begun. Dwelling Place now owns the land and the construction is now in their hands.

What remains to be developed is the 811 PRA program in which 11 apartments spread throughout both building sites will be set aside for qualified disabled tenants. DHTF member Cindy Terlouw has been actively helping prepare 6 families (to date) to gather their information in anticipation of making early application for one of the 811 PRA apartments. Before applications can be made, Dwelling Place must designate a referral agency, which then will appoint a Service Coordinator. The Service Coordinator will work with both clients and the Michigan State Housing Development Authority to create a list of eligible tenants. It is our hope that these apartments will be filled with mildly cognitively disabled adults like Michael. It will be up to Michael and his family if they choose to join the application process.

Pastor Gordon, in his remarks during the shovel ceremony held at the Community Action House property, shared our vision "for the nurturing of community within this project and in our neighborhood. We



also believe that establishing this project can be a catalyst for similar developments to positively impact our community. “

“What is taking shape at the Kollen Park Housing Development is not just an ordinary affordable housing project. It represents a remarkable

seven-year journey where the convergence of faith-based land stewardship, inclusive design, municipal policy reform, and partnerships with tribal communities has unleashed a new model for what community-driven housing can look like and achieve within Holland.”

Hope Church Solar Installation

Peter Boogaart, Creation Care Ministry



In late 2023, the Creation Care Ministry opened a conversation about global climate change. We were becoming increasingly conscious of the multiple ways in which climate change was making life intolerable for many people around the globe. We knew, too, that our own congregational use of fossil fuels was contributing to the problem.

Our discussions were guided by the diagnostic guidelines of Romans 12:18: Is there a break in living peaceably with all? Are we accountable to do something? And, do we have the means to respond?

If it is possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.

– Romans 12:18

In early 2024 we created a Carbon Footprint Team and charged the team with exploring the issue and developing a recommendation.

The team began its work with a detailed tour of our facility, including the attic and basement. They collected 2024 electric and gas bills and used them to calculate our carbon footprint which turned out to be 223 tons of CO₂e

annually. The team then began to catalogue our options to reduce that tonnage—everything from more insulation to upgraded appliances.

The team ultimately identified transition to carbon-free electrical supply as a first step that would be both achievable and dramatically effective. The team began to focus on the potential for installation of a solar array.

We learned that the non-profit Solar Faithful was working with other faith communities to facilitate this same goal. We contacted their solar partner, Chart House Energy in Muskegon, and began the process of identifying our options.

The following months were used to refine the solar array proposal and to communicate the project to the congregation and appropriate committees. Chart House Energy, after an inspection of our roof and mechanical systems, delivered a proposal for a \$102-kW array which would offset 62% of our annual electrical load and 28% of our total carbon footprint at a cost of \$275,000. Allowing for some variation in electrical use from year to year and inflation, the array would save about \$7,000 per year in electric billings.

In August 2025 Consistory approved the proposal and determined that it would be appropriate to borrow the funding from Facilities Maintenance Fund with the understanding that we will apply for the available clean energy tax credits.

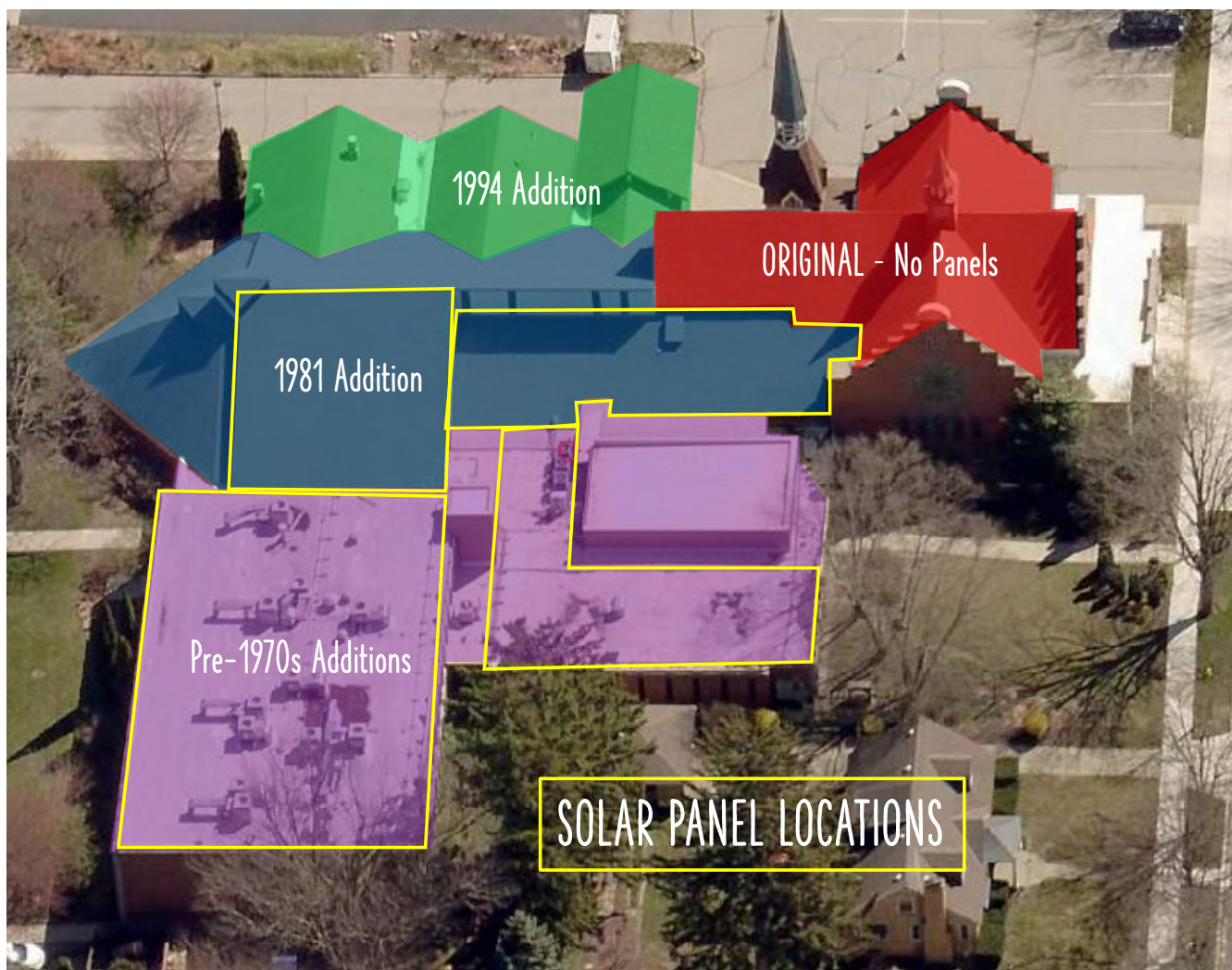
Clean energy tax credits are a function of the IRS code. So, when the solar array becomes operational in 2026, we will file for those credits. We are eligible for a 30% credit and expect to also qualify for an additional 10% credit as we reside in a community formerly served by a coal-fired power plant.

Installation of the solar array has begun and much of the racking system is now in place. Unfortunately, however, the severity of the weather this winter has slowed things down. Chart House Energy will finish as

soon as they are able. We anticipate a formal dedication event sometime this spring.

When the IRS credits are awarded, they will be refunded to the Facility Maintenance Fund. With the IRS credits in hand, we will be able to calculate the remaining balance due to be returned to the Fund; at which point, we anticipate a one-time appeal to the congregation for a contribution toward the remaining total. When all contributions are recorded and the final repayment to the Fund is known, Consistory will determine a number of years in which to refund the balance and add a prorated amount to each successive annual budget.

When the solar array is finally complete and operational, the Carbon Footprint team will begin the search for whatever may be the next step in reduction of our carbon footprint.



Pathways for Creation Care: A Rocha Project

Steven Hoogerwerf and Jackson Nickolay, Creation Care Ministry

The Creation Care Ministry is in a collaborative relationship with A Rocha's Churches of Reconciliation to both encourage and support Hope Church's ministry focused on our care for creation. As part of our obligation, we've committed to each of the two "Pathways" for 2026: Spiritual Formation and a Practical Action. One might think of these as two mutually enhancing endeavors.

The practical action project that generated the most interest both in our group and in a November listening session is a pollinator garden. A pollinator garden is a space specifically designed using native plants that provide nectar and pollen to pollinator insects such as bees, butterflies, and moths. These can be small spaces starting with a corner or border of your yard, or they can replace most of your lawn. Pollinator gardens focus on plants native to our region because insects have evolved specifically to eat and pollinate local plants.

Pollinator gardens are important for many reasons. They support the pollinators responsible for many of the foods we eat (fruits and vegetables, for example). Pollinators are decreasing at a rapid rate, so finding ways to support them is essential to the long-term health of the ecosystem that supports all life. Pollinator gardens also help to counteract land development that has divided forests and prairies into increasingly smaller spaces, which in turn support fewer species and less biodiversity. A series of pollinator gardens provides a pollinator corridor, helping

to counteract the negative impact of what has been called "habitat segmentation." There are other advantages as well: they support the wildlife food web, help sequester carbon, and improve water quality.

How can you be involved? The most direct way is to establish a pollinator garden on your own property (or a container-based pollinator garden if you don't own property). If you already have a pollinator garden, you can advise and assist for this project, advising and assisting those who want to get started. There's nothing wrong with starting small! Dedicate even just a corner of your yard to a pollinator garden.

Later this spring and summer the Creation Care Ministry will offer opportunities for practical support. There are resource people in the Hope Church community, as well as local organizations, webinars, and books that will provide all the help you need to get started. And you won't be doing this alone. We'll be doing it as a community of people who want to participate in this small and important part of caring for creation.

As mentioned before, we will also engage in a Spiritual Formation project: the development of liturgical resources for the "Liturgical Season of Creation."

The Liturgical Season of Creation is less known, though it is observed within a broad ecumenical community. Spanning September 1 through the feast of St. Francis of Assisi on October 4, the season was

first celebrated by the Orthodox church in 1989 before being recognized by the World Council of Churches, the Catholic Church, and the wider Christian community. It also rose in public awareness in recent years during the ministry of Pope Francis due to his well-known papal encyclical letter *Laudato Si'* and his establishment of a World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation in the Roman Catholic Church.

The website dedicated to educating about the Liturgical Season of Creation describes the season as "a time to renew our relationship with our Creator and all creation through celebration, conversion, and commitment together. During the Season of Creation, we join our sisters and brothers in the ecumenical family in prayer and action for our common home."

Pastor Jackson will facilitate the development of liturgical resources that acknowledge the season of creation within the worship life of Hope Church. These resources will include prayers, poems, songs, art, and ways of engaging the word; they will be intended for use within worship in September and October 2026. If you would like to be a part of the brainstorming or development of these liturgical resources, reach out to Jackson in person or via email at jnickolay@hopechurchrca.org.

We look forward to seeing these projects come into being as a part of the good work that the Creation Care Ministry is already engaged in, and we welcome all interest and questions if you're wondering how to get involved in the months to come.



Poetry Corner



As this winter season has stretched on with more-than-usual severe weather, the poem that Jessica Koster shared at Hope Church's Thanksgiving service came to mind. We share it again here to remind us of warmth and peace.

A Recipe for Potato Soup

Jessica Koster

I've felt closest to the saints
in the solace of
scrubbing and skinning potatoes,
of piling them with
chopped onions (wiping teary eyes)
into a pot on the stove
to cover with water—
but not drown—
add chicken broth bouillon
and boil.
Then when potato and onion soften,
give way to a gentle fork,
I pour out the blessing of
cream corn and
crumbled crispy bacon
and stir in a can
of evaporated milk.
So when we gather together,
ladling chowder into
mismatched ceramic bowls,
we pass the peace
steaming around the table.
Here I find that holiness
can be held warm in our hands,
tasted thick on our tongues,
smelled simmering in a bowl
of potato soup.