



SALT & LIGHT

a hope church publication

AUTUMN 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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The Joy of Community



I mentioned it to a number of folks, and it was hard for me to confess: I wasn't actually looking forward to the World Cup this year. I was a little cynical and grumpy. Why? Because FIFA forgot to schedule games near enough to us to make seeing a game manageable. FIFA forgot to schedule games with a ticket price we could afford for a family of four (or even one!).

As a fairly established football fan, I was frankly feeling a bit put-out.

But then. Then! I experienced the beauty and joy of the World's Game, and my enjoyment of this World Cup, like the Grinch's, grew my heart three sizes. I came across a social media post proclaiming this year's World Cup was exactly what we needed here in the Americas. We needed the Scots taking over Boston. We needed the German fan experiencing Waffle House for the first time and raving about it. It turns out so many fans fell in love with ranch dressing that TSA had to issue an announcement reminding people the size of dressing you could bring in a carry-on; most likely please pack the ranch dressing bottle in your checked bag. For the writer of the post, she felt like the World Cup was like an international sleepover party at which we remembered what it was like to have fun with friends.

And for me personally, I had forgotten. How could I forget? I forgot the joy of meeting friends and family to watch games together. You used to live in Paris? I'll watch the France game with you! You're from England? I'll root for your national team and be a little sullen, too, when they lose. I forgot the fun of breaking down the ins and outs of a game with coworkers the day after a match. I forgot what fun it is to learn again about a country and find it on a map. Cape Verde! What a place. There was renewed joy in sharing this event with our community and world, and it was a vehicle for conversation and expression and shared experience.

Shared conversation, expression, and experience. Shared joy, shared dialogue, leading to conversation and friendship! This is exactly what we are aiming for with the reminder and expansion of what we are (for now) calling Affinity Groups here at Hope Church in the coming months. We have a plethora of groups already that meet around shared interest here at Hope Church: choir, Men's Breakfast, Hope Church Readers, Circle groups, Caring for Creation, Pub Theology, Gentlemen of a Certain Age, etc.

There are groups of folks who enjoy similar things, and, in so doing, grow in friendship with one another, carrying joys and concerns as life is lived in community.

But we are also looking to expand these options! Love watching sports? Start a group! Like watching birds or walking dogs? Start a group. Love playing board games? Start a group. We're already planning on beginning a few new groups including playing Bridge and Conversations+Cocktails. If you can dream it, let's consider how we might facilitate making it possible to gather around shared affinities so that meaningful Christian community

is not only experienced but can increase our joy of life together with one another! In the last few years, we have had quite a number of new people join Hope Church—now it's time to get to know one another and share in our Christian journey together. There won't be any trophies handed out at the end, but it will sure be a lot of fun along the way! Stay tuned on ways to join these new groups as well as explore already established groups. And if you have any good ideas on what group you want to start, please see one of your pastors.

- Pastor Gretchen

Do Justice, Love Kindness, Walk Humbly: Fall Adult Education

September 13, 20, 27

Money and Morality: Integrating Free Enterprise, Economic Justice, and Faith

September 13

The Economic Ways of Loving



Dr. Sarah Estelle

Jesus tells us that the second greatest commandment, so great that it is much like the first, is to love our neighbor as ourselves (Matthew 22:37-39). If we take this call seriously and accept that love requires willing the good of another, then we must employ a hefty dose of prudence.

Prudence—not to be confused

with hesitancy or stinginess—is the virtue that we embody when we see the world as it is and respond accordingly. If we are to dare to call our other-serving actions love, we must concern ourselves, not just with good intentions, but also with the consequences of our actions. Facilitating actual good for others matters much more than how it feels or how it looks. Economics is a discipline dedicated to understanding the causes and the consequences of human action within the context of a created world and given human nature such that resources are limited relative

to all the good things we can aspire to do. Time, talent, knowledge, energy, physical resources, and everything else we might consider an “input” to loving our neighbor well are finite in their availability, which is just one reason stewardship of all these resources is paramount when our objective is our neighbors' wellbeing. Recognizing these limitations, but also appreciating human potential, economics is a tool that can be readily employed in prudential, another's-good-seeking action. Sarah Estelle, Hope College professor of economics, will introduce some economically informed principles for loving our actual neighbors well, even while we know that every human person is worthy of our neighborliness.

September 20

Hope from the Dismal Science



Dr. Neil Silveus

science, can help us to understand and anticipate

A call to care for the poor, vulnerable, and marginalized has motivated Christian social action for centuries. Noble intentions, however, even those derived from robust Christian thinking, sadly often do not yield desirable outcomes. Economics, as a primarily descriptive rather than prescriptive social

Adult Education, Cont'd

human behavior in response to policy and circumstance. Combined with Christian ethics, this understanding can complement a Christian vision for justice and mercy. As a case study, Neil Silveus, assistant professor of economics at Hope College, will discuss policies and their impact around incarceration in the United States. We will ask what well-intentioned policies have done and where the dismal science may point us toward hope.

September 27



A Christian Perspective on Poverty and the Welfare State

Dr. Steven McMullen This class, presented by Hope College professor of economics Steven McMullen, will offer a quick overview of poverty trends in the U.S. over the last 50 years, highlighting both the progress that has been made and the challenges that remain. Then, we will explore one way that Christians have thought about economic justice, examining some Reformed thinkers and Biblical texts. Finally, with that account of economic justice in mind, we will examine evidence about the effectiveness of two of our biggest welfare state programs.

October 4 and 11



Why Do People (Sometimes) Do Bad Things in the Name of Religion?

Dr. Steven Hoogerwerf Isn't religion supposed to encourage and inspire people to become better and to do good? In many cases, of course, it has! But there are still some powerful factors that increase the danger of religion and the likelihood of some religious people doing things that could be characterized as "bad." In this course, Steve Hoogerwerf explores some of those factors.

October 4 - Part 1

What do we mean by religion and bad things? Is religion dangerous? We will explore several reasons why it might be dangerous, look at a few historical examples, and explore alternatives that can help maintain its positive function. Topics include the dangers of absolute truth and a monotheistic perspective, blind obedience to religious authority, building religious "walls" and religious exclusivism. We'll look briefly at some historical examples and explore some antidotes to each of these potentially dangerous religious tendencies.

October 11 - Part 2

We will continue to explore some of the factors that contribute to people doing bad things in the name of religion. These include the misuse of sacred texts, notions of Holy War, the idea that the end justifies the means, triumphalism, withdrawal from society and blind obedience to religious authority, and civil religion. We will also identify some ways to avoid these dangerous factors that sometimes encourage people to do bad things in the name of religion.

October 18



Bystanders, Then and Now: Lessons from History

Dr. Victoria J. Barnett The "bystander" question is one of the most haunting issues that emerged from the history of Nazi Germany. How we respond to injustice, violence, and the plight of other people is a challenge to human beings in every age, including our own. Bonhoeffer and Holocaust scholar Victoria Barnett explored this in her book *Bystanders: Conscience and Complicity during the Holocaust*. During this webinar, Barnett will discuss what this means for us today and what we can learn from history. (See the article on page 7.)



Dr. David Ryden

**October 25
and November 1**

**Christian Nationalism:
How Big a Problem for
American Democracy?
For the Church?**

Christian nationalism is seemingly ascendant, associated with events ranging from the January 6, 2021, attack on the

U.S. Capitol to our own backyard, and the brief tenure of the Ottawa Impact control of county government. But what precisely is Christian nationalism? And how does it fit within other historical movements that merged religious and national identity, such as manifest destiny, American exceptionalism, and civil religion? This pair of sessions, presented by Hope College professor of political science David Ryden, will seek to bring greater clarity to the phenomenon of Christian nationalism—what qualifies, how widespread it is, representative national figures, and more. Along the way, we hope to better understand the tensions that especially occur at the intersection of religion, patriotism, and politics in America. Finally how should we as Christians and communities of faith respond?



Rev. Dr. Lynn
Japinga

November 8 and 15

**The RCA Before and During
World War II**

Lynn Japinga presents how the Reformed Church in America (RCA) confronted evil during World War II.

November 8

**Reacting to the First (Great) War and
Resisting the Second**

During the 1920s and 30s, the RCA joined with most other Mainline Protestant denominations and made pronouncements about renouncing war and calling war a sin and refusing to support. Official RCA statements maintained this position until Pearl Harbor. We will explore the dynamics of pacifism (was the RCA really pacifist?) and isolation vs. interventionism.

November 15

The Reality of War

What happened after Pearl Harbor to these ideals? We will explore attitudes toward war and focus on specific examples of chaplains, soldiers, congregations, etc. How did RCA members wrestle with the providence of God during this time?



Nate Magrath

November 22

**Enough for All: Hunger,
Faith, and Our Neighbors
Near and Far**

Nate Magrath of the Alliance to End Hunger, a national coalition working to end hunger at home and abroad, will help us understand the

true scope of hunger and malnutrition—locally in West Michigan, nationally, and globally—and equip us with concrete ways our congregation can respond, both through direct service and effective advocacy. Grounded in scripture and the Alliance's work convening faith communities, nonprofits, companies, and policymakers, this session invites us to consider what "enough for all" asks of us as neighbors.

The Bystander Question: How Could They Let This Happen?

Cindi Veldheer DeYoung

We have stood in the very places where people were put to death, and wondered, “How could they let this happen?”

Bergen-Belsen, in the German woods north of Hannover, perhaps wasn’t intended as a death camp. It started as a prison camp and eventually became a memorial for thousands who died in these woods. At Bergen-Belsen, the primary cause of death was starvation and exposure. In a lovely forest in northern Germany.

In Dachau, a work camp we call a concentration camp, the cause of death often was more direct and intentional: gas chambers.

In Berlin, we saw an oven. We saw memorials of those who had tried to escape East Germany.

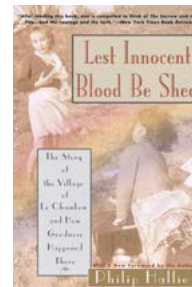
My first trip to Germany was in 1981 as an exchange student; Holland area high school students visited our German counterparts in the Graafschap-Bentheim area of Germany. In 1980, the German students had come for two weeks in the summer. In 1981, the American students went to Germany, stayed in homes scattered around the countryside, and took a bus trip to Berlin. We felt the terror of learning about those who tried crossing from East to West Berlin and were shot. We saw the memorials, the barriers, the armed soldiers standing watch. We felt the deathly, suffocating imposition of The Wall.

In each of those places of death, I said aloud: How could they let this happen? I still wonder, how did this happen? How in the world do people see brutal abuse, smell burning human flesh, watch militarized marches of emaciated people, and stand by? How could someone report on the Anne Frank family only days before the end of the war, leading to her and her family’s eventual departure from the Westerbork transit camp to the concentration camps.

I’ve learned a little more about the “bystander effect.” The psychologists and psychiatrists at Hope Church could bring significant perspective into the questions about bystanders. The medical folks among us, trained to intervene for

emergencies, and those with experience in law enforcement, might all offer perspectives on bystanders and what they can do, and what many people don’t (or won’t) do. We read news stories of government agents taking people, sending them to awful containment centers or countries they’d never known. What can we do?

It’s a complex dynamic. What does intervention look like, and what does it take? What are the ramifications of interrupting, or intervening, and might we consider if our actions could make things worse. Conversely, I wonder if we ever would have the courage to act like many Dutch people did (including my grandparents), hiding and feeding Jewish people from the Nazi soldiers. Or, like French people did as described in *Lest Innocent Blood Be Shed*.



Terry and I visited Berlin in 2023 to see what post-Cold War Berlin was like. It’s an amazing, international, modern city. Besides the shops and bars, gardens and sports arenas, there are museums and markers of history, particularly of the communist era of East Berlin. We visited the Palace of Tears, the Reichstag, and the Dietrich Bonhoeffer House, where our tour was led by an English-speaking German pastor who carefully and respectfully told stories of the Bonhoeffer family and of this house.

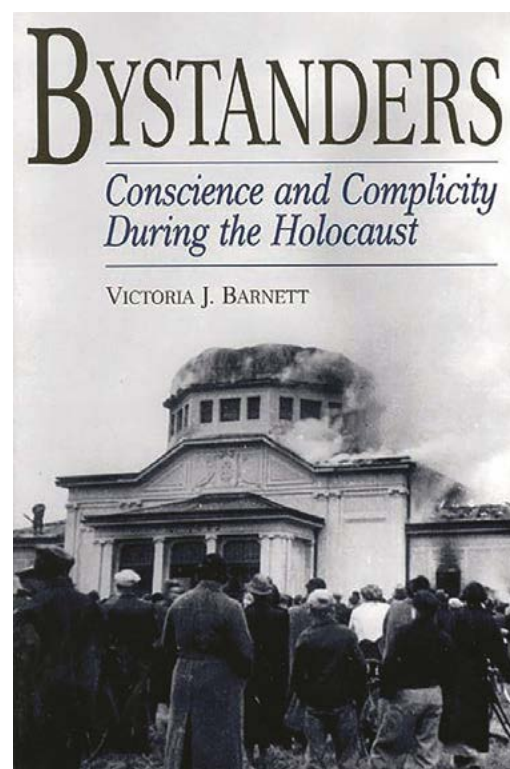
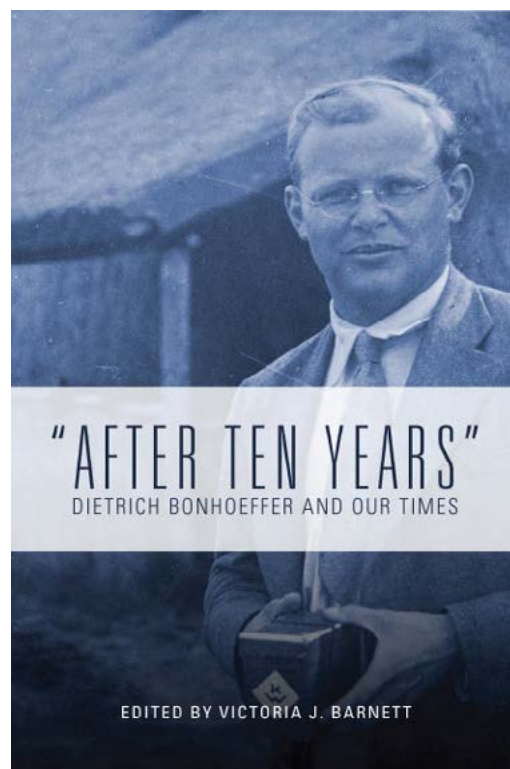
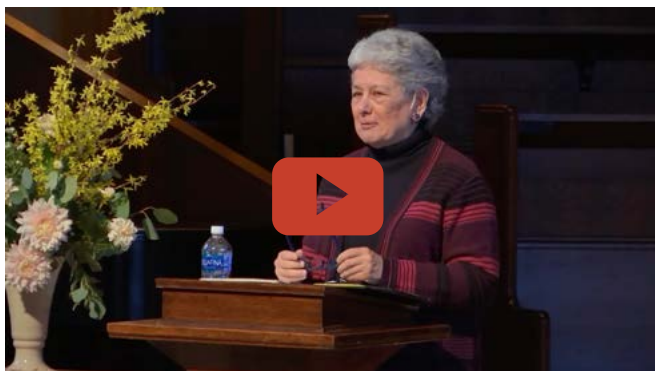
Our experience at the Bonhoeffer House prompted me to learn more about Dietrich Bonhoeffer and about the dynamics of Nazi loyalty. I’ve read a few works related to Bonhoeffer’s life and was particularly captivated by the work of Victoria Barnett. She is a Bonhoeffer scholar and former Director of the Programs on Ethics, Religion, and the Holocaust at the Holocaust Museum in Washington, DC.

Learning from the work of historian Victoria Barnett has significantly complicated my understanding of what it means to be a bystander. She describes the natural questions that arise, as well as the consequences of actions taken by bystanders. Her work has relevance for

people who witness the brutality of ICE; her wisdom reminds us of what is at stake when someone confronts actions that could lead to more damaging repercussions. She is a gracious presenter, a wise historian, and person of faith who teaches about the church, the political and cultural forces affecting people's loyalties and choices.

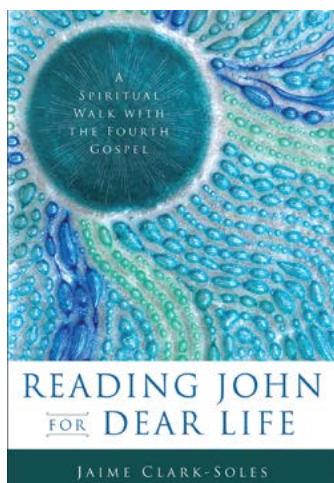
Dr. Barnett's work is an encouragement in our current political environment. She will be the speaker (by Zoom) at Adult Education on Sunday, October 18. In anticipation of her engagement with us, I'd encourage people to read her books (*Bystanders: Conscience and Complicity during the Holocaust*, or a much shorter book: *After Ten Years: Dietrich Bonhoeffer for Our Time*), or to catch a YouTube video of her presentations (here's a good one: [Victoria J. Barnett | Moral Courage in Times of Crisis: Dietrich Bonhoeffer's Insights for Us Today](#)). Of course, if you search Dr. Barnett's background, you'll find many more articles, books, and presentations.

For a taste of her work from the introduction to Bonhoeffer's *After Ten Years*, she writes that Bonhoeffer, like Martin Luther King and Abraham Joshua Heschel, "addressed the specific challenges of their times by speaking to the greater issues at stake. Those issues include the human capacity in all ages for decency, for courage, and for an engagement in political culture that affirms these values and honors human integrity. ...We are summoned to determine what our place in history will be, to think and act beyond our self-interest for the sake of the common good."



Fall Book Study: *Reading John for Dear Life*

Pastor Gordon Wiersma



You're invited to read the Gospel of John with us! And we'll also be reading an excellent little commentary along with the Gospel. Don't tell the other Gospel writers, but the Gospel of John is the favorite of all of the pastors, and we enjoyed the idea of reading and discussing John's Gospel together as a congregation

this fall. John is full of engaging stories, intriguing characters, rich images, and bold theology.

The commentary on John we'll be reading along with the Gospel is a winsome and insightful guide to help engage our minds, hearts, and lives with the Gospel story. *Reading John for Dear Life: A Spiritual Walk with the Fourth Gospel* was written by Jaime Clark-Soles, professor of New Testament and Altshuler Distinguished Teaching Professor at Perkins School of Theology. She serves on the editorial board of the *Journal of Religion and Disability*. As an ordained Baptist minister, she has served in both parish and hospice settings.

About the book, historian, author, theologian, and retired pastor Robert Cornwall says:

This is a book written not for the scholar, but for the person who wants to dive into John and find in it spiritual resources for life and ministry. It's deeply rooted in the author's scholarly pursuits, but it also reflects her spiritual commitments as a Christian scholar. This means that the book is written in an accessible manner....

... Due in part to her commitment to disability studies, Jaime takes special interest in such stories as the man who waits for healing at the pool of Bethesda (chapter 5). She takes note of how John compares and contrasts characters, thus there is a chapter about Nicodemus, who comes to Jesus in the dark of night, and finds it difficult to believe (John 3), which is followed by a chapter

dealing with the Samaritan woman, who meets Jesus in the light of day, and becomes an evangelist. These two stories illustrate the message of light and darkness that are introduced in the prologue and function throughout the Gospel as a central image.

If you are interested in meeting Jesus in the coming year, ...consider meeting him in light of the Gospel of John. Furthermore, I would encourage you to do so in the company of Jaime Clark-Soles, for she understands better than most the historical, the theological, and the spiritual message of John. In her hands, John becomes a message for today's church.

Reading John for Dear Life books will be available for purchase at church in September; sign-up links and sheets will also be available in September. Our meetings will be Tuesday afternoons and evenings through October, from 1:15 – 2:30 p.m. and 6:15 – 7:30 p.m. Both will have light refreshments as we gather. Feel free to switch back and forth between afternoon or evening group times as your schedule allows.

The reading schedule for the four-week study is as follows:

Tuesday, October 6

- Gospel of John: chapters 1-4
- *Reading John for Dear Life*: chapters 1-4

Tuesday, October 13

- Gospel of John: chapters 5-13
- *Reading John for Dear Life*: chapters 5-8

Tuesday, October 20

- Gospel of John: chapters 14-17
- *Reading John for Dear Life*: chapters 9-12

Tuesday, October 27

- Gospel of John: chapters 18-21
- *Reading John for Dear Life*: chapters 13-16

We won't just be reading the Gospel of John, we'll be exploring, learning, wondering, growing together as a community of faith. All are welcome: Join us!

A Hospitable Space for Embodied Worship Practices

Chapel Service Grant

Jackson Nickolay

This past July, Hope Church received some exciting news! In April, the Worship Ministry and the Chapel Planning Team went through the process of discerning and applying for a Vital Worship Grant through Calvin Institute for Christian Worship. The grant is titled “A Hospitable Space for Embodied Worship Practices,” and it is intended to supplement and support the Chapel Service at Hope Church as it continues to grow and find expression in our community. I am pleased and excited to report that our application was accepted, and we will receive the grant in full!

You may be wondering what exactly that grant is for. If so, I'd love to chat about it with you! But first let me explain the title, especially the term “Embodied Worship Practices.”

There are two hopes in using this phrase.

The first is to continue in the good work we have already been doing. Practices like scripture enactment and engaging the word in worship through artistic practice are already hallmarks of the chapel service, and I look forward to seeing them continue to grow and flourish with this grant.

The second is that through these practices—and new ones that we are developing—we hope to continue to add opportunities for our community to worship in connection with our bodies. We are beings of mind, body, and soul, and all facets of ourselves belong in worship. I look forward to continuing to find ways for us to engage embodied worship practices in all areas of worship, and am grateful for the chance to do so with this grant.

So, what should you be keeping an eye out for? Here's a bit of a sneak peek at some of what we're developing.

Prayer Labyrinth

This grant will enable us to obtain a labyrinth prayer mat. Praying through the labyrinth is a practice that focuses and centers your mind, body,



and soul in prayer and enables a sort of pilgrimage while remaining “in one place.”

Artistic Engagement with Scripture

We will continue to respond to the word through art in the Chapel Service, and the grant will enable us to invite guest leaders in to teach us new disciplines and artistic practice in our engagement with the word. We hope that these practices provide a new lens through which to view and be present to God's work in the world.

Artful Hospitality

By engaging the word through art, we will develop art together which will flow into a tapestry (of sorts) for the chapel. This tapestry will reside on the north wall of the Chapel and will reflect both the result of our engaging the word together and the liturgical calendar. We also hope that it will add to the hospitality of the space by absorbing some of the reflective sound elements that can make hearing difficult in the chapel.

There are many more elements and facets to this grant that I hope to see emerge. Keep an eye out over this next year as we learn and grow through this process. And if you're curious, come and see.

This program is made possible through a Vital Worship, Vital Preaching Grant from the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship, Grand Rapids, Michigan, with funds provided by Lilly Endowment Inc.

Connecting with One Another

Welcoming New Members

In the Spring of 2026, these people joined the Hope Church community; we're so happy to welcome them!



Hope Bailey

Born in Holland, Hope spent some of her childhood in the upper peninsula before coming back to Holland. She is working on building a strong foundation for her life, including a right relationship with God, as well as a strong sense of community.



Elizabeth Johnston

Born in Kalamazoo, Elizabeth attended Western Michigan University as a music major. She has five grown children (four daughters and one son), ten grandchildren, and one great-granddaughter. Elizabeth was a "stay-at-home mom" until her youngest started first grade, when she worked at a children's bookstore and Herrick Library. Beyond her family, her interests include writing, music, reading, and enjoying nature.



Steve and Mary Koster

Steve and Mary have enjoyed living on the north side of Holland for over 30 years. Steve is a retired environmental engineer who worked on major development projects across the country, while Mary is a retired nurse and church worship administrator. They have three adult children, all of whom live in West Michigan. They enjoy reading, biking, volunteering, and working on projects in and around the house.



Marlene Moore

Born and raised on Drummond Island, Marlene moved to Holland 29 years ago. She has two daughters, two grandchildren, and two cats. She is retired and enjoys being outdoors in all seasons, whether hiking, snowshoeing, or camping.



Pieter and Amy Norden

From Elgin, Illinois, and Dublin, Ohio, respectively, Amy and Pieter met as students at Hope College and began a relationship during Amy's senior year and Pieter's first year of graduate school. After dating long distance, they wed at Dimnent Chapel in 2015. Following a tenure in Chicago, they moved back to West Michigan in 2021 and moved to Holland ten months later. Amy works at TEKsystems and Pieter at the Van Andel Research Institute. Outside of work, they enjoy the outdoors: golf, our beautiful lakeshore, and getting out on the water.



John and Becky Patrick

John and Becky are both retired former administrators for the State of Michigan. They moved to Allendale in 2018 after living in Lansing and the Big Rapids area. They came to Hope Church because of its clear statements regarding room for all, living out the gospel in matters of justice, and helping all to thrive.



Robert Selig & Barbara Springer Selig

Robert and Barb spent their careers in education, research, and writing: Robert continues to work and Barb does so on a very part-time basis. They have three adult children, one granddaughter, and another on the way. They were drawn to Hope Church because of the acceptance of all people, female leadership, and emphasis on social justice and creation care, values that they share and support.



Nathan Slauer and Meg Schmidt and Evan

Meg and Slauer join Hope Church with their two-year-old son, Evan. Meg and Nathan moved to Holland from Grand Rapids during COVID and have stayed ever since! Meg works remotely as a senior art director with Harper Collins Christian Publishing and is interested in all things books, arts, and film. Nathan works as the Director of Advancement for Good Samaritan, which helps relieve housing and poverty issues in the area.

Patricia and Mike Stewart

Patricia and Mike are retired human resources professionals who share a passion for social justice and personal, physical, and spiritual growth. They enjoy spending time with their two grown boys in Chicago and Washington, DC, and trying to keep up with their goldendoodle Hattie Mae.



Hilary Wilson

Hilary grew up in Holland attending Hope Church. She felt God's comforting grace and loving awareness as her mother, Kim, entered hospice care. Since then, Hilary has been navigating her life to be closer to God and her innermost self, a journey that led to a return to Hope Church. Hilary enjoys solitude to pray, meditate and write. She loves to spend time with friends and family talking, laboring, and dancing. Hilary lives in Grand Rapids with a handful of easygoing plants and her beloved and affectionate cat, Luna Satellite.



Stan Witteveen and Kit Janssen Leggett

Stan and Kit met singing in a church choir many years ago and have been members of the Holland Chorale for seventeen years. They really enjoy being a part of the Hope Church choir. They are active members of the Holland Academy of Senior Professionals (HASP) and traveling to national parks, of which Grand Teton National Park is their favorite. Kit is a Hope alumna, and Stan earned his degree at the University of Michigan. Their four wonderful grandsons live in Sarasota, Florida, Phoenix, Arizona, and Asheville, North Carolina.

The Great Kalamazoo River Adventure of 2026

Jackson Nickolay



The youth retreat for this past summer was an adventure! A small but mighty group of young folks gathered, and we drove down to the Fennville area for a day trip kayaking on the Kalamazoo River.

The theme for the day was “Where Did I Notice God Today?” One of the many ways to pray is with our eyes open, receiving the world around us as filled with the presence of God. We were encouraged to notice how we saw God in the creation around us, how we saw God in our friends and neighbors, and how we heard God speaking to our own hearts as we went through the day.

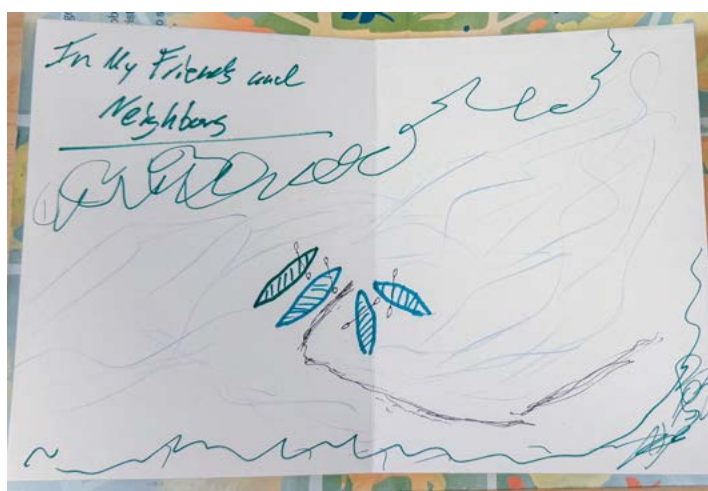
There was plenty of creation to witness God in! We had a beautiful day, and the slow pace of the lazy river allowed for plenty of time to notice. We saw herons, songbirds, eagles, dragonflies, and the occasional far-too-big spider. We overcame challenges together, paddling (and occasionally hiking) upriver and even the self-imposed challenge of seeing how long we could drift

downriver as a raft of kayaks without paddling (we made it an hour).

Speaking for myself, I heard God remind me the importance of spending time in nature. There is a grounding and a centering quality to being amongst the trees and moving at the pace of a river that invites me toward a deeper presence and awareness of God who is always over, under, on my left, and on my right.

I was grateful to hear our young folks reflect on the experience and have the chance to see their prayers as we drew our responses into prayer books for each of the individual noticings of the day before returning for ice cream and games as the day drew to a close.

The Great Kalamazoo River Adventure of 2026 was a delight! I expect it won't be long before we return for another adventure and another chance to notice God's presence in creation, in our friends and neighbors, and in our own hearts.



The Difference 45 Minutes Can Make

Vicki Rumpsa, Kids Hope Director

Forty-five minutes?

Yes, that's all it takes to make the difference in the life of a school-aged child. Kids Hope has proven that when a mentor signs up to meet with a student at a local school, the 45 minutes spent together each week throughout the school year is not only the student's highlight of the week; the student's behaviour in the classroom, school attendance, and reading ability all increase. They feel noticed and cared for and are truly amazed that this new adult in their life shows up at school just for them.

So you can make a difference in 45 minutes? Yes, you can, and here's how it happens.

First, check out the Kids Hope Bulletin Board in the Gathering Area. There are brochures for you to take as well as articles that testify to the success and wide-ranging impact of Kids Hope. You'll also find a sign-up sheet so you can show your interest in hearing more about being a Kids Hope Mentor or Prayer Partner.

I'll contact you, as Hope Church's Director for the Kids Hope Program here. I'll provide more information and answer your questions. If you decide to become either a Mentor or Prayer Partner, training will be provided, as well as a visit to Vanderbilt Academy, the school at which our church provides mentors. After being introduced to your student, you will begin meeting with your

The Difference 45 Minutes Can Make, Cont'd



student each week for 45 minutes. You choose the day and time you meet according to your availability and the teacher's schedule. If there is a week or more you cannot commit to during the school year there are substitute mentors available, so do not hesitate signing up because you think you are gone too much.

How is your time spent with your assigned student? This is not a tutoring program. Kids Hope believes in relationship building as the main focus of your time together. You'll do this by spending time conversing back and forth, possibly doing a project together or playing a game, or maybe a visit to the gym or a walk outside. Occasionally, a teacher may send along a worksheet to finish or you may decide to read a book together, but how the time is spent is up to you. An activity bag is provided for you to use each week if you want ideas for what to do; you'll also have access to a game cabinet with choices of games and a shelf full of books for pleasure reading.

What's especially exciting about choosing to be a member starting this fall is that our church is responsible for mentors for first graders just entering the program. This age is so eager to please and gets so excited just to see you. You may be able to mentor the same child throughout their elementary school years and witness the

progress being made in their self-confidence from year to year. The rewards are great, both for them and you. As one of our mentors puts it, "I can't imagine a better 45 minutes spent than in making a difference in the life of a child." You will feel the difference, too.

A couple more notes: If you have been a mentor in the past, you'll only need an update and not a full training. I can arrange to meet with you at your convenience to get you up to date. For those new to Kids Hope, the training can be accessed online or we can meet in person. Kids Hope has streamlined this training over the years, and it's both easy and informative. If you decide to be a Prayer Partner, you will be assigned a mentor to pray for. This part of the Kids Hope overall program lays the groundwork (or, I should say, heaven work) for the success of Kids Hope and is a way to become a valuable part of the mission. There are over a hundred Hope Church members who have been involved in our Kids Hope program at Hope Church over the past 23 years, and I'd love to see some of you return.

So, 45 minutes? Yes! Come join us this school year and make a difference in the life of a child who needs you. May God bless you as you discern whether you are called to this ministry.



Solar Panels Reducing Emissions, Cutting Expenses

The solar panels on Hope Church's rooftops resulted from the work of the Creation Care Ministry, which formed a Carbon Footprint Team in early 2024. After a detailed tour of the facility, they compiled utility bills to calculate our carbon footprint, which turned out to be 223 tons of CO₂ annually.

A transition to carbon-free electrical supply was the first step recommended as achievable and dramatically effective. Approved by Consistory in August 2025, the solar project, achieved with Chart House Energy, was installed throughout the winter, sometimes delayed by the severe weather.

Our solar array was celebrated and commissioned on April 26, 2026, going live that same month. After a full quarter's operation, Hope Church has achieved these results, as reported by Creation Care member Dawn Boelkins:

Picture this: The carbon footprint subcommittee wrestled with how to describe to the congregation the amount of CO₂ our church plant expelled into the atmosphere. Peter Boogaart

helpfully described it as equivalent to five Asian elephants.

In the first month after the solar array went live, we reduced our emissions by 77.6K pounds of carbon—in one month. That's the equivalent of 586 trees planted. Picture this after one year: a rolling forest of trees.

COMPARISON OF BILLING APRIL 22 TO MAY 22

2025		2026		
HBPW (kWh)	HBPW Bill	Solar (MWH)	HBPW (kWh)	HBPW Bill
12,400	\$1,326.73	15.8	7,280	\$656.74

The May electricity bill was cut in half! Rumor has it that spontaneous dancing broke out in the office when the May bill arrived. Maybe don't picture that.

With a consultant's help, we are navigating the many forms for the 2026 IRS tax credits for our solar array. Picture this: Between the two direct payments, we should receive a 40-percent refund of our \$272,554 investment: a whopping \$109,000.

The dancing then will be congregation wide!

Meditation on Legacy, Continued

Bob Jerow

Part one of Bob's meditations on his visit to The Legacy Museum, in Montgomery, Alabama, was published in the Summer 2026 issue of *Salt & Light*. He concluded that essay by pondering both his experience at the museum and the Hope Church Anti-Racism Statement, adopted in 2024. The juxtaposition made him ask, "What's next?"

I ended the first part of this journey with the question: Where does this leave me and us now? The most powerful emotion and thought I had as I left The Legacy Museum was of the imperative for reparations. I don't know what that word means, and likely it is better defined by the victims as opposed to one who benefited, however unwittingly, by the system of inequality that bigotry created. In this second installment, I would like to use history to make the case for reparations more clearly. I will share some observations and conclude with a few resources for further study. We all must choose our level of engagement.

As I was leaving the Legacy Museum, I had in mind the two million Africans who died on the Atlantic journey. How many slaves died during the years of slavery up to 1865, I wondered? I was not surprised that this number has proved to be difficult to access. In general, studies suggest that the number is somewhere between 450,000 and 800,000. It's essential to acknowledge that any calculation oversimplifies the issue, given the lack of hard data and the incentive at the time to hide those numbers from the public. So now we have a number around two million, and say five hundred thousand.

I thought of the plight of the freedmen in the winter of 1865 following the end of the Civil War. The intentional agricultural devastation left by the Union Army, the abandonment of their plantations by owners fleeing before the Union Army, and an unusually harsh winter saw the death of thousands of former slaves from starvation and exposure. The US Census Bureau in 1860 counted roughly 4 million slaves. One attempt by Dr. Allison Witz published in *Medium* put the number of deaths that winter at one quarter of those alive at the end of the war. That would put the number at one

million and our final number at 3.5 million deaths from the slave-based economy.

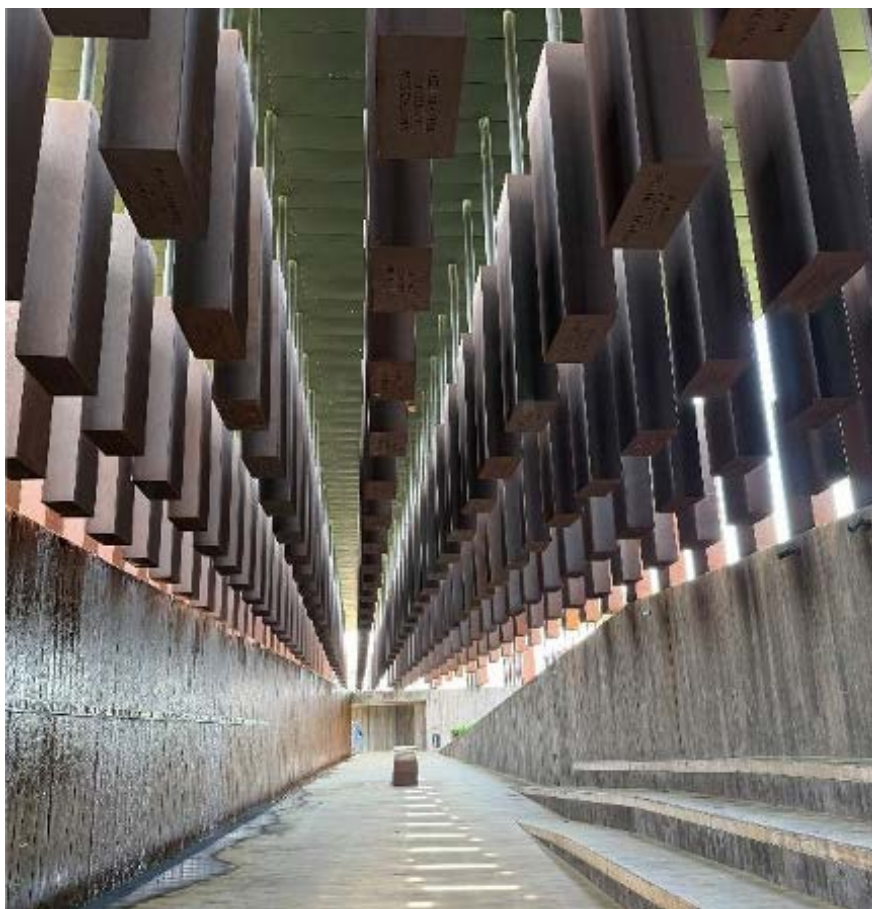
Add an additional 4,000 Black Americans who have been lynched since that time and the intentional trauma inflicted on families and communities. Understand that the number does not include all the dehumanizing behavior short of death to which Black Americans have been subjected. In the words of Ta-Nehisi Coates, "The essence of American racism is disrespect."

As I left the museum, I was thinking of how during and after the Civil War, the US government actively engaged in giving [Native American] land in the West to white, European immigrants; at the same time, the Freedmen were baited with the promise of forty acres and a mule. That promise, which never came to be, was dropped at the direction of President Andrew Johnson, who sought to return the land to the white plantation owners, thus ushering in the era of sharecropping, servitude by another name.

Which brings me back to that discomfiting idea of reparations. What got me started thinking was this number, 3.5 million. Looking for a comparable number in history, my mind goes to the number of Jews who died in the Holocaust. At the end of World War II, how did European and American societies respond? Did we face that truth? Has there been a comparable response to the death and destruction wrought by slavery, as the Nuremberg Trials were to the Holocaust? There are no statues of Hitler in Germany, yet we find statues to Confederate generals here in America; until recently, we named military bases after those who fought for the right to enslave others. Are these differences the product of our failure to search for and confront the truth of our past? Is that failure to confront the truth of our past the product of the false narrative that continues to this day—that Black Americans are not worthy, are not equal? Is this, as Dr. King noted, the check marked "insufficient funds" that Black Americans have been handed? So much time has passed, so much "compound interest," where do we start? Bryan Stevenson would have us begin by the truth telling of our American Legacy.



(Above) Among the Legacy Sites is the Annex, a building that was once a slave-holding warehouse. It is just around the corner from the square in front of the Alabama state capital, where slaves were sold at auction. Within the Annex is an exhibit of mason jars, each filled with dirt from a site where a Black American had been lynched. The dirt was gathered by one of the deceased's descendants.



(Left) The National Memorial for Peace and Justice, is a large installation of funerary steles. Each of the steles represents a state, a county, and the names and dates of the lynchings in that location. One begins walking at the top, walking down until the steles are well above one's head.

Meditation on Legacy, Continued



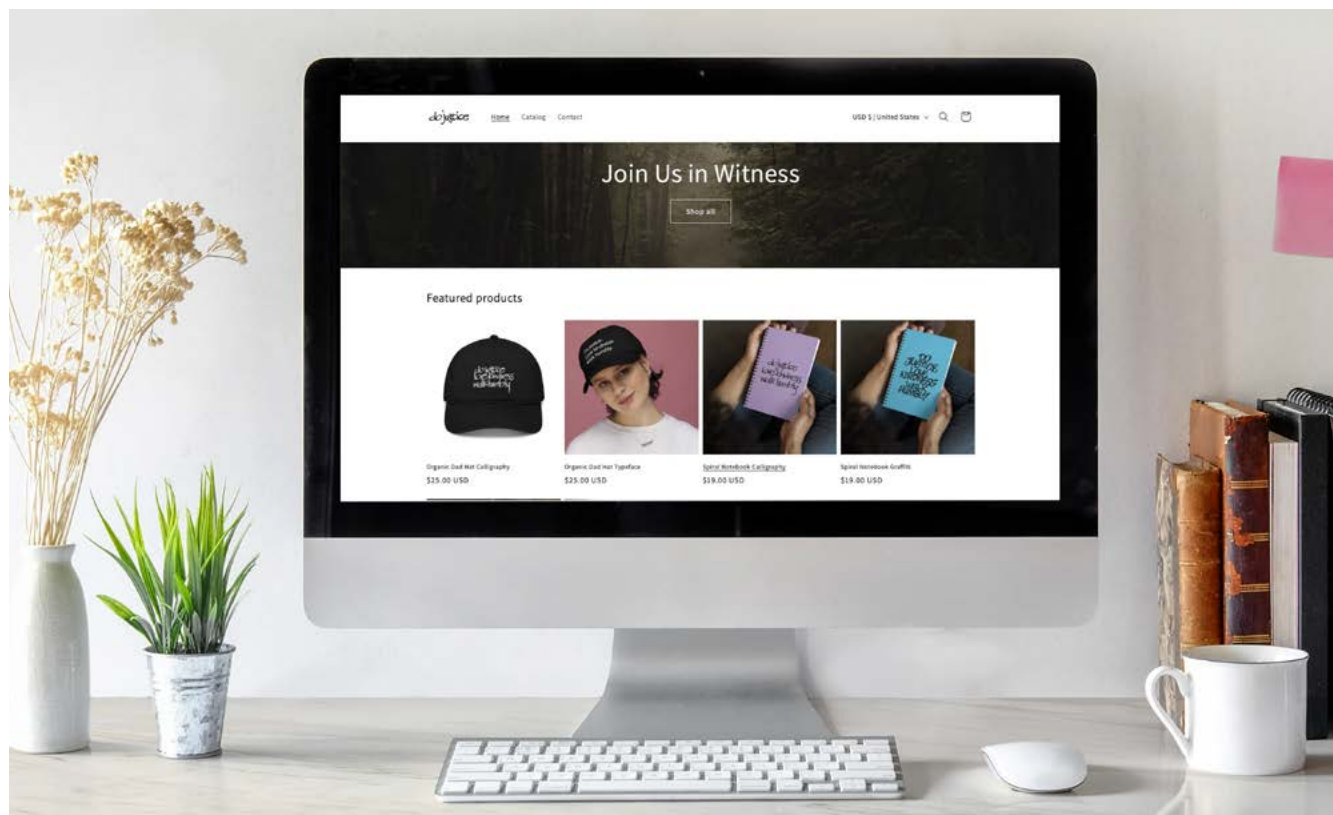
Two more recent additions to the Legacy Sites are the Freedom Monument Sculpture Park and Montgomery Square, an exhibit dedicated to the Montgomery Bus Boycott.

As we continue to confront the truth and consider what comes next, I offer these suggestions. This list is not comprehensive, but provides a starting point for those who would like to learn more.

- SlaveVoyages.org provides data and interactive tools to better understand the extent and the dynamics of the slave trade.
- Listen to a [Terry Gross “Fresh Air” interview](#) with human rights lawyer Bryan Stevenson, “Bryan Stevenson Says Facing Our Racist Past is a Path, Not a Punishment.”
- The Equal Justice Initiative offers history and information about [The Legacy Sites](#). There’s plenty of guidance to plan a visit.
- The [Momentum Center](#) offers a Civil Rights Road Trip by bus each spring that includes the Legacy Sites in Montgomery, Birmingham, Selma, and Memphis. Hope Church members Patti Brink and Betsy Snider have taken the trip and are willing to share and answer questions.
- Author and journalist Ta-Nehisi Coates wrote “The Case for Reparations” in *The Atlantic* dated March 22, 2016.
- The Reverend Nontombi Naomi Tutu, Desmond Tutu’s daughter, was involved in the South African Truth Commission. Connect with her interviews and writing at her [website](#).

Sharing the Message of Micah 6:8

Lois Maassen and Brad MacLean



In early 2023, in the midst of local and county political discord, some Hope Church members discussed their unease with the rise of Christian nationalism. We lamented the “claiming” of the Christian identity by voices that also preached judgment and exclusion. How could we, we wondered, assert our Christian faith publicly?

We decided to focus on the essence of Micah 6:8, conveyed in just six words: “Do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly.” “We wanted,” says Lois Maassen, “to present this call in a way that would engage people who share our faith, people of other faiths, and people of no faith. We believe there are many of us who share the values of justice, kindness, and humility.”

With some stops and starts along the way, a small team investigated online resources that could print on demand, so that we wouldn’t have to guess about inventories. We hoped for national reach, so that our friends across the country could join us in witness. The stars—also known as volunteer and staff capacity—have aligned, and **DoJustice.shop** is now live, offering apparel items, hats, notebooks, and other items. Note that “print

on demand” means “made to order,” so your goods may arrive at a more leisurely pace than you’ve come to expect from online shopping.

Proceeds, in the near term, will recoup set-up expenses; this effort is intended to be entirely nonprofit. When the store is consistently covering its monthly expenses, the team plans to implement a profit-sharing program to support local and global nonprofits.

Thanks to the initial team, which included, in addition to Brad and Lois, Michael Kolk and Chris Wiers, for doing the leg- and design work to get us moving, Justin Lambers for making the administrative connections for us, Pastor Gordon and Pastor Gretchen for happily placing test orders, and Brad for tenacity in getting us actually to the launch finish line.

“We’ve done this in the spirit of experimentation,” says Brad, “so we don’t know what the future holds for the project. In the meantime, we’re happy to see orders coming in from members of Hope Church and beyond, and look forward to seeing this message of faith out and about in our community.”

Coloring Corner

