

In Touch with *Hope*

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF HOPE CHURCH

SEPTEMBER 2026

James Runcorn, D. Min.

Lead Pastor

The Best Northwest Iowa Podcast

If you haven't heard of the "Hodgepodge Theology" podcast, I'm here to brighten your day with a glimmer of joy! Maybe you're not a podcast kind of person... Maybe silly, fun, deep-dive, conversational engagement sounds great, but you didn't realize it could be found in a podcast.

Well, right here in Northwest Iowa (Spencer to be exact) comes the "Greatest podcast of all time" (according to James' 9-year-old, Josiah). To add further credibility, this quote is phenomenal, "It is the NUMBER ONE podcast in North America (on James' personal playlist)."

Maybe "religious" topics have scared you off in the past. James & Eric bring the conversation of God and faith into everyday life - AND - they invite you in as more than just a listener. They invite you in as a friend.

Check it out & let me know your thoughts. Have a great day!



You can find HPT at
www.hodgepodgetheology.com
or on Spotify or on Apple Podcasts.

*Our Mission is to
Gather, Equip, and
Grow in Christ.*

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CHILDREN AND FAMILIES



Julia Andela

Director of Children and Families Ministries

Sunday School started August 23. If your child(ren) haven't tried Sunday School, we'd love for them to check it out! No pre-registration is necessary – stop by the check-in stations to get started. If you have any questions, contact Julia at jandela@spencerhope.org. Please note: there is no Sunday School September 6 due to holiday weekend.

SUNDAY SCHOOL

We offer Sunday School at 9:45 am for kids age 3 to 5th Grade. **Preschool** (3 years old to Kinderkids) is a time of age-appropriate worship, Bible teaching, snacks and crafts and is located off the main hallway across from the nursery. **Elementary** (Kindergarten to 5th Grade) is in the Harbor Basement where students learn age-appropriate Bible teaching and applications through worship, games, crafts, small group discussions and more.

CHILDREN'S CHURCH

Children's Church is offered during both services for kids age 3 to Kinderkids. Kids are dismissed mid-way through the service for a time of age-appropriate worship, learning and play. Children's Church is located off the main hallway, across from the nursery.

If you're child is staying for Sunday School, they don't need to be picked up from the first service Children's Church. They will transition into Sunday School.

COLOR STATION

Sometimes having something in hand helps students learn better. There are activity sheets, color sheets and student sermon guides, along with colored pencils and crayons for kids to use during our worship services. The color station is located in the hallway outside the Sanctuary for kids preschool through elementary.

NURSERY

The Nursery is available for babies and toddlers (newborn to 2 years old) during worship services and Sunday School with age-appropriate play and learning with certified volunteers. It is located in the main hallway between the Lobby & Harbor. A mother's room is available off the nursery for nursing mothers.





YOUTH



Jay Van Gelder

Youth Pastor

Sept 9 = 30 Years of Youth Ministry: A Journey of Faith, Love, and Memories

Thirty years of youth ministry has been humbling and incredibly special in seeing how God has shown up in my life and that He has more planned than I could have ever imagined (Ephesians 3:20,21). God's faithfulness in walking alongside a Pig Farmer back in 1996 as I took a step of faith, scared to death, and jumped into my first job of becoming a Youth Pastor in Arizona. As I celebrate 30 years of serving in youth ministry, I find myself looking back with a heart full of gratitude (if you know me, it makes me tear up). What began as a nerve-racking step of faith, being the last person that thought I could do it, having so many people telling me they saw something in me, has become one of the greatest blessings and privileges of my life.

I have had the opportunity to meet thousands of students, walk through different seasons of life with them, laugh with them, cry with them, pray with them, encourage them, and sometimes simply be there when they needed someone to listen and give them a hug after. I have watched young people accept Christ as their own, take next steps to grow in their faith journey, and discover who God created them to be. It is with great joy to see them become incredible adults, parents, leaders, servants and use their God given gifts in the church. Culture has changed over time, but the purpose has remained the same, to help young people know and experience God, remind them they are loved by God, that their lives have a purpose, and that they matter.

Youth ministry has never been just about programs, work project trips, crazy games, or events (even though those have been a blast at times). Those things create memories, and stories we talk about, but the real ministry happens in the one-on-one relationships. It happens in conversations before and after youth group, Chick-Fil-A in the parking lot, prayers through texts, late-night talks before lights out, going to wash cattle at the farm, and those moments when a student realizes they are not alone in life. It has been an incredible privilege to be part of those moments with so many of the youth that have come through the ministry programs that I have gotten to lead.

There have also been difficult times where Satan tried to distract or stop God working; when I wondered if what I was doing was making a difference, when I felt inadequate or incapable to help students, when they needed someone to sort difficult situations out, and the biggest struggle when it would be easier on my heart if I just did not care so deeply. But again and again, God reminded me in all of those times that I may not always see the impact right there in that moment, but HE is bigger. Sometimes the greatest reward is hearing from someone years later who says, "You probably don't remember this, but do you remember...that really meant a lot to me."

As I remember back over 30 years, I celebrate what God has allowed me to be a part of. I am so thankful of the many Youth Staff people (sponsors) that I have had the privilege to work with along the way. They are truly my best friends, every youth student, every family, both churches that I have served, and every person who has walked alongside me during this journey. Most of all, I am thankful to God for trusting me with the incredible responsibility of investing in the lives of young people.

Thirty years later, my heart still loves students. I still believe they matter. I still believe they have a purpose. And I still believe that one conversation, one prayer, one invitation, or one person willing to care for them, God can use to change a life.

Here's to 30 years of memories, relationships, lessons, laughter, tears, answered prayers, and countless moments where God has shown up in incredibly ways. I am incredibly grateful for the journey—and excited to see what God has in store for the years ahead.

DATES TO REMEMBER

WEEKLY

PRAYER & PRAISE

Wednesdays (starts 9/9) 6:00 pm

SENIOR HIGH YOUTH GROUP

Sundays

Freshmen 5:00 pm

Sr High: 10-12th Grade 7:00 pm

MIDDLE SCHOOL YOUTH GROUP

Wednesdays

6th Grade 5:30 pm

7th Grade 6:30 pm

8th Grade 7:30 pm

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 1

Bethesda Christian Counseling 10:00 am

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 2

Mid Week Service 6:00 pm

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 6

No Sunday School due to holiday weekend

2nd Membership Class 9:45 am

Women's Bible Study starts 9:45 am

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 7

Church Closed for Labor Day

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 9

Feed Our Children starts 5:30 pm

Prayer & Praise starts 6:00 pm

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 10

Consistory 7:00 pm

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 13

Adult Sunday School starts 9:45 am

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 15

Bethesda Christian Counseling 10:00 am

Prayers & Squares Quilting 1:00 pm

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 21

Missions Team 7:00 pm

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 26

Operation Christmas Child 10:00 am

Informational Meeting

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 27

Church in the Backyard at the Runcorn's home 10:00 am

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 29

Bethesda Christian Counseling 10:00 am

CONSISTORY

There was no meeting in July.

CONCERNS FOR

Please continue to lift up the following people and families in prayer:

The following as they navigate their cancer journeys

- Keith Fliss
- Carl Johnson
- Hannah Dibble
- Cindy Fliss
- Chery Haden

- Paul and Linda Abrahamson - healing for Paul and adjustment to new living situations for both of them
- Stacey Hoffrichter - health concerns



WEEKLY BIBLE STUDIES

If you've been looking for a Bible study, you are invited to join any of these!

MONDAYS

Men's Morning (Well) 8:00 am

Men's Evening (Well) 7:00 pm

WEDNESDAYS

Women's Morning (Nursery) 9:00 am

Women's Evening (Grace) 6:30 pm

SUNDAYS

Women's (Well) 9:45 am

Adults - Starts 9/13 (Grace) 9:45 am

LIBRARY



What's all the hype? If you are a reader, you've probably heard of "Theo of Golden." Allen Levi is a Christian of strong faith who wrote a first book blockbuster "Theo of Golden." While he doesn't address questions of heaven in his book he does write of kindness, acceptance and forgiveness. It's an amazing book that many readers are turning to because of its clean and well written content. I haven't heard of one person that has read it that doesn't love it. We purchased it for our library and it's available for checkout this week.

Don't forget to check out our "back to school" highlighted shelf; pick up a book for yourself and one for your child. Remember: Even 15-20 minutes of reading a day can make a meaningful difference. Reading for pleasure—not just assigned school reading—is especially valuable because it helps children see books as something enjoyable rather than simply another school requirement.



WORSHIP

Eric Meeter
Worship/Tech Director

Reclaiming The Ancient Practice of Rhythms and Celebrations

John 15 says. "I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing." Other translations use the word abide in me and I in you. So the question is how do we more deeply abide in Christ, the vine, with all of the distractions around us? For over the last millennia this has been answered in one way through the use of the historical church calendar, otherwise referred to as the liturgical calendar.

When we think of liturgy, for some of you that may bring back bad feelings, or thoughts of boring traditions, but we need to reclaim those thoughts and see the beauty that can be found in liturgy. The original word Liturgy is formed from the Greek words "laos" which means "the people" and "ergon" which means "to work" so put together it simply means "the work of the people"

Originally in Scripture liturgy referred to the service of sacrifices in the temple, but as highlighted in Hebrews, Jesus, being our new high priest has obtained a more excellent liturgy. I think of liturgy as our response and connection to the work Christ is doing in us. One of the ways that our church practices liturgy is in our music. Together we are of one mind, singing one set of words which reminds us of who Christ is, all the while being encouraged and edified by those around us. But singing is only one of the beautiful "works of the people" that we have been given to connect with the Life of Christ.

Over the next nine months we're going to do a deep dive into the liturgical church calendar and ask, what are some things that we can reclaim? What works of the people can we utilize on a more regular basis to keep us connected to the Life of Christ?



***I want to personally invite you to join us the first Wednesday of every month** in the sanctuary for a time of worship, a time of equipping through study, and a time of prayer. Growing the "works of the people" so we can abide in Him and bear much fruit.*



PRAYER and PRAISE

Prayer and Praise will resume September 9 and will meet every Wednesday in the Lobby, with the exception of the first Wednesday of each month when we will have our Midweek Service.

Prayer & Praise is a time when we gather together as a church family to seek God, give Him thanks, and lift up the needs of others. We pray for the needs of our church, our members and their families, our community, and our world. It is also an opportunity to share praises and celebrate the ways we have seen God working in our lives. Through prayer, encouragement, and fellowship, we draw closer to God and to one another. We hope you and your family will join us each Wednesday at 6:00 pm.

MISSIONS

Many Hands for Haiti is busy! Although the store in Spencer, IA closed, a new thrift store has opened in the Jordan Creek area of Des Moines. The new store has been overwhelmed with donations of used clothing and household goods which provide a steady stream of support to efforts in the Pignion area in Haiti and Abaco in the Bahamas.

The Haiti operations led by Spencer natives Craig and Christi Gabhart, have advanced in structure, caring culture, and efficient operations. Four care centers are managed from the main site continue to provide spiritual and physical nourishment in the communities they serve. Local leadership development and spiritual growth also are key components in the areas served.

Home construction after the devastating Hurricane Dorian in 2019, continues to be a focus of activity in Abaco Caye, Bahamas. Many Hands for Haiti reaches out to provide physical and spiritual help to local Bahamians as well as a large population of Haitian illegal immigrants on the Caribbean Island. Two Hope Church members plan to be on a short-term missions team to Abaco with Many Hands for Haiti in October. A second group of Spencer residents, including members from Hope Church, plan to be the first missions team back into Haiti January 27 to Feb 5. Preparations are being made to allow teams back into Haiti and Hope Church has a long list of church members who have been to Haiti on short-term missions trips.



The Gabharts are supported by Hope Reformed Church but you can also support these local missionaries directly.

Visit www.MH4H.org to donate to the Gabharts.

Save the Date!

CHURCH IN THE BACKYARD

Sunday, September 27
10:00 am
at the Runcorn's

2051 358th Street • Spencer

WHAT TO BRING

A lawn chair or blanket and a side (see below for specifics).

PARKING & TRANSPORTATION

Empty lots are available for parking. Look for people directing where to park. We will also have golf carts available to transport you to the backyard.

COFFEE

We will have coffee available.

BAPTISM

We will be doing baptism in the river for anyone who would like to be baptized. If the river is too low, we will have a tank available. Bring a towel and a change of clothes.

POTLUCK LUNCH FOLLOWING SERVICE

The main course, water and coffee will be provided.

Please bring a side based on your last name.

If your last name starts with:

- A - Q - Bring a salad
(greens, pasta, jello, fruit, meat)
- R - Z - Bring a dessert
(bars, cake, cookies, pie)

OPERATION CHRISTMAS CHILD



Prayer & Volunteers Needed

What if one of the most powerful ways you could help a child hear about Jesus is simply to pray?

Operation Christmas Child is preparing for another season of sharing the Gospel through shoe box gifts — and behind every shoe box is a child, a family, a community, and an opportunity for God to change lives.

Hope Church has been blessed with an expanded role in this year's process. Not only will we be collecting our own shoe boxes from our own congregation, but we will also serve as a Spencer and Clay County collection site.

I am looking for men and women who feel called to serve a few hours as a volunteer or who feel called to stand in the gap through prayer for the children, families, churches, volunteers, and ministry teams engaged in this mission.

Would you consider joining my Operation Christmas Child Prayer Team?

You don't need special training or a lot of extra time. I simply need people who are willing to pray faithfully and specifically. Together, we will pray for:

- Open doors for the Gospel and hearts prepared to receive it.
- Children who receive shoe boxes to encounter the love of Jesus.
- Churches and community groups catch the vision for evangelism and discipleship.
- Volunteers and ministry teams to have wisdom, strength, unity, and encouragement.
- Safety and protection for everyone involved in collecting, processing, transporting, and distributing shoe boxes.
- The Greatest Journey discipleship program and the children who choose to follow Jesus.
- New believers to boldly share Christ with their families and friends.
- God to raise up people of peace, and open doors in communities that have not yet heard the Gospel.

Your prayer matters. Every shoe box represents an opportunity, but prayer prepares the way for the Gospel to go forth.

Jesus said in Matthew 9:37–38, *"The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore, pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send laborers into His harvest."*

Let's cover this entire ministry in prayer and trust God to do what only He can do — transform lives for eternity through the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Additional Volunteer Opportunities

Beyond the prayer team, we also need hands-on help this season:

- **Coordinator Meeting Sat. Sept. 26** — All interested volunteers welcome, especially those interested in helping to coordinate our church wide efforts.
- **Lobby Table** — Help staff a table in the church lobby between services for a few Sundays in October to share information about packing shoe boxes.
- **Crate Pickup** — Drive to Sioux City to pick up empty crates used to store and transport shoe boxes.
- **Collection Week, Nov. 16-22** — Serve during our shoe box collection week receiving boxes from surrounding churches. Volunteers are needed for 2-hour shifts, daily, for one week at Hope Church. Shifts will be varied.
- **Shoe Box Delivery, Monday, Nov. 23** — Drive loaded shoe boxes from Hope Church in Spencer to the collection center in Sioux City. (To arrive in Sioux City before noon.)

There's a role for everyone — whether you're called to pray, or you have a few hours to give in person!



If you're interested in volunteering, please contact Ruth Rodie @ 480-793-9634 or rkaterodie@gmail.com.

Thank you for helping bring the joy of Christmas to children around the world!



919 Grand Avenue
Spencer, IA 51301
(712)262-3016
hrc@spencerhope.org

Worship Services

SUNDAYS: 8:30 am and 10:45 am

Live-streamed online:
www.youtube.com/hopechurchspencer

Sunday School

SUNDAYS: 9:45 am

Hope Church Staff

James Runcorn, Lead Pastor

Jay Van Gelder, Youth Pastor

Julia Andela, Director of Children & Family Ministries

Eric Meeter, Worship/Tech Director

Michael Fujimoto, Facilities Director

Jill Lowe, Office Administrator

Abbey Fujimoto, Media Specialist

Tim Yeager, Maintenance

Levi Morris, Treasurer

Missy Lair, Nursery Coordinator

