

in touch with Hope

monthly newsletter of Hope Church, Spencer, IA

November, 2018

by Pastor Russell Muilenburg

A Story of Skeletons and Zombies (or at least, dead bodies rising from the grave)

One of my favorite Bible stories is found in Ezekiel 37. It's a story that seems appropriate for Halloween.

Ezekiel reports that he was carried by the Spirit of the Lord out into a valley. It is a strange valley. Apparently it was the site of a great battle, some years past, and nobody had bothered to collect the bodies of the losers. And so, as Ezekiel picks his way through the valley, he finds it is littered with bones. A femur here, a humerus there. There a rib cage, and over there a skull. An entire army, in skeletal repose.

Then God asks Ezekiel an odd question: "Tell me, Ezekiel, can these bones live?" The obvious answer is "No." But Ezekiel remembers who is asking the question, and so he says: "O Sovereign Lord, you alone know." In other words, if it were up to me these bones are nothing but dust; but since God is involved, strange things might happen...

And indeed they do. God instructs Ezekiel to start preaching, and as he does, the bones begin to rattle and shake. They start to join together. Tendons and flesh begin to appear. Muscles and organs come into place. A covering of skin overlays it all. In front of Ezekiel's very eyes an army of dead soldiers appears.

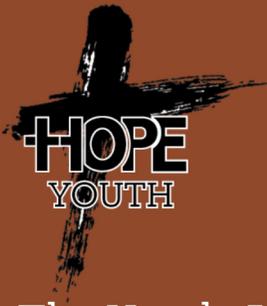
And yet, they are still corpses. There is no life in them. Ezekiel has gone from a field of bones to a field of cadavers, but they're not any livelier than they were before. So God tells him to preach again, this time to the wind. And as he does the wind comes down and enters the corpses as breath and they begin to live. (It's interesting to note that in Hebrew, the word for "wind", "breath", and "spirit" is all the same word.) Soon, they stand up on their feet—a vast army ready to conquer the world.

It's an object lesson for Ezekiel, for the people of Israel, and for us. God's people may feel down and defeated. They might feel like dry, dusty bones. But God can come and bring them up from their graves. He can put His Spirit in His people, and they will live.

For me, it is a great reminder of the real power in the church. It's interesting that when Ezekiel preached the first time, he got a nice crowd. The bones rattled and shook and came together and soon he had pews filled with an attentive audience of corpses. But it wasn't until the Spirit came down and brought them to life that they were able to make a difference.

As a church, we can do things to draw a nice crowd. And we can get excited when lots of people show up. But unless God's Spirit is active and filling us, it's not much better than having a sanctuary full of dead bodies. Until God's Spirit comes and fills us, we will not be very effective as a church. The real power comes not from us, but from the Sovereign Lord who gives us life.

So I am praying that God's Spirit will come from the four winds and fill Hope Church. Won't you join me?



Pastor Jay Van Gelder Youth News

The Youth Auction was another huge success!!!



Once again, we had an awesome evening. We had the most senior high youth helping out than ever before with 45 students. Our youth ministry continues to grow and it's neat to see the young people God is bringing to Hope Youth. This year we had some parents of our youth that wanted to help out by serving and preparing the meal. A big shout-out to Brian Mueggenberg and Gary Van Wettering who were the grill masters; Charity Mueggenberg, Lorelei

Meeter, and Chris Hogge who helped prepare the sides and desserts; Bruce Groen, Chris Swanson and Danny Dekker who helped run the auction and help it go smoothly, and Missy Lair who helped run our childcare. Finally, a big thanks to our Sr. High Staff: Scott and Tami Gilderhus, Debra Wittrock, and Liz Dekker working side by side with our youth. Thanks again to all the bidders and supporters who came out or donated. This year we ended the night with a gross amount of \$24,000! WOW!!! Thanks again for your wonderful support of the youth ministry program at Hope Church!

Trent and I will be gone November 14 - 19 as we are travelling to St. Louis to the Youth Specialties Conference. Please pray for us as we learn how to continue to find ways to engage and impact this next generation to love Jesus.

First Wednesday

Prayer & Worship

First Wednesday Prayer & Worship will be Wednesday, November 7 at 6:30 p.m. in the Sanctuary. Please join us as we spend time worshipping through music and praying for our friends, family, for ourselves, our community and our world.

Church Christmas

Decorating Help Needed

Everyone is invited to come help decorate the Christmas tree, lobby and sanctuary for Christmas/Advent on Tuesday, November 27 beginning at 5:00 p.m. Come when you can, leave when you must. All ages are encouraged to join the fun, and pizza will be provided. Please sign up at the Information Desk by November 25 to let us know how many will be joining us for pizza.

Celebrating with:

- Beth Mulenburg who was ordained as a pastor on October 14.

Concerns for:

- Keith Swancutt as he has been doctoring for an enlarged heart and high blood pressure.
- Ray Meyer suffered a mild stroke on October 19 and had an angioplasty and stent procedure done on October 26.
- Florence Hammerstrom had hip surgery on October 30.

Condolences to:

- Luanne & Darrell Todd on the passing of Luanne's nephew, Jesse Saunders of Fairfield, CA, from time to eternity on October 2.
- Linda & Paul Abrahamson on the passing of Linda's brother, Jim Dexter of Fort Dodge, from time to eternity on October 13.
- Dave & Amona Brink on the passing of Dave's brother, Steve Brink of Des Moines, from time to eternity on October 21.
- The family of Dorothy Smith on her passing from time to eternity on October 25.

Christmas is *Real*

Christmas Cantata

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 16 ~ 8:30 & 10:45 AM

Cantata Practice will be on Sundays beginning November 11 from 4:00 - 5:30 p.m. Everyone middle-school age through adults are encouraged to participate!



Have you noticed the new Hope Church logo? We rebranded our logo, plus updated our website, www.spencerhope.com. A special thank you to Eric Meeter for all of his hard work getting this done for us!



Thanksgiving Worship Service

Our Thanksgiving worship service will be on Wednesday, November 21 at 7:00 p.m. in the Harbor, and will be great for all ages. Plan now to attend this special evening of worship.

The nursery will open but not staffed .
(please do not leave children unattended)



Kim Smith

Children/Family/Women's News

Trunk or Treat

Trunk or Treat was a great success on Sunday night, October 28. We estimate about 2,000 people were here enjoying the nice evening. Thank you to everyone who decorated a car, volunteered at this event, and/or donated candy! We could not have done this big, community outreach event without you!! For a peek at all the photos taken (thank you Jackie Bryan!), check out Hope's Facebook page or our website, www.spencerhope.com

Kid's Connection

All kids in grades K - 5th are invited to Kid's Connection on Wednesday, November 7, from 12:30 - 3:00 p.m. Bring your friends!

Children's Christmas Choir

All children Kindergarten through 5th Grade are invited to join the Children's Christmas Choir. We are practicing on Wednesday evenings from 6:30-7:30 p.m. in the Harbor basement. If your child is participating in AWANA and would like to be a part of the choir, please contact me at 262-3016. We will be singing at both worship services on Sunday, December 9. The preschoolers will also be participating in both worship services on December 9 with their Christmas songs, and they will be practicing during their Sunday School hour. If your preschooler is planning to participate please let Kim Smith know as soon as possible.

MOPS (Mothers of Preschoolers)

MOPS exists to encourage, equip, and develop every mother of preschool-age children and younger to develop her potential as a woman, mother, and leader in the name of Jesus Christ. All moms with children ages birth through 5 years old are invited to a time of fun and fellowship on Thursday, November 1 from 8:45-10:45 a.m. and/or on Tuesday, November 13, from 6:00 p.m.-8:00 p.m.

Ladies Craft Night

All women of Hope Church are invited to a Ladies Craft Night on Friday, November 9 at 7:00 p.m. in the Harbor. There is a \$10 materials fee as we will be making a fun Christmas craft just in the time for the Holidays! There will be an OPTIONAL cookie exchange ~ bring a dozen, take a dozen. Treats will be provided. Bring a friend! Register in the lobby by November 4.

Help Wanted

We are seeking a Director of Children & Family Ministries who is passionate about helping kids and their parents experience the joy of Jesus. Our children's ministry is one of the engines that drives our church, and the ideal candidate will have experience working with children. The position will be full-time or part-time depending on the candidate. For a full job description, and/or to inquire about the position, contact Pastor Russell at 262-3016.

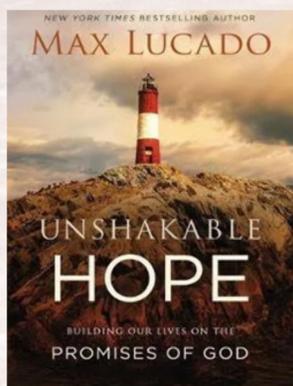
Pastor Beth Muilenburg

Congregational News

Small Group Fall Church-wide Study

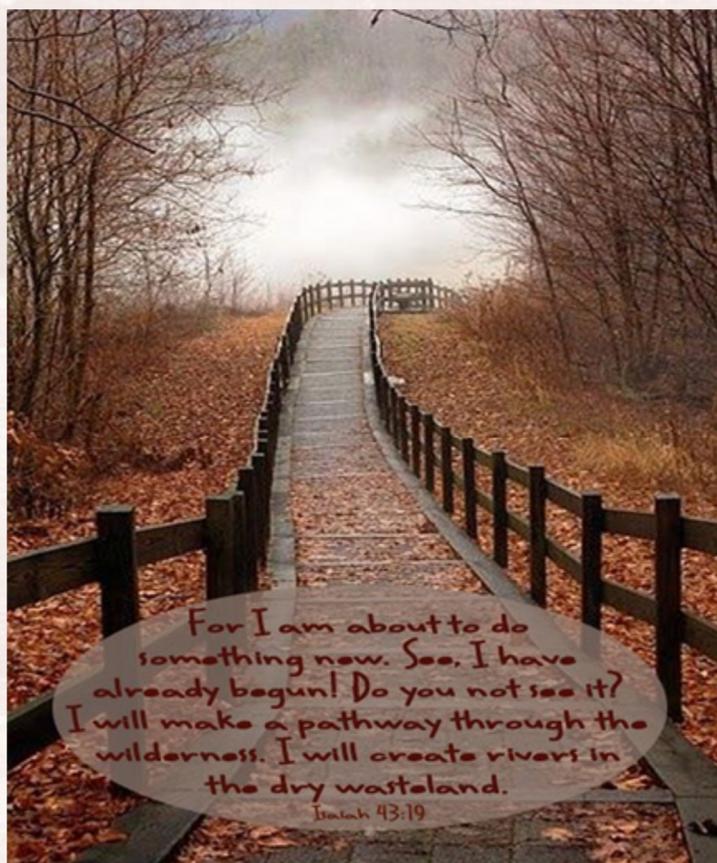
We began Kyle Idleman's study, *Grace is Greater*, on October 28. The last four weeks will focus on how God's grace is greater than our guilt, our brokenness, our wounds, and our weakness. It is not too late to join. If you are interested in joining a small group, please let me know.

Adult Mentoring Program



Mentors, if you have met with your mentee for a while and are looking for another resource for helping with your discussions, you might want to consider Max Lucado's brand new book, *Unshakable Hope*. It is written in an engaging, easy-to-read format that will help you focus on the promises of God. Whether you have been a Christian for a short or long time, this book can remind you of the great love and power of our God. Mentors, contact me if you want to use this and we can order them.

Bible Promise



Volunteer Spotlight



Meet Eric and Rachel Van der Heide Small Group Leaders

What does your small group mean to you?

When we originally joined our small group about 10 years ago it was a great way for us to meet new people and get more involved in the church. Over the years it's developed into a great group of friends that we can count on for support. More than a mere Bible study group, the people in our small group are the ones we get to experience life with; the first ones to share the burden of the difficult times in life and also celebrate the high points.

Why were you willing to be a small group leader?

For us, the experience of participating in a small group was such an important part of our feeling at home at Hope. So when the opportunity to lead our group came along, we wanted to be able to share that experience with others and help facilitate those connections within the church that were so important to us. Being able to help share that sense of community is why we chose to be small group leaders

Is it difficult to be a small group leader? What would you say to someone who may be considering being a small group leader?

Some of the challenges that we face are finding times that work for everyone in our schedules to get together and also arranging child care. Because our group consists of parents of small children we like to line that up so not everyone has to make their own arrangements so that can be a challenge but also an important part of making it easy for parents to get together. Our small group can be quite talkative which makes leading the discussions easy. The resources available through the church, specifically church wide campaigns and also RightNow Media, provide for an incredible amount of content so it's pretty easy to find material that is relevant for our group and doesn't require a lot of work ahead of time. We would say to anyone considering leading a group that you might expect a few challenges unique to your group, but in our experience, the rewards we get from our group far outweigh any challenges along the way.

How have you seen God move in your small group?

As we've mentioned, in our group we get to work alongside other young families who are working at building homes centered on God. The most exciting ways we get to see God move in our small group is through the hearts of the kids and the ongoing work He is doing in each of us as parents to build grace filled families.

Consistory News

The regular meeting of Hope Reformed Church met at 7:00 in the Harbor, October 11, 2018.

Present: Deacons: Danny Dekker, Jason Warren, Craig Van Drunen Eric Van Der Heide, John Haak. Elders: Terry Johnson, Doug Siepkes, Brad Olsen, Bryan Christopher, Karmen Brown. Pastors: Russell Mulenburg, Jay Van Gelder. Absent: Deacon Gary Van Wettering & Elder Gary Zeutenhorst.

Pastor Russell opened the meeting with reading from Ecclesiastes 10:7 and showing a video, *Accidental Pharisees* by Larry Osburn, and led discussion on the video and scripture passage. He ended the devotional time with prayer.

ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION AND DECISION

- **MMSC** to approve the minutes of September 13, 2018
A side note was made that we will be starting up Community Meals with Lorelei Meeter taking the lead.
- **MMSC** to approve the September financials as presented by the Deacons.
- Eric and Danny updated the Consistory on the progress of Open Doors 2.0.
- Discussion took place on Open Door Missions possibilities:
St. Louis Church Plant – discussion took place and we need to find out more information from Milan Johnson and go over at November meeting.
Storm Lake Church Plant – a meeting was set up for October 18 to find out more about this possibility. Pastor Russell, Eric Van Der Heide, Bryan Christopher & Karmen Brown will attend and bring back information to the Consistory for the November meeting.
- Pastor Russell shared about Cultivating Generosity Learning Community Invitation. There was discussion on if we wanted to be involved with this. Jay and Danny will attend a meeting on November 8 to find out more and bring back to the November meeting.
- Pastor Russell shared Kim Smith's resignation letter from her Children & Family Ministries position. There was discussion for the Staff Management team to consider on where to go from here.
- Craig Van Drunen shared about staff reviews and wanting Consistory input. We broke into two groups and took three minutes for each staff commenting on Management, Teamwork, Leadership & Ministry Performance.

ELDERS MEETING

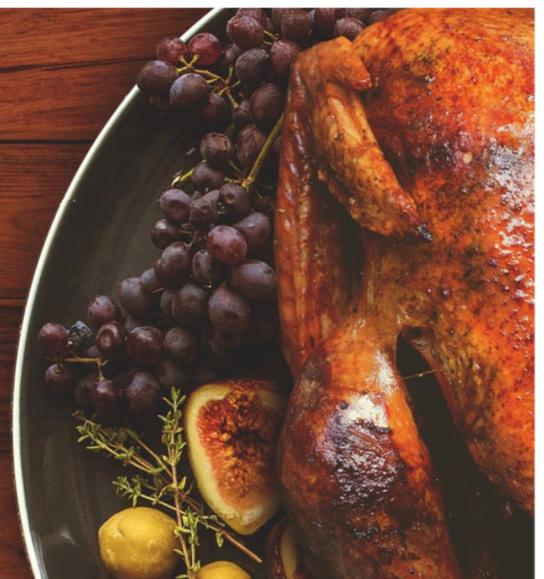
- Pastor Russell opened this portion of the meeting with prayer.
- The Constitutional question was asked and answered in the negative.
- **MMSC** to accept new members Tylor & Kelsey Sarchet.
- Specific congregational concerns were discussed.
- Closed the meeting with group prayer.

DEACONS MEETING

- Eric opened the meeting in prayer.
- An update on the sanctuary roofing project was given.
- Discussed ideas for the remaining Open Doors mission money. More discussion to be had at future Consistory meetings.
- Open Doors 2.0 campaign is coming to an end. Danny will write a letter to the congregation to provide an update.
- Discussed the status of the 2018 budget and set a 2019 budget review meeting for Tuesday, 10/30/2018.
- Danny closed in prayer.

The church building will be locked on
Thursday, November 22 in observance of
Thanksgiving.

The church offices will be closed on
Friday, November 23.



HOPE CHURCH

BRING JOY. EXPERIENCE JOY.

919 Grand Avenue
Spencer, IA 51301
(712)262-3016

worship & sunday school

Sundays:

8:30 a.m. & 10:45 a.m.

also available to read & view online at
www.spencerhope.com

Wednesday, November 7:
First Wednesday Prayer & Worship
6:30 p.m.

Sunday School

9:45—10:40 a.m.
for ages 18 months through Adult

schedule & sermons



Grace is Greater

- November 4: Grace is Greater than Your Guilt
- November 11: Grace is Greater than Your Brokenness
- November 18: Grace is Greater than Your Wounds
- November 21: Thanksgiving Worship
- November 25: Grace is Greater than Your Weakness

Hope Church Staff:

Pastor Russell Muilenburg, *Lead Pastor*; Pastor Jay Van Gelder, *Pastor of Student Ministries*; Josh Hamrick, *Facilities Director*; Trent Hansen, *Youth Intern*; Eric Meeter, *Worship/Music Director*; Pastor Beth Muilenburg, *Congregational Care Director*, and Kim Smith, *Children/Families Director*; Lori Swanson, *Office Administrator*.