

# in touch with Hope

Monthly newsletter of Hope Church, Spencer, IA

January, 2019

**Pastor Russell Muilenburg**

## ***A Vital Part of Our Spiritual Diet***

The following illustration has been around for so long, and used by so many preachers, that no one is entirely sure where it originated. But, regardless of its source, it demonstrates that questioning the importance of preaching is hardly a new phenomenon. It begins with a letter to the editor of a weekly magazine:

Dear Sir: I notice that ministers seem to set a great deal of importance on their sermons and spend a great deal of time in preparing them. I have been attending services quite regularly for the past thirty years and during that time, if I estimate correctly, I have listened to no less than 3,000 sermons, but, to my consternation, I discover I cannot remember a single one of them. I wonder if a minister's time might be more profitably spent on something else? Sincerely....

The letter triggered an avalanche of angry responses for weeks. Some people agreed and wrote letters ripping sermons. Others wrote in defense of preaching. But eventually a single letter closed the debate:

My Dear Sir: I have been married for thirty years. During that time I have eaten 32,850 meals--mostly of my wife's cooking. Suddenly I have discovered that I cannot remember the menu of a single meal. And yet, I received nourishment from every one of them. I have the distinct impression that without them, I would have starved to death long ago. Sincerely....

The regular hearing of God's Word preached is a vital part of our spiritual diet. The experience of hearing God's Word, of being touched in our hearts and minds and wills, provides important spiritual nourishment in our lives. A Christian can no more go without a regular intake of God's Word than any human being can go without a regular intake of food.

We may not remember every sermon we hear, but if we listen actively and attentively—and if the preacher does his or her job—we are fed and nourished each time we go to church.

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We have a sermon every week; and yet, we very rarely talk about why preaching is important or offer any sort of training for those who listen. It seems that we take for granted that every Sunday will have a sermon because that's the way we've always done it. And, we assume that a person equipped with two ears automatically knows how to listen when a sermon is being preached.

The Bible frequently refers to itself as spiritual food. When Jesus was tempted to break His 40-day fast by turning stones into bread in the desert, He responded to the devil: "Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God." (Matthew 4:4). The prophet Jeremiah spoke of eating the Word (Jeremiah 15:16). It is compared to milk (1 Peter 2:2), to honey (Psalm 19:10; 119:103) and to solid food or meat (Hebrews 5:12,14).

The weekly worship gathering is where the family of God comes together to enjoy a meal specially prepared from this spiritual food, the sermon. It seems to me that, humanly speaking, there are two parties involved in this spiritual meal: the preacher, who must prepare the food and serve it; and the listeners, who must receive the food and chew it over.

Lots of books have been written to help the preacher with his task. But what help is there for church-goers and their task? Do we train people in how to listen to and apply the sermons they hear? Sure, most people can tell whether the sermon they have just heard was good or bad--but do they know why? Do they even know why the sermon is so important? Do they know what they should be listening for?

As we start a New Year at church our next series of messages will be entitled "How to Eat a Sermon." It is my intention to help us think about what preaching is and why it matters. It is a subject I am passionate about, and it is my hope that we will come to appreciate why we listen to sermons every week and to benefit more from them.



**Jay Van Gelder**  
**Youth News**

**Mark**  
**Your**  
**Calendars!**

# NO APOLOGIES

Encouraging youth to choose purity

**No Apologies Conference**  
**Wednesday, January 30, 2019**  
**Clay County Events Center**  
**Doors open at 6:00 p.m.**

**Teens: 6th - 12th Grade**  
**6:30pm-8:15pm**  
**Featuring: Cory Nikkel**

**Parent & Youth Worker Training**  
**6:30pm-7:30pm**  
**Featuring: Jon Pausley**

**Advanced Ticket Purchase: \$5 per youth or adult**  
**(I have your ticket, so pay me please)**

**Ticket Purchase At Door: \$10 per youth or adult**

**SENIOR HIGH SUMMER WORK TRIP**  
**MARYVILLE, TN**  
**JUNE 22-29, 2019**

HIS WORK CAMP IS A WEEK-LONG PHYSICAL, MENTAL AND SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCE. YOU WILL SLOW DOWN AND LEARN TO TAKE TIME TO SEE AND YEARN FOR THE WORK GOD IS DOING IN YOUR LIFE.

REGISTRATION INFORMATION WILL BE COMING SOON.



HIS WORK CAMP 2019

JULY 23-26 2019

BETHEL UNIVERSITY ST. PAUL, MN

**POWER CONNECTION WORK CAMP ENCOUNTER**

MUSIC ORCHARD HILL COLLECTIVE

SPEAKER RYAN FELTMAN

COST: \$160  
SYNDOUTH.ORG

**Aware** 2019  
**POWER CONNECTION**

SPEAKER HARRIS III

MUSIC ORCHARD HILL COLLECTIVE

FUN 321 IMPROV

WEEKEND CONFERENCE FOR MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS COST: \$165

JULY 26 - 28, 2019  
[synodyouth.org](http://synodyouth.org)  
BETHEL UNIVERSITY  
ST. PAUL, MINNESOTA

**Middle School Work Camp and Power Connection**  
**July 23—28, 2019**

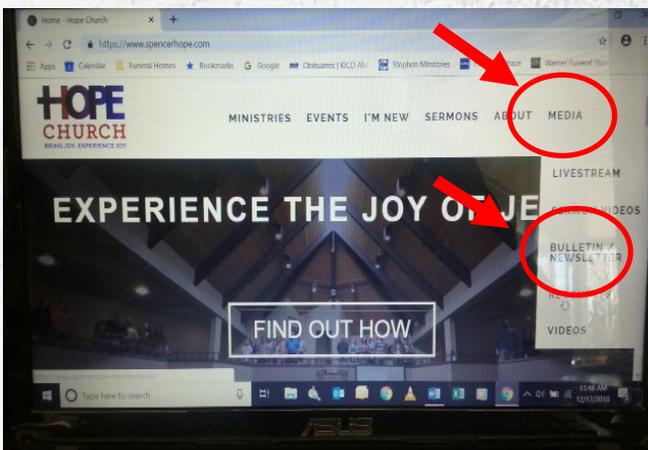
Both the work camp and Power Connection will be held at Bethel University in Minneapolis.

Registration information will be coming soon.

# Beth Muilenburg Adult News

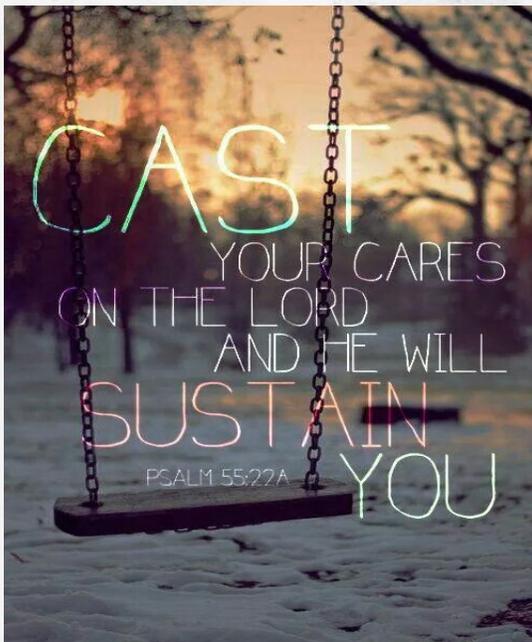
## Next Step

Starting Sunday, January 6, Pastor Russell will begin preaching a series called, "How to Eat a Sermon." We want to start 2019 focused on listening to God's Word and help you take a next step if you are so inclined. On our church's website, you can find questions and activities that can help you dig deeper into what was preached on that Sunday. This can be done individually or as a small group. This is not a church-wide study, but it is a resource for those who want to explore more. If you click on our church's website: [www.spencerhope.com](http://www.spencerhope.com), click on the Media tab. Then, click on Resources. Click on the Next Step icon.



May God bless you as you seek to know Him better!

## Bible Promise:



## Volunteer Spotlight

Meet Karmen Brown, Coffee Team Coordinator



### How much coffee does Hope Church go through in a year?

We average about 300-350 cups of coffee every Sunday morning.

### What is the most popular flavor of coffee?

Hands down the most popular flavor of coffee on Sunday mornings is Jamaican Me Crazy. We make the most pots of that flavor. I have figured out we do not take that one out of the rotation of flavors. Folks love it!

### Why is coffee important to Hope Church?

I believe serving coffee creates an atmosphere of fellowship and conversation. A time to share with people about life - how the sermon touched us, etc.

### What time do you get up to get the coffee started? How long is your shift?

When I serve coffee, I am there by 6 a.m. I want to have everything ready when the worship team arrives so they can get their coffee or tea as they prepare to lead our worship for Sunday. I see this as a way to serve the worship team as they serve the congregation leading us in worship.

### How are coffee and hospitality connected?

Hospitality means being friendly and giving a generous reception of guests. When folks walk into church on Sunday morning the smell of coffee is inviting and says, "We are so happy you are here with us. Join us for coffee and stay awhile." We want to make people, both members and guests, feel welcome and wanted. I love it when people ask if they can bring their coffee into the sanctuary. They are always amazed that we want them to enjoy their coffee while hearing the word and singing.

### If someone wants to join the coffee team, what should they do?

If someone is interested in joining the coffee team they can contact me at [kbrown@mh4h.org](mailto:kbrown@mh4h.org) or call my cell 712-240-4897.

## Celebrating with:

- Allie Helmink & Ryan Bauermeister who were united in marriage on December 15.

## Concerns for:

- Audrey Coffman had shoulder replacement surgery on December 20.
- Jody Vulk had tests and a procedure done in Rochester on December 20.
- Brooke Moser had foot surgery on December 21.
- Lyle Howard had leg surgery on Monday, December 31.

## Condolences to:

- the family of Mae Koch on her passing from time to eternity on December 19.
- Meloni & James Mengelson on the passing of Meloni's brother, Cory Williamson of Spirit Lake, from time to eternity on December 21.

# Happy New Year!

**“Rejoice in the Lord always,  
again I say rejoice!”  
Phil. 4:4**

## **Kim Smith Children & Family News**

Wow! I can't believe the time has come. I first want to say "thank you" to everyone at Hope Church who took a chance on me over 11 years ago to let me serve as your Children and Family Ministry Director. It has been a huge blessing and privilege to be a part of your families over the years and have a small part in your journey. Thank you also to everyone for the generosity you've shown with your kind words, cards, gift cards and videos as my time here has come to a close. It has been very humbling to be on the receiving end of all of these.

I had no idea over a year ago when I was looking for materials to help keep "our" kids safe online and help families navigate this ever increasing online world, that it would change my call and direction. In case you have not heard, I have become a volunteer with "Shared Hope International," an organization that works to aid in the fight against domestic minor sex-trafficking. I will be helping to raise awareness and educate our kids and families on how to keep themselves safe regarding this issue. With the younger kids, they just need to know that I am volunteering for an organization that helps keep kids safe online.

Prayers are appreciated as I follow this new call and for the person God is calling to Hope Church. Thank you again for the blessing of serving at Hope over these many years!

Happy New Year!

## **Offering Envelopes**

If you used offering envelopes in 2018 your 2019 envelopes are ready to pick up in the lobby. If you haven't had offering envelopes in the past and wish to use them, they are available in the lobby as well. The Deacons strongly encourage the use of offering envelopes, or tithe by automatic withdrawal (ACH), to ensure accurate record keeping and regular giving.

## **First Wednesday Prayer & Worship**

First Wednesday Prayer & Worship will be Wednesday, January 2 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 the world.

## **Elder/Deacon Installation**

In accordance with the Constitution of the Reformed Church in America, unless there are reasonable spiritual objections presented to the Board of Elders, Dean Mechler and Kurt Weeks will be installed as Elders and Bob Graham and Kyle Mechler will be installed as Deacons on January 6 as they were elected at the Congregational Celebration on December 9.

## **Starting Point**

Starting Point will be held on Sundays, January 20 and 27 from 1:00-2:00 p.m. in the Well. This class is intended for adults and is your pathway to membership at Hope Church. It is a great opportunity to find out about our church and the church we are trying to be. Attending does not commit you to joining Hope Church, but it helps you make that decisions wisely. Sign up at the Information Desk.

# Consistory News

The regular meeting of the Hope Reformed Church met on Thursday, December 13 at 7:00 p.m. in the Harbor.

Present: Deacons: Jason Warren, Craig Van Drunen, Eric Van Der Heide, Gary Van Wetering, Danny Dekker. Elders: Gary Zeutenhorst, Karmen Brown, Brad Olson, Doug Siepkes, Brian Christopher. Pastors: Russell Muilenburg, Jay Van Gelder. Absent: Deacon John Haak and Elder Terry Johnson.

Pastor Russell opened the meeting by reading from 1 Corinthians 12: 12-20 and then led a discussion on the scripture and video *Accidental Pharisees* by Larry Osburn. He ended the devotional time with prayer.

## ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION AND DECISION

**MMSC** to approve the minutes of November 8, 2018.

**MMSC** to approve the November financials as presented by the deacons.

**MMSC** to give Kim Smith \$2500 to assist her in her new position.

**MMSC** to give Kim Smith \$300 as a gift for her service from the church.

Congregational Celebration responses were discussed and reviewed from the questions *How can we better carry out the mission/vision of Hope Church in the coming year? How have you seen God at work at Hope Church in 2018?*

Pastor Russell led a discussion on reports by Dave Bartlett and Kevin Myskens.

Pastor Russell and members of the staff management team shared where they were at in filling the Children's and Family Ministries position.

Pastor Russell shared details regarding Ordination of Elder and Deacons on January 6, 2019.

## ELDERS MEETING

Pastor Russell opened the meeting with prayer.

Constitutional question was asked and answered in the negative.

Specific congregational concerns were discussed.

Closed the meeting with prayer.

## DEACONS MEETING

Eric opened with prayer.

**MMSC** to approve staff Christmas gifts.

Agreed on the 2019 collecting schedule.

Discussed year-end financial status.

Danny closed with prayer.

## Staff Christmas Fun



The staff decided to wear ugly Christmas sweaters at their Christmas party. Although it wasn't a contest, Pastor Russell and Josh Hamrick both donned the most ugly attire!

*Discerning  
the voice of God*

*Women's Conference*

*Friday, January 25*

*Doors Open at 6:30 p.m.*

*Saturday, January 26*

*8:30 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.*

*Cost. \$40*

*includes materials, snacks,  
Saturday breakfast & lunch.*

*Sign up at the Information Desk by January 13, 2019*



919 Grand Avenue  
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www.spencerhope.com

## WORSHIP

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

First Wednesday Prayer & Worship  
Wednesday, January 2  
6:30 p.m.

Sunday School: 9:45 - 10:40 a.m.  
Ages 3 years old through Adult

## schedule & sermons



*How to Eat a Sermon*

January 6 *Getting Hungry*

January 13 *The Pantry*

January 20 *The Menu*

January 27 *The Entree*

### Hope Church Staff:

Russell Muilenburg, *Lead Pastor*; Jay Van Gelder, *Pastor of Student Ministries*; Josh Hamrick, *Facilities*; Trent Hansen, *Youth Ministries Assistant*; Eric Meeter, *Worship/Music*; Beth Muilenburg, *Congregational Care*; Lori Swanson, *Office Administrator*