

in touch with Hope

monthly newsletter of Hope Church, Spencer, Iowa

December, 2019

By Pastor Russell Muilenburg

The Waiting is The Hardest Part

Tom Petty had a knack as a song writer for putting down timeless lyrics with universal appeal. In 1981 he released a song called "The Waiting." It's chorus is instantly memorable:

The waiting is the hardest part
Every day you get one more yard
You take it on faith, you take it to the heart
The waiting is the hardest part

Whether it is waiting in line, waiting in traffic, waiting for food service, or waiting for marriage; biding our time is more counter-cultural than ever. It really is the hardest part. We have been conditioned to have it our way, right away. First, it was fast food and instant coffee; then it was everything else. And yet, waiting—and the virtues of waiting—is a big theme in the Bible. In Psalm 40 the psalmist celebrates waiting patiently for the Lord. In Isaiah 40 we are promised that those "who wait for the Lord shall

renew their strength: they shall mount up with wings like eagles." Waiting for God is an expression of the healthy heart's desire: "O Lord, we wait for you; your name and remembrance are the desire of our soul" (Isaiah 26:8) And, it is an echo of the unparalleled power and grace of God, "who acts for those who wait for him" (Isaiah 64:4). The commitment to wait for God is a bold declaration of faith: "I wait for the Lord, my soul waits, and in his word I put my hope." (Psalm 130:5)

In a way, the entire Old Testament can be thought of as an extended period of waiting: waiting for the promised Messiah. But even those of us who live on this side of Christmas still wait. We "wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ." (1 Corinthians 1:7); we are a people "waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ" (Titus 2:13). The church is the community which has "turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven" (1 Thessalonians 1:9-10), knowing that when he appears, he comes "to save those who are eagerly waiting for him" (Hebrews 9:28). And, there is a lot of other waiting as well. Waiting for prayers to be answered; waiting for the fulfillment of dreams long deferred; waiting for relationships to mend and for sicknesses to be cured. Much of life is waiting.

This year, during the countdown to Christmas, we are going to talk about waiting. We are going to learn about the ways God is shaping our faith through waiting, and we are going to see the errors we must avoid while waiting. Most importantly, we are going to look at the big things God is encouraging us to wait for, the prize which is most clearly identified in the Christmas story.

The waiting can be the hardest part. But, maybe Tom Petty was onto something better than he knew when he sang, "You take it on faith, you take it to the heart." The unwelcome intrusions of waiting into our lives, whether weighty or seemingly trite, are powerful opportunities to welcome God into every moment and keep our hearts renewed in him.





Pastor Jay Van Gelder
Youth News

Youth Fundraiser Auction

Thank you all so much for the amazing support to our Youth Ministry Program here at Hope Church at our annual youth auction. What another amazing auction we had again for 2019! This year we were able to raise around \$24,000 which is just amazing! I am always in awe of how God provides on this night! This will allow us to not have to fund-raise throughout the year like other groups, but instead do ministry to youth the rest of the year.

It is so much fun to watch our young people serve you at the auction, work as a team, laugh with people, smile with people, and engage with our adult congregation. It is a fun evening as we raise money to help support the youth to go on their summer work project trips. This year we are going to Rocky Mountain High in Estes Park with a stop in Colorado Springs for a work project with Trinity Church in Orange City.

If you have never been to our Youth Auction before you need to put that on your Bucket List for next year. It should be around the first weekend in November again (if Jesus does not return before that). Thanks again for your continued support of our youth ministry program here at Hope church. Please pray God will continue to help us as we plan the 2020 summer trips.

Traveling Lock-In

On November 16 we took off again for the Mall of America in Minneapolis. This year the weather was great and we did not have to worry about rescheduling. If you are wondering why we do the Traveling Lock In it is all about Hope youth inviting friends along, who maybe do not have a church home or a youth group, to come with us for an awesome night of relationships and great community building.

This year, Hope Youth had 40 friends that have never been to an event or youth group at Hope Church. We also had 50 youth fill out on their registration card that they did not have a church home or youth group in Spencer. So, these 50 have come before or were first-timers that we want to follow up with and ask them to join us at youth group. Great job to our young people for inviting youth who do not have a church community! This was awesome!! We met some new friends and got to connect with friends we had met at previous events and trips that we have partnered with in the past. We ended up with a total of 501 youth and adult staff attending this year's event (225 of them were from Hope).

Thanks to the great Hope Youth Staff team that helped Trent and I lead the group from Hope. They are great people who love youth and give their time and service so the youth in our community can come to know Jesus as their personal Lord and Savior. I know the youth from Hope Youth had an awesome night. Thanks again Hope Youth Team!



25 Christ-centered Christmas Traditions

- 1 Set out a child-friendly Nativity for play
- 2 Buy Nativity cookie cutters to use for holiday baking
- 3 Make salt dough ornaments with Nativity themes
- 4 Make puppets and reenact the Christmas story.
- 5 Make a paper chain to count down the days until Christmas with a verse on each link
- 6 Instead of a gingerbread house, make an edible Nativity
- 7 Make an Advent wreath. Light it each night together and read the Bible.
- 8 Attend a Christmas Eve service together.
- 9 Make a countdown poster with shepherds, adding a cotton ball sheep each day.
- 10 Buy or check out Christ-centered Christmas books; wrap and place under the tree to read during Advent
- 11 Watch The Nativity Story together; talk about how it compares to the Biblical account
- 12 Make an Advent calendar; instead of candy, insert papers with ways you can serve someone else that day
- 13 Read a chapter of Jotham's Journey each day of Advent
- 14 Make and use a Jesse tree during Advent
- 15 Purchase a Nativity sticker set and add one sticker each day until Christmas
- 16 Use Operation World to pray for people different country each day to know Jesus
- 17 Cook Christmas recipes from other countries and pray for people in those countries to know Christ.
- 18 Participate in an Angel Tree project
- 19 Replace one or more Christmas gifts with gifts from the World Vision or Samaritan's Purse catalogs
- 20 When hanging Christmas lights, talk about Jesus being the light of the world
- 21 Make a birthday cake for Jesus and sing Happy Birthday
- 22 Research Christmas ornaments and their meanings, and make some for your tree
- 23 Buy the Truth in the Tinsel curriculum to make an ornament each day and read part of the Christmas story
- 24 Read the Christmas story together on Christmas Eve or Christmas Day
- 25 On Christmas morning, grab pots and pans and spoons and spatulas; run outside banging them and shouting the Good News that Jesus was born!

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Beth Muilenburg Discipleship and Care



Volunteer Spotlight

Jackie Bryan — Cantata Director

Why do you enjoy directing cantatas?

I enjoy directing the cantatas because conducting is a love of mine. Also, I love rehearsing the music and listening as the choir improves and comes together. Music is an emotional experience for me and I find it's one of the best ways for me to engage in worship.

Why is worship important?

Worship is the entire purpose of the cantata. I pray that each person in attendance will connect in some way and each participant will feel touched and in some way connect more deeply with God. Music is a powerful tool.

What message do you want the congregation to leave the cantata with this Christmas?

I pray that the congregation and the participants will leave this cantata performance with an understanding of the beautiful gift we were given through the birth of Jesus.

Celebrating with:

- Milo James, son of Alex & Mackenzie Johnson, on his Baptism November 10.
- Tucker Matthew, son of Kyle & Mallory Rehnstrom, on his Baptism November 10.
- Jaxson Graham, son of Terry & Erin Stevens, on his Baptism November 10.
- Austin & Mindy Wells on the birth of their daughter, Blakely Kathleen, on November 13.

Concerns for:

- Todd Brockshus as he continues to heal from a second knee surgery.
- Barry Anderson as he recovers from knee surgery on November 25.
- Susan Meyer was diagnosed with a rare form of breast cancer and had a bilateral mastectomy on November 27.
- Josh Weber had a procedure done to remove cancer on his ear on November 27.

Condolences to:

- Tim & Michelle Yeager on the passing of Tim's brother, Patrick of Estherville, from time to eternity on November 17.

Haiti Color Blast Fundraiser

Our annual Haiti Fundraiser event goes through December 1. A \$50 donation will sponsor a Haitian runner and provides them a t-shirt, two meals, a special gift from Hope Church, and they get to hear the Gospel! Making a donation would make a great Christmas present - donate in honor or in memory of a loved one! Stop at the kiosk in the lobby to donate. ***This is our only Haiti fundraising event for the year.***

First Wednesday Prayer and Worship

First Wednesday Prayer & Worship will be December 4 at 6:30 p.m. This special service is an opportunity to reconnect and refocus on Jesus and pray for our church family, community and world.

Congregational Celebration

All confessing members of Hope Church are invited to our annual Congregational Celebration on Sunday, December 8. We will be celebrating what God has done in 2019, look ahead at 2020, and participate in the selection of new church officers by the drawing of lots. Elder nominees are Arvin Druvenga, Jeff Helmink, Darrell Todd and Cedric Winterboer. Deacon nominees are Derek Bailey, Patrick Connor, Mike Heiter and Levin Morris. We will begin promptly at 5:00 p.m. with a dessert potluck and the meeting will begin promptly at 5:30 p.m. Each family attending is asked to bring 1 dessert to share. Nursery will be provided.

Year-End Tithing

Year-end financial donations to the church will be received through noon on Tuesday, December 31. Donations can be dropped off at the church office.

Sarah Kerns

Children/Family News

Spencer Youth Giving Tree

Hope Church is sponsoring a Giving Tree to benefit Spencer Middle School and High School students. Middle school and high school students are also in need, but not typically the recipients of local donations. We want to show our local youth that they are loved and cared for during the Christmas season. Choose an ornament from the tree in the lobby (take as many ornaments as you would like!). Purchase the gift/s listed on the ornament that the Middle School and High School staff have suggested are most needed. There are a variety of items to fit any budget. All items must be new and not gift wrapped. Bring your gift/s to the box outside of Sarah's office by Friday, December 20. Thank you for your generosity!

Children's Christmas Choir

The preschool children and the K-5th grade Christmas choir will be singing at both worship services on December 15. There will be a special highlight which includes the K-5th grade choir plus middle school and high school students.

December practices:

Wednesday, Dec. 4 ~ 6:30-7:30 p.m. (Youth join us @ 7:15 p.m.)

Sunday, Dec. 8 ~ During Sunday School and again from 12:00-2:00 p.m. (Pizza Practice)

(Youth will practice during Sunday School & at the beginning of Pizza Practice).

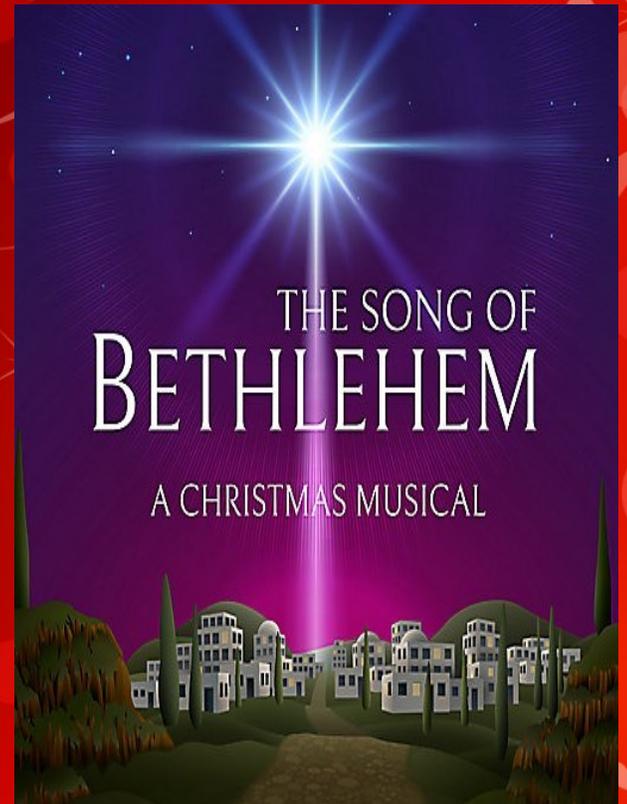
Wednesday, Dec. 11 ~ 6:30-8:00 p.m. (Youth join us @ 7:30 p.m.) This is the FINAL practice! It will be very important for everyone to be there!

****Preschool will ONLY practice during their Sunday School hour****

Family Christmas Caroling

Come join us on Thursday, December 19 at 6:30 p.m. as we travel by bus to go sing Christmas Carols to shut-ins around Spencer. Afterwards, we will return to Hope Church for hot cocoa and goodies. This will be fun for all ages!

Craig Cannon Music Worship News



On Sunday, December 8 at both worship services we will be presenting a Christmas Musical, "The Song of Bethlehem." We hope you can join us!

Consistory News

The regular meeting of the Hope Reformed Consistory met at 7:00 p.m. on November 14 in the Harbor. Present: Deacons Bob Graham, John Haak, Chris Swanson, Kyle Mechler, Craig Van Drunen, and Jason Warren. Elders Gary Zeutenhorst, Dean Mechler, Brad Olson, Bryan Christoffer, Doug Siepkes and Kurt Weeks. Pastors Russell Muilenburg and Jay Van Gelder. Pastor Russell opened the devotional time with reading from Acts 15:28 and then led the discussion on Sticky Teams with Larry Osborne on "Leadership Alignment" and closed the discussion with prayer.

ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION AND DECISION

- **MMSC** to approve the minutes with changing the date from October 10 to 17 and adding Jackson Stevens under baptisms.
- John Haak reviewed the October financials and discussed the budget shortfall to date at -\$40,797.08. This number did not reflect the automatic deposits which would lower this figure. Deacons indicated that the note in the bulletin did seem to increase the giving in the following weeks.
- **MMSC** to approve the October financials as presented by the deacons.
- Pastor Jay reviewed the projected 2020 budget to be presented at the Congregational Meeting on December 8. Craig Van Drunen reviewed with Consistory recommended staff raises and updated the process of incorporating the new wage and hour laws. Some time was spent discussing how to implement the new laws and how this might impact the budget.
- **MMSC** proposed raises for staff of 2.5 %.
- **MMSC** to approve the proposed 2020 budget with an additional increase of \$500 to be split between the Dahlhusers and Hoberts.
- The following have been nominated for the office of Elder and Deacon for the Congregational Celebration on December 8:
Elders: Arvin Druvenga, Jeff Helmink, Darrell Todd, and Cedric Winterboer
Deacons: Derek Bailey, Patrick Connor, Mike Heiter and Levi Morris
- Pastor Russell invited any Consistory members who are interested and can attend a presentation of the 2020 Vision Committee on December 3 at 12:30 p.m. in Sheldon at the Pizza Ranch. Brian Keepers will give an update on the committee's work to date.
- Pastor Russell indicated one of the quarterly projects the staff has been looking at is how to better engage guests/visitors at Hope Church. As a part of that there will be a Guest Engagement Training on December 15 at 12:30 p.m. in The Well. Those who are invited are all those who are greeters as well as the church Consistory.
- Pastor Russell closed this portion of the meeting with prayer.

ELDERS MEETING

- The constitutional question was asked and answered in the negative.
- Congregation concerns were discussed.
- **MMSC** to approve the baptism of Jackson Stevens.
- Closed the meeting with prayer.

DEACONS MEETING

- Chris opened with prayer
- Final discussion on the 2020 budget from Tuesday Night's budget preparation meeting.
- Approved insurance settlement on roofing.
- Closed with a Deacon photo for #spencerhopeisthankful





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Worship & Sunday School

Sundays: 8:30 a.m. & 10:45 a.m.
First Wednesday Worship & Prayer
December 4, 2019
7:00 p.m.
Christmas Eve Candlelight Worship
Tuesday, December 24
5:00 p.m., 7:00 p.m. & 11:00 p.m.
Sunday School
9:45 -10:40 a.m.
for ages 18 months through Adult
There will be no Sunday School on December 22 or 29.

Schedule & Sermons



The Waiting Room

December 1 *The Challenge of Waiting*
December 8 *The Impetuous Side of Impatience*
December 15 *The Help Available Sign*
December 22 *With Us in the Waiting*
December 24 *The Waiting is Over*

December 29 Sermon & Christmas Carol Sing

Hope Church Staff:

Russell Muilenburg, *Lead Pastor*; Jay Van Gelder, *Pastor of Student Ministries*; Craig Cannon, *Worship/Music Ministries*; Josh Hamrick, *Facilities*, Trent Hansen, *Youth Ministries Assistant & Communication*, Sarah Kerns, *Children & Families*; Beth Muilenburg, *Discipleship & Care*; Lori Swanson, *Office Administrator*