

# in touch with Hope

Monthly newsletter of Hope Church, Spencer, Iowa

April, 2020

by Pastor Russell Muilenburg

## The Church Has Left the Building

We started the year 2020 with a sermon series we called *Force of Habit*. The whole goal was to encourage you to make regular Sunday morning church attendance a routine. The plan was that we would see a spike in our Sunday morning worship crowds as we were all reminded of the benefits of meeting together and we resolved to make church a priority. 2020 was going to be a year of increased attendance. Ironic, isn't it?

The key passage for that series was Hebrews 10:25:

<sup>25</sup> not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

As we looked at the verses that surrounded this verse, we identified four things that we could do better by doing them together. We said the benefits of weekly attendance were that we could draw near to God together (worship, 10:22); we could hold unwaveringly to the faith we profess (sermon, 10:23); we could spur one another on toward love and good deeds (accountability, 10:24); and we could encourage one another (ministry of care, 10:25). All of these things, we said, were more easily incorporated into our lives when we regularly gathered on Sunday mornings to do them together. Again, you see the irony, right?

One important qualification that was mentioned several times during the series: we do not need a church building (or even a church meeting) to be a Christian. Church is not a building—or a certain time of meeting during the week—the church is people. I've often said if our church building burned down, Hope Church would not cease to exist. Hope Church would still be the people of our congregation scattered around Spencer and the surrounding area. Little did I know it wouldn't be a fire that prevented us from meeting, but a pandemic.

Physically meeting together is not currently an option. But those four activities that are made easier by regular Sunday morning attendance are still vitally important. And, with a little creativity, we can still make them a part of our weekly routine. Here are some suggestions:

**Worship.** If you are like me, singing by yourself or with just the members of your family does not sound like an appealing prospect. But, it is important for us to keep singing. Our Sunday morning services (drive-in or [LiveStream](#)) will continue to include 2 or 3 songs every week. We may not have our full, talented team, but our worship leader, Craig Cannon, will lead us with his voice and guitar. In addition, Craig and his wife, Katie, are inviting us all to worship with them throughout the shutdown with their "Living Room Sessions" which premiere on [Facebook](#) every Friday at 7:00 p.m. Craig has also curated a playlist of nearly 40 of Hope Church's favorite worship songs on [Spotify](#) and [Apple Music](#).

**Sermon.** Probably the easiest element of Sunday morning worship for us to re-create, even when we can't be together physically, is the sermon. We will continue to have the drive-in service at 9:00 a.m. on Sunday mornings as long Iowa does not have a shelter-in-place order and we will continue to put the [LiveStream](#) service out at 10:45 a.m. on Sundays regardless of whether meeting requirements tighten or loosen. Our children and family ministries coordinator, Sarah Kerns, is putting out an excellent, interactive Sunday School lesson on [Facebook Live](#) every Sunday at 10:00 a.m. In addition, I am committing to put a Bible Study/devotional on our [Hope Church Facebook](#) page every Wednesday evening through the shutdown.

**Accountability and Encouragement.** The last two items on our list become much more difficult when we can't be together face to face, but they are not impossible. Our congregational care coordinator, Beth Muilenburg, is hosting prayer meetings on [Zoom](#) at 3:30 p.m. on Tuesdays and 7:00 p.m. on Wednesdays that are open for everyone in the church who would like pray together and spur one another on. In addition, she is hosting a Bible Study at 7:00 p.m. at the same [Zoom](#) page for anyone who would like to join. More than that, I want to challenge all of you to pick up your phones and contact someone that the Lord brings to your mind. Use modern technology or old-fashioned pen and paper to send a note of encouragement to a health care worker, a nursing home resident, or a restless student who might be going stir-crazy without school.

Ultimately, I hope that this forced hiatus from Sunday morning gatherings will make us appreciate the privilege of meeting together as a church that much more when we get to go back to normal. But in the meantime, we haven't stopped being the church and we can find ways to continue loving the Lord even when we can't be together in person.

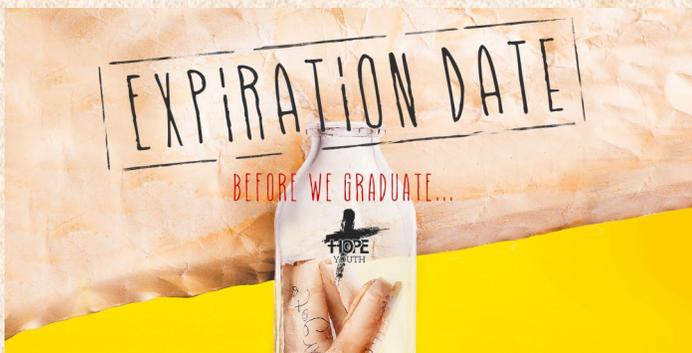


Pastor Jay Van Gelder  
Youth News

## Pancake / Waffle Fundraiser Breakfast



## 6th, 7th, 8th Grade Youth Group



Youth Group continues on Wednesday nights at 6:30 p.m. via Zoom with our new series, *Expiration Date*. All middle school youth and/or their parents should have received a text with the link to participate online. If you haven't received the Zoom link and would like to participate, please contact Trent or I with your email address.

## Middle School Spiritual Retreat



The middle school spiritual retreat scheduled for April 3-5 is needing to try something new this year. We will not be meeting in person so the retreat will be livestreamed online for people to view in their homes. If you did not sign up to attend this retreat earlier, we have GREAT news for you! You can now sign up to participate online for \$10. Sign up on [Breeze](#). If you had already signed up and were planning on going you will be receiving the link via text. We encourage families to now do this retreat together. Heather Flies will be speaking. Look her up, she's heartfelt and hilarious. There will also be a worship band, and interactive games. Contact Trent Hansen at 402-982-9653 with any questions.

## Sr. High Youth Group



Youth Group continues on Sunday nights at 7:00 p.m. via Zoom. We are excited about this new series, *The Assignment*, we have started! All high school youth should have received a text with the link to participate online. Please contact Trent or I with your email address if you haven't received the Zoom link and would like to participate.

Beth Muilenburg  
Congregational Care

## RightNow Media

You might know that there are many resources for small group Bible Studies on [rightnowmedia.com](http://rightnowmedia.com), but did you know they offer so much more? All you need is log-in access to [Rightnowmedia.com](http://Rightnowmedia.com). If you do not have access and would like it, let me know.

Want to leave your home? Would you like to be on vacation now? Here are just a few choices out of many!



See the gospel through a different lens as two men explore the places where Jesus lived during His life on earth in Appian Media's *Following The Messiah*. Get up close to the ruins of the ancient city of Capernaum, take a boat ride on the Sea of Galilee, and walk through the arid wilderness of Judea. Jeremy Dehut and Barry Britnell are your tour guides on this incredible journey through the Bible lands, both old and new.

It's surprising how and where God nurtures his people. Where we seek to protect and shield, God is not intimidated with "at risk" situations. Whether it's the "iron-smelting furnace" of Egypt or the "vast and dreadful wilderness," God hapes his people in extraordinary situations and circumstances. C.S. Lewis' description onis apt: "he is good...but his is not tame." Filmed on location in the Middle East this series will transform your understanding of God and challenge you to be a bolder follower of Jesus.



We are all in this together! Please know, if life is difficult and you need someone to talk to, please call me at 712-346-8481. I am here and I care!

## Connecting during COVID

- As we are all learning, COVID-19 can rapidly change our plans and routines, and Hope Church is seeking to adjust as needed. Please check our website to view our most recent updates for ongoing ministry.
- We are excited and feel blessed for the opportunity to worship with you at our drive-in worship service on Sundays at 9:00 a.m. However, stay in your car at ALL times, keep your windows up and bring your Bible. We are also worshipping via live stream at 10:45 on our YouTube Channel.
- Hope Church is increasingly convinced of the importance of prayer as "the engine room of the church" (Spurgeon). Join us each Tuesday at 3:30 p.m. and Wednesday at 7:00 p.m. on *Zoom*. This allows us to "meet together" for a special time of prayer for the world, our community, ourselves, our friends & family. *Zoom* is a website that allows us to visually stay connected with each other without meeting in person. If you would like to participate on *Zoom* for the prayer time, click here.
- Each Wednesday evening Pastor Russell shares a devotional and message on Facebook.
- Join us each Tuesday at 3:30 p.m. and Wednesday at 7:00 p.m. on *Zoom*. This allows us to "meet together" for a special time of prayer for the world, our community, ourselves, our friends & family. *Zoom* is a website that allows us to visually stay connected with each other without meeting in person. If you would like to participate on *Zoom* for the prayer time, click here.

Sarah Kerns

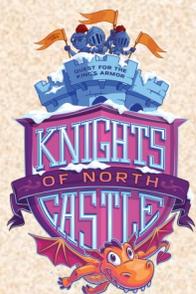
Children and Family News

Sunday School

Sunday School is at 10:00 a.m. on Facebook Live. Each week I will live stream a story and fun lesson on the Hope Kids [Facebook Page](#). This is appropriate for ALL ages, especially PK-5th grade.

Family Activities

Activity packets for children and families are available outside the front doors in a tub to pick up at your convenience. These packets are focused on Lent and the countdown to Easter. Also, there are family devotionals and activities available to download on our [website](#) and posted on the [Hope Kids Facebook page](#).



Vacation Bible School

VBS registration is postponed at this time. We will keep you informed of changes as we know them.

Craig Cannon  
Music Worship News

During this time when we are not able to worship or sing together, my wife, Katie, and I are hosting *The Living Room Sessions*. This is meant to be a special time of praise and worship from our living room to yours on Friday evenings at 7:00 p.m. Listen and watch online on my [Facebook page](#).

I have also created a playlist of nearly 40 of Hope Church's favorite worship songs. You can listen for free on [Spotify](#) or on [Apple Music](#).

# HOLY WEEK

## PALM SUNDAY, APRIL 5

Drive-In Worship @ Hope Church: 9:00 a.m.

Livestream Sunday School: 10:00 a.m.

Livestream Worship : 10:45 a.m.

## MAUNDY THURSDAY, APRIL 9

Drive-In Worship & Communion\* @ Hope Church  
6:30 p.m. \*with individual Communion sets

## EASTER SUNDAY, APRIL 12

Drive-in Worship @ Gateway North Mall parking lot:  
9:00 a.m.

Livestream Worship : 10:45 a.m.

Celebrating with

- Kevin & Tara Brown on the birth of their son, Philip Nathanael, on February 29.

Concerns for

- Joyce Flaharty suffered a mild stroke and is undergoing rehabilitation therapy.
- Betty Oltman had gallbladder surgery on March 2.
- Pam Meier had surgery after she was bitten by a dog and the wound became infected.
- Paul Abrahamson had an angiogram for heart concerns on March 30.

Condolences to

- The family of Belle Cross on her passing from time to eternity of March 7.
- To Norman & Deann Van Enter and Carla van Holsteijn on the passing of Norman's sister (Carla's aunt), Phyllis Nielsen of Milford, from time to eternity on March 10.
- The family of Linda Hamilton on her passing from time to eternity on March 18.
- Maye Wiemers and Tori Rasmussen on the passing of Mayes' twin sister (Tori's aunt) Faye from Harlan, IA, from time to eternity on March 19.

# Consistory News

The regular meeting of the Hope Reformed Consistory met at 7:00 p.m. in the Harbor on March 12.. Present: Deacons Bob Graham, Derek Bailey, Craig Van Drunen, Levi Morris, Kyle Mechler. Elders Gary Zeutenhorst, Dean Mechler, Cedric Winterboer, Kurt Weeks, Brad Olsen. Pastors Russell Muilenburg and Jay Van Gelder. Absent: Deacon John Haak.

Pastor Russell opened the devotions with reading from Haggai 2:6-9 and then led the discussion on the video Sticky Teams with Larry Osborne on Talking about Money. He closed the discussion with prayer.

## ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION AND DECISIONS

Pastor Russell led the discussion of the Classis meeting on 03/10/2020 regarding the report given at by the Vision 2020 committee, what this will mean for us as a church and the upcoming synod meeting this summer. One idea discussed was having a meeting of the Greater Consistory to discuss this issue further prior to the Synod meeting this summer and possibly inviting Brian Keepers to talk to this group.

**MMSC** to approve the February 13, 2020 minutes.

**MMSC** to approve the February financials as presented by the Deacons.

Pastor Russell shared that staff has been reviewing the Policy and Procedures such as reviewing the current Security Team responsibilities and duties as well as reviewing any new safety issues than need to be addressed in the building.

Pastor Russell discussed the next sermon series after Easter. He shared that he and Pastor Nick Hanges from Foundation Church in Spencer and David Lyons from Atlas will be doing a sermon series together and will be exchanging pulpits as a part of the series.

Pastor Russell led the discussion on how we as a church are currently going to handle the pandemic. After discussion the following decisions were made (updates will be made as necessary):

1. If the Spencer schools cancel classes youth groups will not meet to be consistent with our current policy regarding canceling church programs with school cancellations.
2. We will cancel the community meals starting this Sunday, 03/15/2020.
3. We will continue Sunday services until there would be a state mandate to no longer have group gatherings of 100 people or more.
4. Pastor Russell indicated that there will be an email sent out to address issues around the Pandemic and the measures we will be taking going forward while we continue services.

Pastor Russell closed the portion of the meeting with prayer.

## ELDERS MEETING

Pastor Russell opened the meeting with prayer.

The Constitutional Question was asked and answered in the negative.

Pastor Russell led the discussion regarding contacts made since last meeting by the Elders.

Congregational concerns were discussed.

Closed this portion of the meeting with prayer.

## DEACONS MEETING

Bob opened the meeting with prayer.

We talked about doing background checks on all volunteers and the cost associated with doing so.

Jay introduced 3 database planning and communicating options for the church and we discussed those options at length.

Craig closed the meeting with prayer.



A special meeting of Hope Church Elders was held in the Narthex at 6:30 p.m. on March 16.

Present: Elders Dean Mechler, Gary Zeutenhorst, Brad Olson, Darrell Todd, Cedric Winterboer and Kurt Weeks. Pastor Russell Muilenburg.

## ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION AND DECISIONS

Pastor Russell opened the meeting with prayer.

Pastor Russell discussed the most recent proclamation by the Governor that we cannot assemble with any more than 10 people in any setting for 8 weeks. He discussed the impact on us not being able to meet as a church body if we were to follow those guidelines. After much discussion on the ramifications of this for us as a church body a motion was brought to the floor.

**MMS** that we suspend live worship services for the next 4 weeks and then reassess the situation. After discussion a vote was taken, and the motion was defeated.

**MMSC** to suspend live worship services for three weeks and then reassess the situation again before the Easter Service.

Pastor Russell indicated that the services would still be streamed on-line. He also spent some time reviewing some plans the staff had been talking about to keep in contact with the congregation through on-line programs and other forms of contact during this time.

Pastor Russell also indicated that he would be doing a Wednesday devotional on-line and the first topic he will be talking about Psalm 91.

An idea was discussed to broadcast a sermon on an FM frequency and that the congregation could park in the parking lot and listen to the sermon live in their cars. Pastor Russell stated that he would check into this and would see if this were possible. If so, this could be done at the 9:00 a.m. service and they could still stream the second service on-line.

Pastor Russell closed the meeting with prayer.



BRING JOY. EXPERIENCE JOY.

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## WORSHIP SERVICES

### Sundays

Drive-In Service

9:00 a.m.

Hope Church Parking Lot

Live Stream Online

10:45 a.m.

YouTube

### Palm Sunday, April 5

Drive-In Service @ Hope: 9:00 a.m.

Live Stream Online: 10:45 a.m.

### Maundy Thursday, April 9

Drive-In Service & Communion\* @ Hope: 6:30 p.m.

\*with commercially pre-packaged individual juice/wafer sets

### Easter Sunday, April 12

Drive-in Service @ Gateway North Mall Parking Lot: 9:00 a.m.

Live Stream Online: 10:45 a.m.

### Hope Church Staff:

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