



# IN TOUCH WITH HOPE

monthly newsletter of Hope Church, Spencer, IA

May, 2020

By Pastor Russell Muilenburg

## *COVID-19 Announcements & Survey*

As you have probably heard, on Monday, April 27 Iowa Governor Kim Reynolds recognized the constitutional right of churches and other religious organizations to meet without restrictions. This was good news, especially as it was a part of a declaration recognizing that our county and many other counties in Iowa are in good shape with regard to the coronavirus and can begin the process of re-opening. I am hopeful that this means there are more days of social isolation behind us than there are in front of us. The Governor's announcement did not mean, however, that Hope Church will immediately resume in-person worship services. There are a couple of things to keep in mind:

- The Governor's statement was a part of a declaration that continues to put a limit on all mass gatherings of 10 people or more. Churches are constitutionally exempted from this limitation, but that does not mean it is advisable for us to exceed it at this time. The principal of Christian freedom reminds us that just because we can do something, that doesn't mean we should. (1 Cor. 10:24; Gal. 5:13-15) Loving our neighbor means we must still consider the repercussions of choosing to join large groups not just for ourselves, but also for others in the group, those we return to, and the welfare of our entire community.
- The Governor's statement also requests that churches continue to follow social distancing guidelines, along with other sectors of society, even as we begin to meet together again. This is a reminder that when we do begin meeting in-person, it may not immediately look like our meetings have looked in the past. Things like shaking hands, coffee service, child-care and passing an offering plate may have to be delayed. We may seek to limit crowd sizes and maintain social distancing in our seating patterns. Once again, Christian love directs us to follow these and other steps out of care for one another and as a part of our witness to the world.

We recognize that different churches will approach this matter in different ways. Congregation size and facilities, as well as denominational affiliation will be factors. We do not wish to criticize any churches who begin activities sooner than we do, nor question churches that choose to wait longer than we do. But in light of the current situation, our consistory is taking these steps:

1. **Beginning May 1:** We will unlock the church doors and invite groups of 10 or less to meet in the building. Please schedule any meetings with the church office and please follow the additional guidelines you will be provided with.
2. **Beginning May 17:** we are tentatively planning to resume in-person worship services. The church staff is working on a plan for what this will look like under social distancing guidelines, which the consistory will approve in advance. As it was before this crisis, on-line streaming of services will continue to be an option.

All of this, of course, is Lord Willing. We are hopeful that the situation in Clay County will continue as it is, and we are praying that the rest of the state as well as the rest of the nation and world will reach the peak of this virus and begin to improve. If the situation changes, or circumstances indicate we should wait longer--or, even if we resume in-person worship and the situation in our area changes significantly--we will adjust as needed. As so many of us have been reminded in the last few months we must do our planning in pencil.

As a part of our planning, we have prepared [a brief survey](#). We know that nobody knows exactly what the situation will be tomorrow, let alone two weeks from now, but we would like to know what sort of activities you might feel comfortable with as we begin to re-open the church. This will help us as we make our preparations. No matter what happens, please know that nobody will be pressured into participating in activities they are not comfortable with, whether as a volunteer or an attendee. We will try to provide the most reasonable precautions we can, but understand they will not be right for everybody. We will continue to provide on-line services and other remote activities.

Finally, let's remember that while these past weeks have not been ideal, and the weeks ahead may still be frustrating and not what we prefer, we have not stopped being the church. God has not left us. Jesus is still in control. I am grateful for the technology and creativity that have allowed us to connect with each other in the ways we have, and I am praying that you will continue to deepen your friendship with God even as we are physically removed from each other. This will always be an interesting stop on the journeys of our lives, but I am hopeful that we will all look back on it as a time when we grew closer to God.

Please [click here](#) to take the survey.



## Pastor Jay Van Gelder Youth News

Congratulations to our high school graduates. The following high school seniors have been involved at Hope Church and were asked the following questions:

- What have you been involved in at Hope Church?
- How has Hope Church helped you grow as a person?
- What are your future plans after graduation?



**Austin Bryan**  
**Son of Mike & Jackie Bryan**

I have been involved in Hope Church through the youth group since 6th grade. I have also taken part in Sunday morning worship through singing and running the sound board. This year I also started as a Middle School Youth Sponsor. Hope Church has helped me grow in my faith giving me the chance to go on summer mission trips and the spiritual retreats in the spring. Hope also gave me the opportunity to attend Inspiration Hills in 4th grade. I am very thankful I have been given the opportunity to help with the Middle School Youth Group because it has given me the chance to show people how much God has done for me. Next year I will be attending Iowa State University with an open undecided major.



**Rhyan Busch**  
**Son of Scott & Melissa Busch**

I have been on multiple mission trips and been a part of the praise team on Sunday mornings. Hope Church has helped me grow in my faith due to their love and support for children ministry. I plan on studying Musical Theatre at Drake University in the Fall.



**Addie Gilderhus**  
**Daughter of Scott & Tami Gilderhus**

I have been going to Hope Church since I was born. I participated in everything from serving in the nursery, Children's Church, Vacation Bible School, and Sunday school. I started going to youth group in 6th grade and have gone on every mission trip in the summer which have included Urban Plunge, Power Connection twice, Rocky Mountain High, West Virginia, and Tennessee. Hope Church has helped me grow in my faith because of the amount of adults that have mentored me and are constantly looking out for me. I have been a part of the Mentor Program since it started and have had a few different mentors along the way. In the fall I will be attending University of South Dakota to double major in Criminal Justice and Psychology.



**Kyle Goeken**  
**Son of Kevin & Rebecca Goeken**

I have been involved in Hope Church since 2nd grade. My first memories are learning and growing in my faith during Sunday School with Kim and Ronnie Smith. I also was involved in Middle and High School Youth Group and mentoring with Eric Meeter which then led me to volunteer my time with Praise Team, Video and Sound Board. I've enjoyed creating recap videos for Bible School and the Super Youth Football Parties and my favorite memory was creating the "This Is Me" Mother's Day Video. Attending the mission trips and Rocky Mountain High were very impactful and helped me grow in my relationship with God. Next fall I plan to attend Nebraska Wesleyan University in Lincoln, NE to pursue a BFA in theatre with a minor in film.



**Keegan Johnson**  
**Son of Mike & Tara Johnson**

Since being invited to Youth Group in 6th grade I became actively involved. I attend Senior High Youth Group on Sundays, attended our spring spiritual retreats, and went on summer mission trips. However, my personal favorite is serving as a student sponsor for the Middle School Youth Group on Wednesday nights. Hope Church has guided me in my faith journey tremendously. Accepting Christ as a 7th grader on Power Connection, allowing me to make friends and surround myself in an uplifting Christian community outside of church, and through all the relationships from mentors and community members. I thank our youth group for helping develop my leadership skills and learning to share my faith. As I was once told, your faith can be personal, but not private. In the fall I will be attending Western Iowa Tech Community College to major in police science and get a firefighting certificate.



**Jenna Morey**  
**Daughter of Jeff & Kerrie Morey**

I have been involved in Youth Group and Bible Camp in the summer at Hope Church. I have gone on two mission trips, which have included West Virginia and Tennessee. Hope Church has helped me grow in my faith through the teachings and friends I have made along the way. Most importantly the adults have taught me right from wrong, and how I can become stronger in my faith. Starting this fall, I plan to attend Wartburg College, where I will be majoring in Exercise Science and running for the Cross Country and Track team for the next four years.



**Maegan Olsen**  
**Daughter of Brad Olsen & Sara Olsen**

I have been involved in VBS, youth group, the praise team, and helping with any activities going on. Hope Church has become my family. I found some of my closest friends through youth group and they have all helped me through multiple trials in my life. Although I grew up in a strong Christian home, I didn't know what it meant to have a relationship with God until youth group and going on the youth trips. Helping people through our mission trips opened my eyes and helped me form my strong relationship with Christ. After graduation, I will be attending Iowa State University studying animal science in hopes to become a large animal veterinarian specializing in horses.



**Noah Reiman**  
**Son of Brad & Amy Reiman**

I have been involved with the Middle School and High School Youth Groups, gone on spiritual retreats & summer work projects, and worked with the Praise and Worship Team by doing projection for regular sermons and special services. I have also helped with some of the children's programs and have been a leader during VBS. I am fortunate to be involved with the Mentor/Mentee program with Arvin Druvenga as my Mentor. Hope Church has helped me grow in numerous ways. These two verses, Philippians 1:3-6 & Isaiah 41:31, have impacted me in growing closer to the Lord through the way I work and carry myself while acting as the hands and feet of God. I plan on attending South Dakota State University and majoring in Animal Science.



**Turner Soden**  
**Son of Kevin & Lynnette Soden**

I have been a part of Hope Youth Group since 8th grade and have gone on many work/mission trips with my youth group. I have grown in my faith journey by all the friendly people in the church there to guide me. In other churches it was not the same way. After graduation I am going to Iowa Central to play football and join the Fire Science program to become a full time Fireman/EMT.

## Sarah Kerns Children & Family News



### Vacation Bible School

The Lord willing, Vacation Bible School is rescheduled for July 13-17. Registration and more information will be coming soon.

### Sunday School

Sunday School is online at 10:00 a.m. Join me for a story and fun lesson on the Hope Kids [Facebook Page](#). This is appropriate for all ages, especially PK-5<sup>th</sup> grade.

### Resources

Activity sheets and devotionals are available for children and families online on our church [website](#) and [Hope Kids Facebook page](#). Please let me know if you are unable to print these at home and would like copies.

## Craig Cannon Music News

### Cantata Books

For those individuals who have the music books from the Cantata that was cancelled on Palm Sunday, please hold on to them or return them to me. Our plan is to perform that Cantata next spring.

### Worship Music Playlists

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

# Beth Muilenburg

## Discipleship & Care

Are you feeling anxious? RightNow Media has several options to help with feelings of fear and doubt. If you do not all ready have access and would like to be able to log-in to RightNow, contact me at (712) 346-8481 or email at [bmuilenburg@spencerhope.org](mailto:bmuilenburg@spencerhope.org) and you can have free access through our church's subscription. *May God bless you as you seek Him!*

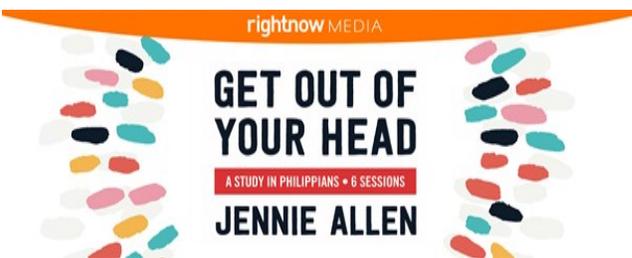
Check out these timely options:



Anxiety can feel like a constricting snake slowly tightening around us until it is difficult to breathe. In this four-part series, Jonathan Pokluda speaks words of comfort and wisdom, to help Christians navigate the areas of life COVID-19 is affecting. During this series you'll be encouraged in how to overcome anxiety in these troubling days and explore ways you can remain faithful to God and to others.



What the world needs most today, what our cities and communities need most today, what we all need most today is a spiritual awakening. Here's the good news. It's possible. Right now, God is closer to you than you think. How close? Twenty inches. Twenty inches is all that separates you from, "then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land." It's the twenty inches between your knees and the ground. It's assuming a position of kneeling before the mighty God and admitting that you need help. Twenty inches to go from death to life. Twenty inches that change your story from, "I was a victim of circumstance," to, "I found Jesus, and He stood me up victorious."



Are your thoughts holding you captive? Jennie Allen knows what it's like to swirl in a spiral of destructive thoughts, such as *I'll never be good enough*. *Other people have better lives than I do*. *God couldn't really love me*. But Jennie also knows we don't have to stay stuck in toxic thinking patterns. As she discovered, God built a way for us to escape that downward spiral. Freedom comes when we refuse to be victims to our thoughts and realize we have already been equipped with power from God to fight and win the war for our minds.

## COVID-19 Guidelines for Group Meetings at Hope Church

- Groups, as always, need to call the church office at 262-3016 and schedule **all** meetings with Lori. This will help us be aware of numbers and facilitate cleaning before and after groups meet.
- Groups must be limited in number to 10 or less at this time.
- People within groups must be at least 6 feet apart.
- We recommend washing your hands before and after you meet.
- While we cannot force you to wear a mask, we highly recommend wearing one.
- Instead of passing out any papers, please send all information by email or text messaging to reduce transmission of germs.
- We ask that childcare for groups be provided outside of the church building at this time to limit exposure.
- If you are feeling ill, please stay home!

## Celebrating with

- Lyndsay Nelson and Nick Anderson who were united in marriage on April 4.
- Andrew & Briana Wetrich on the birth of their son, Greyson Lou, on April 19.
- Jonathan and Lindsey DeGraaf on the birth of their daughter, Annie Elaine, on April 29.

## Concerns for

- Paul Abrahamson had three heart stents placed on April 10.
- Allan Hansen was in the Sioux Falls Hospital with pneumonia.

## Condolences to

- Kevin & Becky Robinson & family on the passing of Kevin's father, Keith Robinson of Manchester, IA, from time to eternity on April 2.
- Deb & Dean Mechler, Kyle and Janessa Mechler & family and John and Karen Corrigan on the passing of Deb's brother (Kyle & Karen's uncle), Al Janssen, from Albany, NY, from time to eternity on April 3.
- Bob & Chris Johnson and Heather & Adam Warren on the passing of Bob's father (Heather's grandfather), Cleo Johnson of Spencer, from time to eternity on April 6.
- Tim & Michele Yeager on the passing of Tim's mother, June Johannsen of Spencer, from time to eternity on April 22.
- Tom & Char Maertens on the passing of Tom's mother, Arlene Maertens of Marshall, MN, from time to eternity on April 24.

# Consistory News

The regular meeting of the Hope Reformed Consistory met at 8:15 over *Zoom* on Thursday, April 2. Present: Deacons Bob Graham, Kyle Mechler, Craig Van Drunen, Derek Bailey, Levi Morris and John Haak. Elders Dean Mechler, Darrell Todd, Kurt Weeks, Cedric Winterboer, Brad Olsen, and Gary Zeutenhorst. Pastors Russell Muilenburg and Jay Van Gelder. Pastor Russell read from James 4: 13 and opened the meeting with prayer.

## ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION AND DECISION

- Pastor Russell discussed the schedule for Holy week. The Maundy Thursday service will be in the parking lot at 6:30 p.m., and Communion will be served at this service. Easter service will be held at the ILCC parking lot at the North Mall. This will be at 9:00 a.m. and live stream at 10:45. Pastor Russell indicated that if a Shelter at Home order occurs then the parking lot services will be cancelled. There will be a 30 second radio add on KUOO regarding the Easter service.
  - Pastor Russell reviewed the finances up to the end of March. He reviewed 2019 weekly giving through the end of March in comparison to 2020 weekly giving through the end of March. Giving up to the end of March was \$22,000 short of budget. He indicated that the Classis is giving the churches a 30% discount on the 1<sup>st</sup> quarters assessment payments.
  - Pastor Russell suggested that the church look at the Payroll Protection Program that was passed by Congress to cover payroll costs for a 2-month period. Non-profit organizations are eligible for this program. The church would be eligible to borrow money to cover payroll for two months. There is a possibility that this could be forgiven and not have to be paid back. If it became a loan the interest rate would be 1%. Pastor Russell indicated that the denomination had no recommendations regarding applying for the loan.
  - **MMSC** to apply for the Payroll Protection Program loan. Levi Morris stated that he would take the lead on contacting Farmers Bank and getting the application sent in.
  - There was discussion regarding communicating to the congregations about the shortfall in giving and whether another reminder needs to be sent out. The decision was made to wait until after Easter. It would have been six weeks since the email had been sent out to the congregation and we could evaluate if giving has increased since then. At that time, we could decide what type of communication would be sent out.
  - Pastor Russell closed the meeting with prayer.
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The regular meeting of the Hope Reformed Consistory met at 8:15 on *Zoom* on Thursday, April 16. Present: Deacons Bob Graham, John Haak, Craig Van Drunen, Levi Morris and Derek Bailey. Elders Dean Mechler, Brad Olson, Darrell Todd, Cedric Winterboer, Kurt Weeks and Gary Zeutenhorst. Pastors Russell Muilenburg and Jay Van Gelder. Absent: Deacon Kyle Mechler.

Pastor Russell opened the meeting with prayer.

## ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION AND DECISION

- Reviewed the financials for March. We are down 21,000, expenses versus income for the month. This did not include the ACH giving.
- Levi Morris reported on the status of the Payroll Protection Program. The application was submitted, and we received \$70,000. This will be deposited into checking at the end of the week. If the loan is not forgiven there is a 1% charge and the loan is to be paid back in 24 months. To be eligible for the loan to be forgiven 75% of it needs to be spent on staff salaries and you have to have the same number of staff working at the end of the 2.5 month period as when you requested the loan.
- Some time was spent addressing how to address the budget shortfall and how to communicate this to the congregation. It was decided that the giving information be put in the bulletin that is put out on-line on Sundays.
- Pastor Russell stated that as we anticipate the government's Phase 1,2,3 process he indicated that he and Cedric had talked about what could be done to make people feel more comfortable coming back and attending church once we get to that stage of the Phase process. They had identified three things.
  - \* We could have someone taking temperatures as people came in the door. (this could also be done in the nursery, Sunday school and youth group.)
  - \* Having hand sanitizer stations in the church.
  - \* Encouraging people to wear masks.
- Pastor Russell discussed services going forward for right now that they would continue the parking lot service and he would be doing this from the garage area. They also are pre-recording the streaming service. He discussed the issue of Vacation Bible school and that the date would have to be pushed back, as well as looking at not having the number of children as in the past. Pastor Jay reported on attendance with youth group and he has 50% senior high attendance and 60% middle school attendance. He had a middle school retreat scheduled that was switched to a *Zoom* format and all of the middle school kids who signed up for the retreat (19) attended the Friday night session and the three sessions on Saturday.
- Pastor Russell stated that the General Synod has been postponed for a year. He indicated that the Vision 2020 Report will be coming out and that there may be a meeting in the fall to address those recommendations.
- Pastor Russell reviewed some of the numbers of views on the internet to some of the programs that have been offered since the pandemic has started. He indicated a big increase of course regarding the live streaming service since the start of the COVID 19 and our dropping services in the church.
- Pastor Russell closed the meeting in prayer.

# HOPE CHURCH

BRING JOY. EXPERIENCE JOY.

919 Grand Avenue  
Spencer, IA 51301  
(712) 262-3016  
www.spencerhope.com

## WORSHIP SERVICES

## SERMONS

### Sundays

Drive-In Service

9:00 a.m.

Hope Church Parking Lot

Live Stream [Online](#)

10:45 a.m.

YouTube



***Socially Distant:  
Staying Connected with God When  
You Cannot Go to Church***

May 3 *A Well-Ordered Live*  
Colossians 3:17

May 10 *Tell the Next Generation*  
Psalm 78: 1-4

May 17 }  
May 24 } To Be Determined  
May 31 }

### 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*