

in touch with Hope

Monthly newsletter of Hope Church, Spencer,
IA

June, 2020



by Pastor Russell Mulenburg

The Thing We Keep Talking About

If you are like me, you are tired of talking about the coronavirus. You are tired of news reports that focus on it. You're tired of the seemingly endless debates about the best responses to it, and you are especially tired of the way it is disrupting your life. It would be nice, maybe, to read a newsletter article about something else. But, the coronavirus continues to affect the way we do things at church, so it seems that the thing we keep talking about needs to be the thing I write about here.

It is becoming increasingly clear that we are going to have to find a way to go on with life even while the coronavirus remains an active threat to public health. As I have said throughout this pandemic, I am not qualified to weigh in on medical matters, politics, or the economy. What I can do is think about how the Bible applies to current situations. Along those lines, I offer the following thoughts:

1. **The priority of mutual concern.** In 1 Corinthians 12:25 the Apostle Paul writes: "that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other."

Something that is clear in this situation is that people have different needs and concerns when it comes to public gatherings. Whether it is risk factors, risk tolerance, or personal conviction people are at different places on the spectrum of what kind of groups they feel comfortable joining and how they are likely to behave in those groups.

One of the things I like about our current plan for Sunday mornings is that it offers options for people at different places on that spectrum. With the 9:00 a.m. parking lot service, the [10:45 in-person option](#) or [at-home worship](#), I am hopeful that people can find a way to participate in worship in a way that feels right to them. I am also hopeful that as we get used to this "new normal" we will be able to bring more and more people into the building. But, I recognize that it may be quite a while before we are all ready to return, and so we will continue to make a point of offering alternatives.

2. **The priority of harmony.** Colossians 3:14-15 says: "Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds us all together in perfect harmony. And let the peace that comes from Christ rule in your hearts." (NLT)

There is no shortage of opinions about the best response to the virus; and those opinions can serve as a source of great division. It is possible that those who are more cautious about returning to in-person worship will look at those who do as being reckless. It is possible that those who are ready for in-person worship will look at those who remain at home as being fearful. It is possible that when we talk about these things—whether it is on social media or in the church lobby or even just within our own families—that we will be tempted to put down or even insult those who feel differently than us.

And so, it is important for all of us to seek after peace. That might mean that I keep quiet about my convictions. It might mean that I seek to limit my conversations to topics of the gospel and God's grace. It might mean letting a comment pass without rebuttal or response. It might mean telling my own heart to set aside every attitude and thought except love for God and others. As [one blogger said](#), "Promoting harmony is a fruit of dying to self... It is not my life's goal to have you agree with me. It is my life's goal to love you."

3. **The priority of putting others first.** Finally, Philippians 2:3-4 says: "Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others."

I have not been perfect at social distancing, but I am definitely conscious of it. I do not put myself in very many gatherings. When I do I wash my hand frequently, I stay out of other people's space, and I wear a mask. It's not necessarily because I am convinced of the effectiveness of those things, but because they are simple ways that I can show my concern for others. As Christians who are called to show our love for God by the way we love others, it seems like the least I can do.



Pastor Jay Van Gelder Youth News

We're Sad to Inform You.....

Middle School Summer Service Trip

The Middle School "Immerse" trip that was scheduled in Lincoln, NE in June has been cancelled. Power Connection is in the works to be on the calendar for the summer of 2021 for 6th-8th grade youth (location and exact dates to be determined).

Sr. High Rocky Mountain High Summer Trip

The senior high work project trip in July to Colorado Springs and Rocky Mountain High at the YMCA of the Rockies has been cancelled for 2020. Rocky Mountain High is rescheduled for July 31 - August 4, 2021, but due to planning circumstances at the YMCA of the Rockies, Rocky 2021 will be open to next year's juniors (Class of 2022) and seniors (Class of 2021) only. We understand that the loss of Rocky 2020 has hit this year's seniors the hardest. There is, however, planning in the works by the RCA for a new event for next summer that will be available to the class of 2020. Regular Rocky for grades 9 - 12 will be staying on an every three year rotation with the next one planned for the summer of 2023.

We are so disappointed that these summer youth trips have been cancelled! We will be refunding all the deposits made for these trips to the parents.

What is to Come.....

Summer Youth Group

We are continuing to look at ways we can connect with the youth over the summer as well as look at adding special things, if possible. We are talking through creative ways for us to still connect, talk, share, pray, have fun, learn and maybe even serve together. So, keep your eyes open. We will post things on our Facebook page, Instagram, twitter and via mass texts.

Stay Connected!



like us & follow us on Facebook: www.facebook.com/hopeyouth



Instagram: [@hopeyouthspencer](https://www.instagram.com/hopeyouthspencer)



email: jvangelder@spencerhope.org

Consistory News

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

Pastor Russell led the devotional time by reading Isaiah 40: 28-31 and opened the meeting with prayer.

ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION AND DECISIONS

- Pastor Russell introduced Dr. Nathaniel Meyer, a member of Hope Church and family practice doctor in Spencer, to talk to the Consistory about the COVID-19 virus and what the medical community has seen in Clay County. Dr. Meyer shared that they have tested approximately 200 people and had five tests positive. They have had a total of eight positive cases at the time of meeting. At this point they have not seen any community spread yet in Clay County. Medically they are following the guidelines as set out by the state - 10 or less for any group gathering, social distancing and wearing masks. He indicated that the Iowa Department of Public Health is where you can check guidelines and COVID-19 information. Pastor Russell thanked Dr. Meyer for coming and sharing with the Consistory.
- Pastor Russell led the discussion on the decision of our last meeting when we had decided to have our first open church service on 5/17/2020. He discussed some of the information from the survey sent out and reported we had 165 people fill out the survey. He reviewed the pros and cons of going ahead and starting live services on May 17 or postponing to a later date.
- Dean Mechler stated that he attended the staff meeting this morning and discussed their feelings of starting on the 17th. They had expressed concerns about starting the live services on the 17th but would be willing to do it if asked. He did share that they were more open to the idea of starting on June 7th.
- **MMS** to start live services on May 17th following the guidelines set out in proposal at previous Consistory meeting. Motion was defeated 5 for and 6 against.
- **MMSC** to start live services May 31st following guidelines set out in previous Consistory meeting.
- Pastor Russell stated that we would not meet again before the May 31st service. We will meet again for the regularly scheduled time on June 11.
- **MMSC** to approve the minutes as presented for the following dates March 12, March 16, April 2, and April 16.
- Pastor Jay stated that the data system that the church has started has been working well and he has been using this for communicating with parents about youth group activities.
- **MMSC** to approve the April financials as presented by the Deacons.
- Pastor Russell reminded the Consistory that the General Synod scheduled for this year was postponed till next year but that the Vision 2020 report would be coming out this summer and that there would possibly be a meeting in the fall to vote on the final report and recommendations. He was going to see if he could get Brain Keepers and Tim Breen from the 2020 committee to come this summer and talk to the Consistory.
- Pastor Russell closed the meeting in prayer.

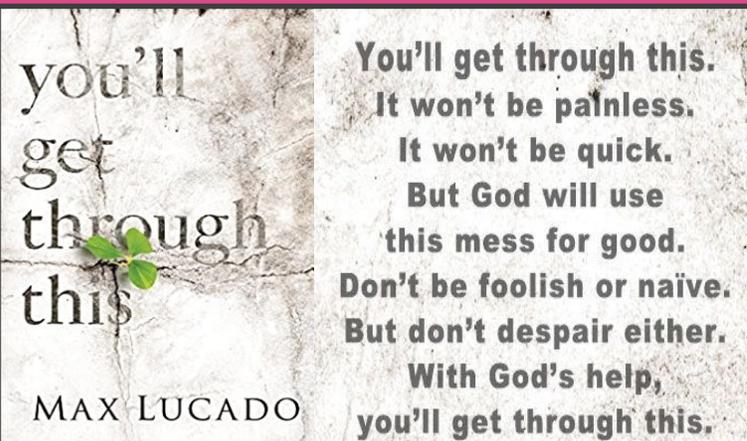
ELDERS MEETING

- Pastor Russell opened the meeting in prayer.
- Pastor Jay stated he had two youth who had requested to make Profession of Faith and indicated that meeting with the Elders could wait for now.
- **MMSC** to approve the transfer request of Ken and Karen Hunziker to Hope Lutheran Church in Des Moines IA.
- Congregational concerns were discussed.
- Pastor Russell indicated that Beth has started the third round of phone calls to the congregation since the pandemic has started to check on them and any concerns they may have.
- Pastor Russell closed the meeting with prayer.

DEACONS MEETING

- Discussion was had regarding refund options for all the middle school and high school youth who had signed up for the summer work trips which are now cancelled for 2020.
- **MMSC** to approve Pastor Jay's advice and his recommendation to not carry over the deposits paid for 2020 work trips in to 2021, so deposit refunds will be paid back to the parents.

Beth Muilenburg Congregational Care



We are doing a small group Bible Study on Tuesday nights in the Harbor at 7:00 p.m. We are looking at Max Lucados' series, *You'll Get Through This*. We watch videos of Max sharing insights on the story of Joseph from the Old Testament, have discussion questions, and have a time for prayer. There is no cost to attend, but please contact the church office if you would like to participate.

Sarah Kerns Children & Family News

Vacation Bible School

We are exploring the options for Vacation Bible School this year. Many of you send your children to this extraordinary week and/or support the children's programs through volunteerism, prayer, or tithing. Please continue to pray for wisdom and guidance as we make decisions in the weeks to come on how Vacation Bible School will look for the summer of 2020.

Like our [Hope Kids Facebook](#) page to receive updates and information about VBS as well as other information and activities for children and families!

Summer Sunday School

Our online, live Sunday School has come to an end for the summer months.

FAMILY BIKE RIDE

HOPE
CHURCH
BRING JOY. EXPERIENCE JOY.



WEDNESDAY
JUNE 3
6:30 PM

Meet at the Front
Middle School
Parking Lot

ALL AGES WELCOME!

Concerns for

- Paul Abrahamson had a fourth heart stent placed on May 7.
- Paul Flaharty had an infection in his nervous system causing issues with weakness and difficulty walking.

Condolences to

- Dave & Betty Oltman on the passing of Dave's mother, Hilda Oltman of Grundy Center, from time to eternity on May 22.
- Dave and Pam West on the passing of Dave's daughter, Allie West of Wisconsin, from time to eternity on May 22.

Summer Worship

We have resumed in-person worship at the 10:45 a.m. livestream service with a limited number of reserved seating. **We are respectfully asking that only those who have pre-registered come to the church at 10:45 as we have carefully planned for social distancing.**

We believe we can seat approximately 90 people in the Sanctuary and the Well while still maintaining social distancing between family groups. Because of limited seating, we are sending a [registration form via email](#) on Monday mornings prior to the following Sunday's service, and those who would like to worship in the building for Sunday's livestream service can RSVP. You can register anytime throughout the week. When we fill the first 90 spots in the Sanctuary/Well we have another 60 spots available in the Harbor, watching a video feed. The 9:00 a.m. drive-in service will continue, and you may **bring a lawn chair if you would like to sit outside your car.**

As you know, our worship services in the Sanctuary and time of fellowship in the lobby are not very conducive to social distancing, which continues to be one of the best ways to love our neighbors and protect our families. Please view our [COVID-19 page](#) on our website for detailed guidelines on our re-gathering plan.

Church Softball

Unfortunately, church softball has been cancelled for the summer of 2020. It will resume next year!



“Some of the best summer memories are made on two wheels.”

unknown

HOPE CHURCH

BRING JOY. EXPERIENCE JOY.

919 Grand Avenue

Spencer, IA 51301

(712) 262-3016

www.spencerhope.com

WORSHIP SERVICES

Sundays

9:00 a.m.

Drive-In Service

Hope Church Parking Lot

10:45 a.m.

Livestream Service

Reserved Sanctuary seating
(limited numbers)

SERMONS



*Legendary 2
Heroes of the Bible*

June 7: Peter & John: *We Cannot Help Speaking*
Acts 3-4

June 14: Jonah: *Reluctant Prophet*
Jonah

June 21: Samuel Anointing David:
God Looks at the Heart
1 Samuel 15-16

June 28: Ruth: *Kinsman-Redeemer*
Ruth

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*