

in touch with Hope

monthly newsletter of Hope Church, Spencer, Iowa

July, 2020

by Pastor Russell Muilenburg

Christ Jesus: Died, Raised, and Interceding

(This article was inspired by "Against Every Accusation" by Scott Hubbard found at www.DesiringGod.com)

"Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. Who then is the one who condemns? No one. Christ Jesus who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us." Romans 8:33-34

Romans 8:1 says that "there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." Romans 8:34, quoted above, says the same thing. Asking the rhetorical question "Who...is the one who condemns?" it provides the answer: "No one." If you belong to Jesus Christ then you will not be condemned. There is no one to condemn you. It is settled.

But...wait a minute. That is a splendid article of faith, but a casual review of our own experience makes it appear to be untrue. There are actually quite a few voices bringing condemnation our way. For one thing, there is Satan—the accuser—who is constantly dredging up our flaws and failures (see Zechariah 3:1 and Revelation 12:10). There are people around us—enemies who would see us discredited and loved ones who are often hurt by us—who remind us in ways big and small of our ongoing sinfulness. And, we don't need outside voices. Our own hearts are quick to testify against us (1 John 3:20).

What do we do then, when we are confronted once again with our weaknesses and we begin to doubt whether God can really love sinners such as us? Verse 34 gives us the instruction that we must preach the gospel to ourselves. We must remind ourselves of the great truths of the gospel that Christ died. Christ was raised. Christ is interceding for us.

Christ Jesus Who Died. The voices of condemnation would be easier to dismiss if they were obviously untrue. The problem is they carry a lot of truth. We are sinful. We are weak. We deserve to be found guilty. We don't find peace by making excuses. We don't avoid condemnation by minimizing our sin. Instead, we must admit that we are sinful, but then rest in the fact that Christ died for sinners (Romans 5:8). We are guilty, but Christ's blood covers our guilt (Romans 3:24-25). We deserve condemnation, but Christ was condemned in our place (Romans 8:3). As Scott Hubbard puts it, "Christ has died for our sins. And if *he* has died for them, then we need not."

Christ Jesus Who was Raised. The willingness of Jesus to suffer and die in our place is certainly noble and loving; but if the story ends with Jesus' bloody and broken body being removed from the cross, it's more tragic than triumphant. What good does a dead savior do us? But, of course, Jesus didn't stay dead. My favorite part of the Apostle's Creed is the transition from "crucified, dead and buried" to "on the third day He rose again from the dead!" When we recite those lines together I can hear the congregation gather a breath after "buried" before belting out the good news of the resurrection. If Christ had not been raised we would have serious doubts about whether His death removed our guilt. How would we know He was not a fraud, an imposter, or simply a failure? Perhaps, as Isaiah said, He was "smitten by God, and afflicted" (53:4). But it was God Himself who raised Him. God was so satisfied with His Son's work that He was pleased to reach His hand down into death, grasp the Son of His love, and raise Him back to the land of the living. Thus, assuring us that Christ's death was effective to save us.

Christ Jesus Who Intercedes. The part of Jesus' story that we often overlook or downplay is that fact that He is still alive today, seated at the right hand of God the Father (Ephesians 1:20), and actively pleading our cause as the great High Priest (Heb. 4:14). As the great hymn by Charitie Lees Bancroft puts it, "Before the throne of God above/I have a strong and perfect plea/A great High Priest whose name is love/Who ever lives and pleads for me." If Christ is in heaven, interceding for us, then nothing can separate us from his love: not tribulation, not distress, not persecution, not famine, not nakedness, not danger, not sword (Romans 8:35) — and certainly not the reminders of sins that have already been redeemed and forgiven. As the hymn goes on to say: "I know that while in heav'n He stands/No tongue can bid me thence depart."

There are still voices in this world that seek to condemn us; but, they are silenced by our Savior who died, rose again, and now intercedes for us in heaven.



Trenten Hansen *Youth Assistant*

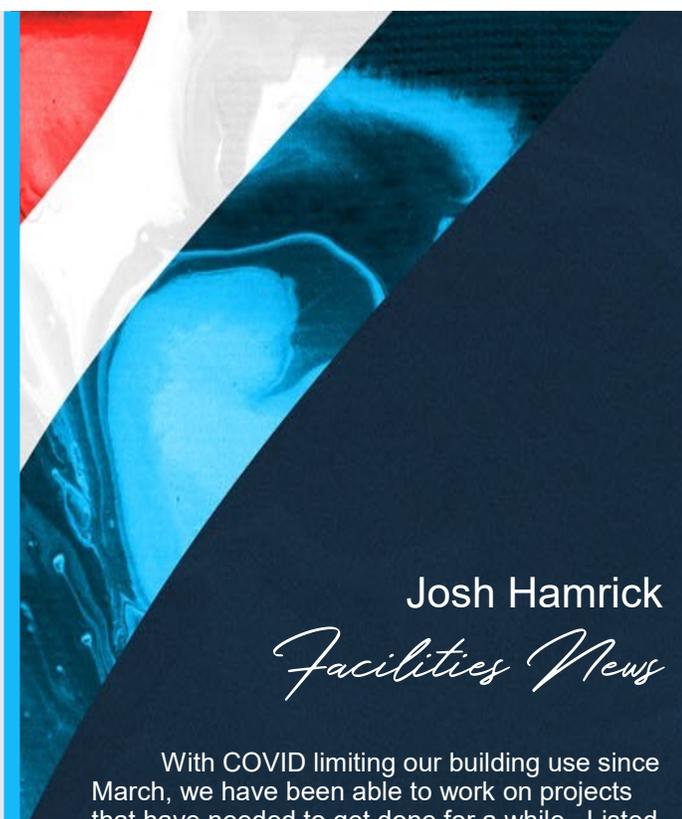
Youth Ministry has looked very different recently. Since March 18 we have had our weekly youth group meetings online via ZOOM and most recently we have been doing a combination of ZOOM and in-person gatherings. We have been fortunate to continue doing ministry with 58 middle schoolers and 31 high schoolers during this crazy time.



On June 7 we began slowly trying to regather in person. We were fortunate enough to circle up our chairs in a socially distant circle and have conversations relating to topics we are facing individually and within the world. Although this isn't our ideal way of doing youth group, we continue to strive finding ways of doing ministry. One thing we have

been doing is delivering prizes, apparel, checks to the students and their families at their homes. We have enjoyed having conversations and learning some new things about the families.

We do have things planned throughout the summer but also know that things can change on a weekly basis. So, please stay informed via our texting or social media. If you are not receiving the texts and would like to receive them please call Jay at 712-363-0885 or me at 402-982-9653.



Josh Hamrick *Facilities News*

With COVID limiting our building use since March, we have been able to work on projects that have needed to get done for a while. Listed below are a few of the things that have been accomplished this spring/early summer:

- Our garage across the street was cleaned out and organized.
- Our fence across the street was completed with new boards on the back side.
- The Sanctuary stage was updated and repaired.
- The men's bathroom (by Pastor Russell's office) was completely remodeled for Trent's new office.
- New shelving was put up in the music room.
- A new wooden offering box in the lobby was built.
- Some of the lobby furniture was repaired.
- The storage basement (under the Sanctuary) was cleaned and organized.

A special thank you to:

- Lon Peterson for keeping the lawn mowed, trimmed and looking good.
- Paul Rekow for helping clean the carpets.

Hope Church uses Sign-Up Genius, an online sign-up tool whenever we need volunteers to provide food for funerals, VBS, etc. If you are not currently receiving emails to sign-up to volunteer to bring food items when needed, please contact the church office at hrc@spencerhope.org or 262-3016. A volunteer sign-up will be emailed soon for VBS snacks.

Sarah Kerns

Children and Family News

At our family bike ride on June 3 we had over 30 people join the fun. We met at the Middle School and enjoyed time together riding on the trails around Spencer.



Vacation Bible School

LOOKING FOR A FUN, SAFE ACTIVITY THIS SUMMER?

HOPE CHURCH
QUARANTINE FRIENDLY
BACKYARD VBS
IS JUST WHAT YOU NEED!

- YOU'LL BE ASSIGNED A HOST SITE IN SPENCER RUN BY A TRAINED HOPE VOLUNTEER
- 3 DAYS - 1.5 HOUR SESSIONS
- OUTSIDE! SMALL GROUPS!
- TWO OPTIONS FOR DATES: JULY 10-12 OR 12-14
- COST IS **FREE!** T-SHIRT & CD INCLUDED!
- GAMES! SNACKS! BIBLE STORIES! MUSIC! FUN!



KIDS
Registration

ONLINE REGISTRATION IS NOW OPEN TO THE PUBLIC!
<https://hopechurchspencer.breezechms.com/form/a0b46850>

<https://hopechurchspencer.breezechms.com/form/a0b4685086>

Volunteer
Registration

- Registration for VBS has begun! Children ages 4 (must be potty-trained) through entering 5th grade in the fall can [register online](#). Volunteers are also needed to help at the host sites and can [register online](#) as well.
- We are needing empty 2-liter pop bottles with the cap, clean and label removed, for a VBS craft. There is a box located near the church office in the lobby for you to place them in. Thank you!

Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is,

there is
freedom

2 Corinthians 3:17

Congregational Care

I know from talking with many of you that you miss being inside our church building, so I thought I would bring it to you! Below are different items located around the inside Hope Church. See if you can figure out what these items are:

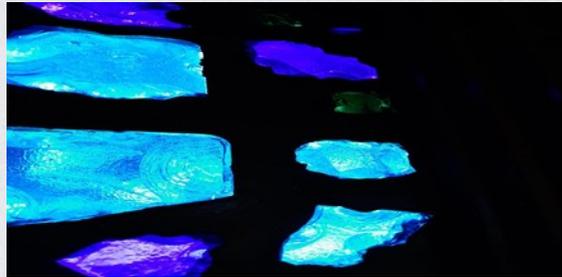
Concerns for

- Katrina Howard had gallbladder surgery on June 4.
- Barb Mann was in the hospital with cellulitis.
- Joanne Goettsche as she started infusion therapy for sarcoidosis.
- Scott Carpenter was in the heart hospital in Sioux Falls.
- Shayler Van Gelder had a heart procedure done in Sioux Falls on June 26 to repair a hole in her heart.

Condolences to

- Paul & Linda Abrahamson on the passing of Paul's brother, Melvin Abrahamson of Havelock, from time to eternity on June 2.
- Norb & Kim Manwarren on the passing of Norb's brother, Ron Manwarren of Spencer, from time to eternity on June 4.
- Phil & Siri Christy on the passing for Phil's father, Donald Christy of Spencer, from time to eternity on June 5.
- Marge Rudisill on the passing of her sister, Arlene Stewart, from time to eternity on June 13.
- Marjean & Doug Siepkes on the passing of Marjean's mother, Iva Oltmanns of Lennox, SD from time to eternity on June 17.
- Allen Glover on the passing of his brother, Brian Glover of Independence, MN, from time to eternity on June 18.
- Joan & Keith Johnson & family on the passing of Joan's mother, Janice Young of Spencer, from time to eternity on June 26.

1.



2.



3.



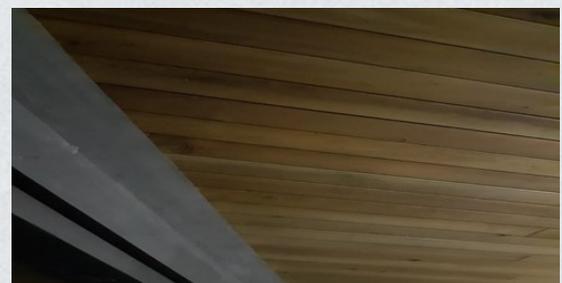
4.



5.



6.



Answer Key:

1. sanctuary window stained glass
2. "Welcome Home" painting in Narthex
3. red couch in youth room couch
4. coat hangers
5. ceiling in The Well
6. snare drum head



Consistory News

The regular meeting of the Hope Reformed Consistory met at 7:00 p.m. in the Well. Present: Deacons Bob Graham, Derek Bailey, Levi Morris, Craig Van Drunen, and Kyle Mechler. Elders Brad Olsen, Cedric Winterboer, Dean Mechler, Darrell Todd, and Gary Zeutenhorst. Pastors Russell Muilenburg and Jay Van Gelder. Absent: Deacon John Haak and Elder Kurt Weeks. Pastor Russell led the devotions by reading from Ephesians 2:11-22 and opened the meeting with prayer.

ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION AND DECISION

- **MMSC** to approve the minutes as presented for May 12, 2020.
- Pastor Russell led the discussion in reviewing the financials for May. There continues to be a shortfall from budget versus giving. Income was \$27,000 short of budget needs. One issue was there were three pay periods in the month that increased expenses. Some of the Elders have been asked by the congregation how the giving has been going. Pastor Russell indicated that it is important to keep this in front of people and that was why he had mentioned it over the pulpit.
- Levi Morris reported on the Payroll Protection Program and stated that the recent change in the program being from 8 weeks to spend the money to 24 weeks as well as the ratio of 75% payroll and 25% other expenses has changed to 60%-40% ratio. The requirements for what would need to happen to get the loan forgiveness continues to change at this time.
- **MMSC** to approve the May financials as presented by the deacons.
- Pastor Russell led the discussion on feedback regarding the recent services in the church. One of the Elders had received comments related to people wanting some of the restrictions lifted such as not having to wear masks and being allowed to stand and sing. Observations were that people were not leaving by rows and there was some people visiting in the lobby after the service. Numbers were low for both services and some discussion was had regarding the need for having people make reservations. It was decided that the reservations email had gone out for this coming Sunday, but the reservations format will be dropped after that.
- **MMSC** to make the church available for graduation parties starting in July.
- Sarah Kerns presented a proposal for VBS. She reviewed with the Consistory the results of the survey sent out to get feedback from the congregation on the idea having VBS this summer. She discussed the reason for having VBS and what the typical VBS would look like pre-pandemic. She shared from the survey the some of the indicators that would make the congregation comfortable with having VBS. The top two were a very small number of COVID cases or not a rise in cases and Sunday morning worship with little or no restrictions. She presented seven different formats of VBS that could be done with one of the seven being no VBS this summer. She then presented the proposal that she would like to recommend for approval. She was requesting we use a three day "backyard" VBS made for churches and families during COVID 19. The format would be as follows:
 - 3 day 1 ½ hour sessions offered at two different times: July 1 0-12 or July 12-14.
 - Hosts/Host sites- Hope families, congregants, leaders to run
 - Families could use it individually
 - Host requirements- application, background check, attend VBS training
 - Kids register on Breeze
 - The cost is free for kids. The church pays for t-shirts (approx. \$500)
 - Minimal materials needed
 - Main goal is to encourage Hope families to "be the church"
 - Sarah would coordinate host sites, youth helpers, kid placement and logistical needs materials tech and communication.
- **MMSC** for Sarah to proceed with the VBS program as proposed.
- Pastor Russell discussed the upcoming Vision 2020 report that is to come out at the end of June. He indicated that it is his understanding that there will be recommendations on how churches can leave the RCA if they do not agree with the recommendation. The recommendation is to take the liberal stand of following the functional reality of how the denomination is already operating. He indicated that he would like to have Brian Keepers and Jim Breen present to the Consistory the recommendations of the Vision 2020 report as well as talk about a network of conservative churches that are talking about joining together. Pastor Russell would like to open this meeting up to the greater consistory of the church as we move toward making the decision regarding the recommendations of the Vision 2020 report.
- Pastor Russell closed this portion of the meeting with prayer.

ELDERS MEETING

- The constitutional question was asked and answered in the negative.
- It was decided to continue to put Communion on hold for now.
- Pastor Russell indicated he has a family that has a child they would like to baptize but they are not members of church yet. He will try to figure out getting a Starting Point Class scheduled for them and others, if interested, to become members.
- Congregation concerns were discussed.
- Pastor Russell closed the meeting with prayer.

DEACONS MEETING

- Bob opened the meeting with prayer.
- Greg Meeter attended our meeting. He talked about the changes in QuickBooks and has decided he will be stepping down as the church treasurer.
- **MMSC** to have Levi consider being our church treasurer.
- We discussed utilizing *Breeze* for ACH giving.
- Workman's Comp ran an audit from May last year to May of this year.
- **MMSC** to accept the concrete repair bid from M & D Construction that Josh Hamrick submitted.
- Jay closed the meeting with prayer.

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 & In-Person Worship Service
Sanctuary

SERMONS



*Legendary 2
Heroes of the Bible*

- | | |
|---------|-----------------------------------------|
| July 5 | Ruth: Kinsman-Redeemer |
| July 12 | Paul: Seeing the Light |
| July 19 | Gideon: Mighty Warrior? |
| July 26 | Mary: Nothing is
Impossible with God |

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*