

# *in touch with Hope*

*monthly newsletter of Hope Church, Spencer, IA*

*March, 2021*

*by Pastor Russell Mullenburg*

## *A Secret Disciple*

As the Easter season approaches, I've been thinking about Joseph of Arimathea. Joseph of Arimathea is an unlikely (and unappreciated) hero of the Easter story. I mentioned him on Sunday as being the key to the fulfillment of Isaiah 53, verse 9.

Who was he? Well, he's mentioned in all four of the gospels. Matthew tells us that he was a rich man, who had become a disciple of Jesus (Matt. 27:57). Mark adds that he was a "prominent member of the Council" (Mark 15:43)—that is, he was a member of the Sanhedrin, the Supreme Court of Israel, the group that turned Jesus over to Pilate to be killed. Luke adds that he was a "good and upright man, who had not consented to their decision and action" (Luke 23:50-51). So he didn't vote for Jesus' crucifixion, but he didn't do enough to stop it either. Finally, John adds that "Joseph was a disciple of Jesus, but secretly because he feared the Jews." (John 19:38)

Based on this description alone, we would probably conclude that Joseph was not much of a follower of Jesus. A secret disciple who refused to take a stand for Jesus? A person of means and influence who cowered behind his fear when Jesus needed him most? Joseph comes off as superficial and non-committal, the perfect example of everything that is wrong with lukewarm and shallow Christianity today. Except for one thing. If it wasn't for Joseph of Arimathea, we might never have had a resurrection at all.

You see, the reason Joseph gets mentioned in all four gospels is that after Jesus' ordeal was over, as the sun was setting and the Sabbath was about to begin, it was Joseph who approached Pilate and asked for permission to take Jesus' body away. That was not at all typical. Normally, a condemned criminal killed on a cross would be left there for several days, to be ridiculed by passers-by and picked at by vultures. When a crucified body was finally taken down it would generally be thrown on the trash heap. From there it would be torn apart by scavenging animals. But not Jesus. Joseph came and took Jesus' body away, and then carefully wrapped it and placed it in his own tomb. Which takes us to Isaiah 53:9, and Jesus being the unlikely fulfillment of the prophecy that "He was assigned a grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death."

If it wasn't for Joseph, there would have been no burial. If there hadn't been a burial, there'd be no body. And if there was no body, then there would have been no resurrection. No empty tomb. I've been thinking about Joseph of Arimathea because in the church world, we often make a big deal of the vocal Christians. The church volunteers who are up front and active. And we do, indeed, need Christians who are willing to take bold risks for Jesus. But there's something to be said also, for the quiet disciples. The ones who haven't found a place to serve yet. The ones who aren't quite ready to put themselves out there for Jesus. Even someone we might call a "secret" disciple. Because, who knows when God might just have a huge assignment for them?

And so, if you find yourself as a Christian who comes to church once a week, but haven't found yourself too involved beyond that... if you are a believer who believes in your heart, but haven't found the courage to take a stand for Jesus yet... if you are somebody who feels like you just don't measure up to the bolder and more vocal Christians around you... don't give up. Jesus loves the quiet disciples too. And He might yet have an opportunity for you to make a huge impact.



# Pastor Fay Van Gelder

## Youth News

### Super Youth Football Party

Below-zero temperatures and Covid wasn't going to stop us from doing our annual Super Youth Football Party! On February 7, we had a modified event with 123 students coming through the church parking lot to pick up their pizza party pack to take home and watch the big game with their family and friends. Throughout the night we texted trivia questions, did raffle drawings, and delivered the prizes to the winners' doorsteps. We believe this event accomplished our goal of doing outreach. We challenged our students to invite their friends hoping to get connected to students who do not have a youth group community. And, our students did exactly that! We saw 15 new youth who do not attend a youth group and we saw 42 youth who we have not seen since last year. Thanks to Godfather's Pizza, Sunshine Foods and all of the volunteers for helping make this a successful youth outreach event!



Youth  
Groups

rightnow MEDIA

SADIE ROBERTSON HUFF

# FIRE & FAITHFULNESS

We live in a world that doesn't care what God wants. Sure, they may not say it that way, but the messages that parade across social media declare that God's way just isn't worth it. **But as Christians, we're committed to following Jesus in every aspect of our lives.** Is it possible to live—or maybe even thrive—as a believer in our world today? Beginning in March, the next series we are doing in both middle school and high school youth groups is *Fire & Faithfulness* with Sadie Robertson Huff. We will discover the lost art of faithfulness in the face of a world that wants nothing to do with God., Trek through the story of four young Israelites who, when ripped from their homes, faced a choice: remain faithful followers in a foreign land, or bow before an empire that hated God.

**HOPE**



Sarah Kerns

Children & Family News

## Journey to the Cross

**Journey to the Cross**  
A SPECIAL EASTER EXPERIENCE!

TRAVEL THROUGH 8 SURPRISING AND ENGAGING STATIONS AND DISCOVER THE JOY, SORROW AND INCREDIBLE GRACE OF GOD.

GOOD FRIDAY, APRIL 2  
HOPE CHURCH  
5:00-8:00 P.M.  
5:00-6:30 P.M. MASKS REQUIRED  
6:30-8:00 P.M. MASKS OPTIONAL

A SPECIAL EVENT FOR THE WHOLE FAMILY! NURSERY PROVIDED FOR CHILDREN BIRTH-2 YRS. OLD

Everyone is invited to attend *Journey to the Cross* at Hope Church on Good Friday, April 2. *Journey to the Cross* is a powerfully moving, multisensory family event that guides people along the path that Jesus walked during his last days on earth. Activities focused on Jesus' love and forgiveness demonstrate the real meaning of Easter: our risen Christ's victory over death! Designed for parents, children and families of all ages and stages of life to experience together, this event teaches about the life-changing message of the cross in a way that everyone can understand and no one will forget.



## Easter Garden

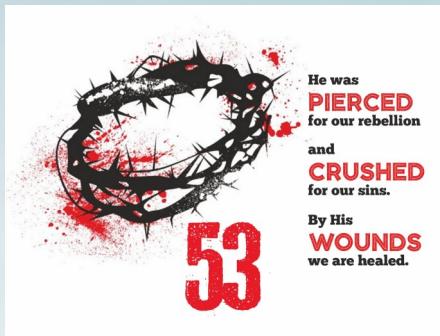
A colorful Easter garden is planned for Easter Sunday, April 4.

To purchase a flowering plant in memory of, or in honor of, a loved one(s) pick up an envelope at the Information Desk and return to the office by March 28. The cost is \$20 each plant.

# Beth Mullenburg

## Congregational Care

### Lenten Small Group



If you have not grabbed a booklet yet to dig deeper into Isaiah 53, whether in person in the sanctuary on Monday nights at 7pm or for individual or family devotions. May God bless you as you seek to grow closer to Him during this season of Lent.

### Concerns for:

- Curt Geyer had surgery in Iowa City to remove a tumor from his pituitary gland.
- Haleigh Kuhlman, 10 year old daughter of Tyler and Chelsey Kuhlman, and granddaughter of Mike and Julie Tjebben, had testing done at the Mayo Clinic as she was recently diagnosed with FSHD, a form of muscular dystrophy.
- Charlene Hamrick had back surgery on February 12.
- Marv Umbrell is in the Sioux Falls Hospital with health concerns.

- The community Lenten worship is available to watch on SMU Channel 3 and a temporary Spencer Ministerial YouTube Channel every Wednesday during Lent at 12:00 p.m. Each week a different church will be providing the message.
- Google has updated their Gmail settings, so if you have a Gmail account for your email and are no longer receiving emails from Hope Church, please contact the office.
- The next baptism celebration will be on Sunday, March 14. If you would like baptism administered to yourself or a child, please contact the church office so arrangements can be made.

### Craig Cannon

## Music Worship News

On Wednesdays from 6:00 - 7:15 p.m., beginning on March 3 for three weeks, we will be doing Soundboard Training 2.0. This training is for all current soundboard volunteers and those who are interested in learning how to mix and run sound for our weekly worship services. Join Eric Meeter and me in the sanctuary for this in-depth learning experience. Attending all 3 sessions is not required, but highly encouraged. Contact me at [ccannon@spencerhope.org](mailto:ccannon@spencerhope.org) or 712-262-3016 if you are interested or plan to attend.

# *Consistory News*

The regular meeting of the Hope Reformed Consistory met on Thursday, February 11 at 7:00 p.m. in the Well.

Present: Deacons Derek Bailey, Bob Graham, Luke Lovin, Kyle Mechler, Levi Morris and Eric Van Der Heide; Elders Arvin Druvenga, Dean Mechler, Darrell Todd and Cedric Winterboer. Pastors Russell Muilenburg and Jay Van Gelder. Absent: Elders Jim Hill and Kurt Weeks.

Pastor Russell opened with devotions from Mark 8:31-33 and then led the discussion on Chapters 1 and 2 of the book we are all reading, *Canoeing the Mountains*. He closed with prayer.

## ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION AND DECISION

- **MMSC** to approve the January 21, 2021 minutes.
- **MMSC** to approve the January financials as presented by the Deacons.
- Dean Mechler discussed how Staff Management is set up.
- Arvin Druvenga and Cedric Winterboer gave an RCA future update and discussed options.
- Pastor Russell closed this portion of the meeting with prayer.

## ELDERS MEETING

- Pastor Russell opened the meeting with prayer.
- Constitutional question was asked and answered in the negative.
- **MMSC** to accept the requests for membership from Deborah Cordeiro, Joana Franca, Brent & Lori Peterson, and Jim & Julie Vermeer.
- Communion in April will be Sunday, April 11. We will also have Communion at our Maundy Thursday worship service on Thursday, April 1.
- Congregational concerns were discussed.
- We discussed the worship services for Sunday, February 14, with the forecasted wind-chill temperature. It was decided to have one worship service at 10:45 a.m. (with live streaming), and cancel the 8:30 a.m. worship service, Sunday School, and Youth Group for that day.
- Pastor Russell closed the meeting with prayer.

## DEACONS MEETING

- Bob opened the meeting with prayer.
- We had a "Get to Know Your Deacon" bit, and tonight we heard from Bob.
- Jay re-capped the Super Bowl event.
- We talked about our "Serving Deacons" idea.
- We discussed our church database choices.
- Bob closed the meeting with prayer.

**Maundy Thursday**  
**WORSHIP & COMMUNION**  
**April 1**  
**7:00 PM / SANCTUARY**



919 Grand Avenue  
Spencer, IA 51301  
(712) 262-3016  
[www.spencerhope.org](http://www.spencerhope.org)

## WORSHIP SERVICES

### Sundays

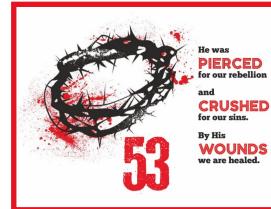
8:30 a.m. and 10:45 a.m.  
Sanctuary

10:45 a.m.  
Live-streamed online



[www.youtube.com/hopechurchspencer](https://www.youtube.com/hopechurchspencer)

## SERMONS



53

March 7

*The Straying Sheep*  
Isaiah 53:6

March 14

*The Suffering Substitute*  
Isaiah 53:4-11

March 21

*The Silent Savior*  
Isaiah 53:7-9

March 28

*The Lord's Leading*  
Isaiah 53:10-11

## HOPE CHURCH STAFF:

Russell Muilenburg

*Lead Pastor*

[rmuilenburg@spencerhope.org](mailto:rmuilenburg@spencerhope.org)

Jay Van Gelder

*Pastor of Student Ministries*

[jvangelder@spencerhope.org](mailto:jvangelder@spencerhope.org)

Craig Cannon

*Worship/Music*

[ccannon@spencerhope.org](mailto:ccannon@spencerhope.org)

Josh Hamrick

*Facilities*

[jhamrickccannon@spencerhope.org](mailto:jhamrickccannon@spencerhope.org)

Trenten Hansen

*Youth Ministries Assistant/Communications*

[trentenhansen95@gmail.com](mailto:trentenhansen95@gmail.com)

Sarah Kerns

*Children/Families*

[skerns@spencerhope.org](mailto:skerns@spencerhope.org)

Beth Muilenburg

*Congregational Care*

[bmuilenburg@spencerhope.org](mailto:bmuilenburg@spencerhope.org)

Lori Swanson

*Office Administrator*

[lswanson@spencerhope.org](mailto:lswanson@spencerhope.org)