

# in Touch with Hope

monthly newsletter of Hope Church, Spencer, IA

August, 2021

By Pastor Russell Muilenburg

## *Finding God Bigger*

One of the themes of my ministry and my preaching is a belief in a Big God. I frequently refer to myself as a “Big-Godder.” I like to say that there is nothing I can do that will ever take God by surprise. I believe that God is in control of everything that happens.

This creates problems for some. “If God is all-powerful,” they’ll ask, “then why didn’t He stop the tsunami, or the earthquake, or the killer tornado?” “If God knows everything that’s going to happen, then why didn’t He see that mass shooting in advance and do something to stop it?” Those types of questions can create a crisis of faith for some. If God is so big, why doesn’t He do something about all the bad?

But, I look at it another way. If God really is too weak to do something about all the tragedy in the world, then what sort of hope do we have? If He is taken by surprise when terrorists attack or buildings collapse, then we are all in trouble. Because then I’d have to believe that evil is the strongest force in the universe, and we’d all be doomed.

While I don’t always understand the purposes behind the tragedies that strike this world, I believe God does. I believe He is bigger than earthquakes and tsunamis. He’s in control, even when there is a social unrest. He’s a Big God. And belief in the big-ness of God is important for our faith. A professor of mine used to phrase it like this: Strong faith in a strong God makes strong Christians. The more we trust in God’s control over all of life—even in our worst circumstances—the more confident we will be. Psalm 62 puts it like this:

My soul finds rest in God alone;  
My salvation comes from him.  
He alone is my rock and my salvation;  
He is my fortress, I will never be shaken.

When your view of God is big—when you believe He is an immovable rock—then you can live an unshakable life. And so I challenge you to have a believe in a Big God. Learn the Bible’s descriptions of His strength and majesty, His splendor and power, and build your confidence in Him.

In *Prince Caspian*, part of C.S. Lewis’s Narnia Chronicles, the Pevensie children return to Narnia after a long absence. Aslan—the great lion and Christ figure—is nowhere to be seen. Lucy, the youngest of the children, particularly aches to see him. Then, one night she wakes to a voice calling to her and follows it through the woods to a clearing. There she sees Aslan and runs to him, burying her face in his mane.

“Aslan, Aslan. Dear Aslan,” sobbed Lucy. “At last.” The great beast rolled over on his side so that Lucy fell, half sitting and half lying between his front paws. He bent forward and just touched her nose with his tongue. His warm breath came all round her. She gazed up into the large wise face. “Welcome, child,” he said. “Aslan,” said Lucy, “you’re bigger.” “That is because you are older, little one,” answered he. “Not because you are?” “I am not. But every year you grow, you will find me bigger.”

That’s a great description of those who train themselves in the big-ness of God: every year you grow, you will find Him bigger.



# Pastor Jay Van Gelder Youth News

## Middle School Work Trip & Power Connection



What an eventful week it was! Thanks for all your prayers! We took 28 students (for 26 students it was their first time on a summer trip with us). At Immerse Lincoln, we were able to get a lot of work done including: edging a garden, building a carport, weed removal in "The Jungle", painting, renovating a shower, and much more. We were also able to hear life transforming testimonies from the people we served. Then we headed to Power Connection in Pella where the theme was "Wonder Wander". We learned how distractions in this world can make us WANDER away from God, yet God always pursues us. But when we turn all our focus to God and His creation we stand amazed in child-like WONDER. At the end of the trip, we had 3 individuals accept Jesus as their Lord and Savior! This trip will certainly be a memorable one!



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

There is no middle school youth group during the month of August; However, be watching for the fall kick-off date!

### Sr. High Youth Group

On Sunday, August 15, we will be having our Senior Send-Off for our high school seniors as they head off to college. Come hungry at 6:00 p.m. to Pastor Jay's house (1526 West 14th Street) as we will be grilling.

This will be our only time meeting in the month of August; However, be watching for the fall kick-off date!

### Youth Mission Sunday

On Sunday, August 15, the youth who went on summer work trips will be leading us in both worship services.





## Children & Family News

### Children's Church

Children's Church will not meet during the month of August. It will resume this fall.

### Help Wanted

Hope Church is seeking a Director of Children's and Family ministry who is passionate about helping kids and their parents experience the joy of Jesus. Our Children's Ministry is one of the engines that drives our church, with a thriving Sunday morning program and an annual Vacation Bible School that is a highlight in our community. The position involves ministering directly to children as well as recruiting and equipping volunteers. The ideal candidate will have experience working with children and be a good theological fit for a Reformed Church in America. Ordination is not required. The position will be full-time or part-time depending on the candidate. We encourage all interested persons to inquire. Salary will be competitive according to experience and education. Paid time off, professional development, and money towards insurance included. Years of Experience: 0-5 years. Education level: Bachelors or higher preferred, but equivalent life experience also considered. To apply, send resume and cover letter to Pastor Russell Muilenburg at [rmuilenburg@spencerhope.org](mailto:rmuilenburg@spencerhope.org).

WE INVITE ALL STUDENTS, TEACHERS, AND EDUCATORS TO BRING THEIR BACKPACKS/ SCHOOL BAGS WITH THEM TO WORSHIP AS WE WILL FILL THEM WITH PRAYER AND WELL WISHES FOR THE START OF THE SCHOOL YEAR.

## BLESSING OF THE BACKPACKS

SUNDAY, AUGUST 22 AT BOTH WORSHIP SERVICES

### Teacher Supply Drive / Aug. 1-22

Teachers often pay for their classroom supplies out-of-pocket. Let's assist them by donating these requested items:



Drop off your donations to the box in the lobby. Thank you!!

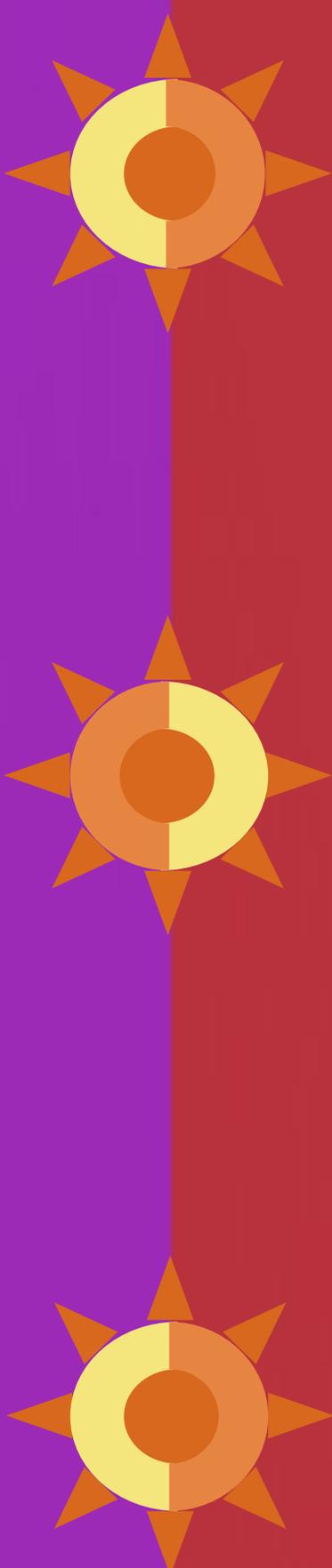
- Ticonderoga Pencils
- Mechanical Pencils
- Colored Pencils
- Pencil Sharpeners/Pencil Bags
- Expo Markers
- Erasers
- Highlighters
- Scissors
- Folders
- Composition Notebooks
- Sticky Notes
- Water Bottles
- Clorox Wipes/Electronic Wipes
- Headphones/Ear Buds

#### Also in need of:

- Individual snacks (granola bars, crackers, etc.)
- Toothbrushes/Toothpaste
- Socks (lower elementary)
- Underwear (sizes 5-12)
- Leggings/Athletic Pants (sizes 5-12)
- Tennis Shoes—students @ Lincoln will need a pair for the new gym (size 3 and Up)

Faith is like sunshine.  
It gives you hope  
and makes  
everything brighter.





## Consistory News

The regularly scheduled meeting of the Hope Reformed Consistory met at 7:00 p.m. in the Well. Deacons present: Eric Van Der Heide, Levi Morris, and Bob Graham. Elders present: Dean Mechler, Arv Druvenga, Cedric Winterboer, Darrell Todd, Kurt Weeks and Jim Hill. Absent Deacons Kyle Mechler, Derek Bailey, and Luke Lovin. Pastor Jay Van Gelder. Absent: Pastor Russell Muilenburg.

Darrell opened the meeting with prayer. We had comments and discussion on the book, 'Canoeing the Mountains.'

### ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION AND DECISION

**MMSC** to accept the June minutes

**MMSC** to approve the June financials presented by the deacons

Discussion regarding the church building condition and possible future projects and repairs and budget planning for these concerns.

Discussion on staff holidays and days of the week that some holidays fall on. Concerns to making some changes to allow for all staff to get paid for holidays that fall on their day off.

**MMSC** to allow staff a floating holiday for the holidays that fall on a Hope working day (such as Christmas).

Discussion and presentation by Arv on a 11-year chart showing attendance, giving, and membership.

Discussion on possible ways, including electronically, to track more information for attendees and follow up on those that have stopped coming or have just been absent for various reasons.

### ELDERS MEETING

Dean opened with prayer

Constitutional question was asked and answered in the negative.

Discussion on Russell's upcoming return to the church building from sabbatical and the need for any acclimation and the need for a report about his time off to the Elders upon his return.

Congregational concerns were discussed.

Meeting was closed with prayer for these concerns by all Elders.

### DEACONS MEETING

Eric opened the meeting with prayer.

Craig Cannon came to the meeting to discuss new projector options. After some discussion and in contacting/visiting with Carey's Electronics, **MMSC** to approve the purchase of a new projector.

Went over Deacon ministry options.

Approved Trent Hansen's proposal.

Bob closed with prayer.

## Communion

On Sunday, August 1, we will have the privilege and opportunity to participate at the Lord's Table for Communion. If you will be joining us online for worship, you may participate in Communion at home alongside us with your Communion elements (juice, crackers/bread, etc.).

# HOPE CHURCH

BRING JOY. EXPERIENCE JOY.

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## HOPE CHURCH STAFF:

### **Russell Muilenburg**

*Lead Pastor*

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### **Jay Van Gelder**

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### **Craig Cannon**

*Worship/Music*

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### **Josh Hamrick**

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### **Trenten Hansen**

*Youth Ministries Assistant/  
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### **Beth Muilenburg**

*Congregational Care*

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## Worship

Sundays:

9:00 a.m. & 10:45 a.m.

## Schedule & Sermons



*5 Questions:  
Better Decisions,  
Fewer Regrets*

August 1

*The Legacy Question*

Genesis 39:21

August 8

*The Conscience Question*

1 Samuel 24



August 15

Youth Mission Sunday

August 22

*The Maturity Question*

Ephesians 5:15-17

August 29

*The Relationship Question*

John 13:34-35