

In Touch with *Hope*

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF HOPE CHURCH

DECEMBER 2023



Pastor James Runcorn
Lead Pastor

And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him. ~ Hebrews 11:6

A Season to Believe

Living in a world ingrained with doubt causes the idea of belief – in anything – to be a challenge. Integrity seems to be a thing of the past. Trust in agreements, one's word, in other people, has all but completely faded. When one news outlet presents their spin on a story, another news outlet presents the same story from a completely different perspective. What looks like chaos and destruction from one person, looks like self-expression and freedom from another. No matter where your perspective currently rests, there is no question that things seem to be getting worse every day.

What are we to do? This question is important for people in general, but paramount to those who follow Christ Jesus. Why? Because we are

known as believers. We place our lives, our faith and our future hope in the belief that there is a God who loves us and who holds the future safe in His hands. The writer of Hebrews reminds us that our faith is anchored securely to the One whom we believe in. This belief propels us to action. Faith is the step of action or response to our belief.

If I believe a seatbelt can save my life, but I never fasten it, I have not executed faith. As a result, my lack of response in my belief could end in my own death. If I believe a seatbelt can save my life and I fasten it, I have executed faith. My belief has moved me to action – a response filled with faith.

It's the same with our belief in God. Does that belief move you to respond? Does that belief cause you to execute your faith through action? Hank Hanegraaff has said, "Faith is only as good as the object in which it is placed." If Jesus is the object of our faith, our belief is secure, as is our life and our eternal future. This season, as we remember the greatest gift God has given humanity, let us believe and let that belief move us to a faith-filled life. From there, we can see the fallout of the world around as a call to action – to spread the Good News of the hope found only in Jesus.

Pastor Jay Van Gelder

Youth Pastor

Youth Auction Night 2023

Thanks so much for the Support of our Youth Ministry Program at Hope Church. What another great Youth Auction we had this past month. We took in over \$34,000 dollars for the event. Every year I get worried as we add more youth, costs of expenses go up (especially 15 passenger vans) on how are we going to continue to pay for everything.

I ask the question will the auction be enough. And every year since I have been here for 15 years the auction has went up every year to balance it out. God totally provides. My life verse comes to mind in these moments.

Ephesians 3:20, 21

Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.

I am always humbled by how God can do more than I can imagine. I continue to be in amazement the support this church gives in supporting our young people. It was such a great night as I watch our young people serve, work as a team, laugh with people, smile with people, and engage with our adults in our congregation. Clint Jones (like always) did a great job helping us auction off the items that so many of you brought. Thanks again for your contribution to this wonderful event.

The money we raise helps support the youth to go on their summer work project trip. This year we are looking at what God is calling us to go and serve. We have a possibility of heading to Idaho Falls with just our Sr. High Youth Group from Hope. If that does not work, we will be going to Tennessee again. Middle school will be heading to Minneapolis to Bethel College to be apart of Power Connection that happens every 2 out of 3 years.

The youth are already looking forward for the summer trips.

Please Pray God will continue to help us as we plan on which ministry He is leading us to serve at for the year of 2024. Thanks again for your continued support of our youth ministry program here at Hope church.



Wednesday, december 13
6-8 pm | hope church

games - pizza - worship

guest speaker:
corey nikkel



**COST IS
FREE!**



There will be NO
 Sunday School or
 Children's Church
 on
 December 24 & 31

Julia Andela

Children and Families Director

CHILDREN'S
 CHRISTMAS PROGRAM
 SUNDAY, DECEMBER 10
 8:30 AM & 10:45 AM

This is the
CHRISTMAS
 STORY

HOPE KIDS
Christmas PJ Party
December 17

Preschool & Elementary kids
 are invited to wear their pajamas
 (Christmas or Regular)
 to Sunday School on Dec 17
 as we celebrate Jesus' Birthday together!

COME JOIN US!
CHRISTMAS CAROLING
THURSDAY EVENING
DECEMBER 21
TIME TO BE DETERMINED

We will be singing at the nursing homes.
 Afterwards we will come back to the church
 for hot cocoa, goodies, fun and fellowship.

SAVE THE DATE

VBS 2024 • JUNE 10-14

A Season to Believe

HOPE • JOY • LOVE • PEACE

John 6:29 | Jesus answered them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent."

DECEMBER 3, 10, 17
8:30 AM & 10:45 AM

DECEMBER 24
10 AM

CHRISTMAS EVE
CANDLELIGHT SERVICES
5:00 PM • 7:00 PM • 11:00 PM

Nursery provided at 5 pm & 7 pm

Missions Focus



"The Bridge strives to care and advocate for Storm Lake youth in vulnerable places of life by meeting them where they are, building a supportive community there, and providing training toward a more hope-filled future."

Jesus doesn't sugar coat the fact that we will indeed have hurts, habits and hangups in our lives "troubles" that disrupt and break us. But he is quick to remind and encourage us about His purpose—He has overcome the world. His death and resurrection make us overcomers too. We have been introduced to so many overcomers these last months. Women living on little yet supporting their neighbor next door, youth inviting their friends to Tree House Support and Bible Studies, and a refugee and author who is impacting this world in mighty ways. Our eyes have been opened to these things this fall and we give thanks to God for the ways He is at work in Storm Lake and around the world overcoming obstacles that many times we don't even notice. Our fall Tree House and Service Days are off to a great start this fall. We had a wonderful night together at the banquet on October 21st and were all blessed by being together. Thank you for being in this with us. If you would like to support The Bridge, you can give at: www.thebridgeofstormlake.com. Just select the giving tab.



Fall Bible Study



Youth studying in the Loft Cafe space.

Consistory News

Present: Pastor Jay Van Gelder, Pastor James Runcorn
Elders: Arvin Druvenga, Barry Anderson, Jeff Helmink, Bruce Groen, Bob Campbell, Doug Siepkes
Deacons: Terry Stevens, Eric Van Der Heide, Alex Johnson, Ryan Hoskins, Ryan Christoffel, Luke Lovin

7 pm: Opening prayer Jay Van Gelder
Devotion on Heidelberg Questions # 29-32 by Barry Anderson

REGULAR BUSINESS

Reviewed and approved September minutes
Reviewed September financials and approved, all team budgets due end of October
Reviewed September 2023 giving and attendance analysis.
Had to purchase a new mower.

Pastor's report

Sunday service schedule - plan a Thanksgiving eve service
Pastor Emeritus to be reviewed with Pastor James and Pastor Perry

Executive Team Reports

Amend Articles of Incorporation - Approved, need congregational approval at annual meeting
Reviewed Covenant of the Ordained to which we would ask all Pastors, Elders and Deacons to sign
Alliance Midwest Network - Would like to send at least 2 delegates Nov 11-12, 2023 in Worthington
Synod of the Heartland changing name to Cultivate Coop of which we would be a partner church

Ministry Liaison Reports

Missions team will have presentation on 10/29/23, prayers and squares going to have a presentation soon, congregational care team to meet with James, middle school youth having great turnouts

OTHER BUSINESS

Upcoming congregational events, BLT date & time to be determined, Executive Team meeting, Consistory Meeting, Chick Fil A in Hope Church Parking lot 10/17

ELDER MEETING

Opening prayer by Arv Druvenga
Congregational Care needs discussed
Plan formal installation of Pastor James Runcorn
Closing prayer by all Pastors and Elders taking turns

DEACON MEETING

Alex opened with prayer
Budget discussion
Paul Flaharty memorial bench - Luke to reach out to Design Team
UDMO holiday funding approved
Closed in prayer

Concerns for

Please pray for continued healing for the following people who've had surgeries this past month:

Kodie Borders who had an emergency appendectomy
LaVonne Bell who had gastric bypass surgery
Katrina Howard who had shoulder surgery.

Please continue to pray for:

Kathy Houseman as she will see more doctors for her recent cancer diagnosis
Kent Kilpatrick and his health issues
Tami Gilderhus as her broken foot heals

Condolences to

Holly and Gary Graham and Rebecca and Kevin Goeken and families on the passing of Holly's mom and Rebecca's grandma, Arlene Warner, from time to eternity on November 17.

Winter Weather Policy

If Sunday services need to be cancelled due to weather, you will receive a text and an email. It will also be on KICD.

If first service only is cancelled, Sunday School will also be cancelled.

During the week, if school is cancelled or let out early, ALL church activities are cancelled for the day.

Keep Us Informed

If you have moved or have a new phone number or email, please let us know so we can update our database. We also want to celebrate with you if you have a birth, or pray for you and your family if there is a death, hospitalization or other need in your family. You can contact the church office at 262-3016 or by email at hrc@spencerhope.org.

Please note: If you have a family member celebrating a milestone birthday and would like congregation members to be able to send cards, we will be putting them in the monthly newsletter. Please send any requests to Jill at hrc@spencerhope.org before the 20th of each month.

Year End Tithing

Year-end financial donations to the church will be received through 11:00 am on Sunday, December 31.

Take some time to think
Take a moment to meditate



Pastor Perry DeGroot

Pastor Emeritus/Congregational Care

A few weeks ago my wife and I had the opportunity to travel on the KICD Bus to Branson. Many of the shows that we watched had two segments to their shows. After the intermissions for each of those shows, the performers would feature Christmas or holiday songs. It was quite noteworthy that one of their songs featured a Christmas song written by Mark Lowery, entitled "Mary Did You Know."

Each year there are music awards given out by several different organizations. There are, for example, the Dove, Country or American Music Awards that given out in a variety of categories. Awards are given for the best song, composer, male and female singers, etc. You probably get the idea of what we are talking about.

If there was an award given out for the most extraordinary or impressive song in the Bible what do you think it would be? In the Old Testament, many would probably say it might be the 23rd Psalm. In the New Testament, a suggested song would probably be what some have called "Mary's Song." Others have entitled it "The Magnificat." You may have an idea what it is, and you may not. Let me help you.

It was composed by a young woman, who was recognized by the Lord as "as the highly favored one." The occasion seems to be an impromptu response of praise and adoration for a confirmation of God's call on her life.

This song is referred to most often today during the Christmas season. The song is found in the Gospel of Luke. It is the response of praise and adoration by Mary, the virgin mother of Jesus to regarding the affirmation that Mary received from her cousin Elizabeth. Take a moment to read the song and the events that led up to the song itself in Luke 1:35-55.

35 The angel answered, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So, the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God. 36 Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be barren is in her sixth month. 37 For nothing is impossible with God." 38 "I am the Lord's servant," Mary answered. "May it be to me as you have said." Then the angel left her. 39 At that time Mary got ready and hurried to a town in the hill country of Judea, 40 where she entered Zechariah's home and greeted Elizabeth. 41 When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. 42 In a loud voice she exclaimed: "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child you will bear! 43 But why am I so favored, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? 44 As soon as the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy. 45 Blessed is she who has believed that what the Lord has said to her will be accomplished!" 46 And Mary said: "My soul glorifies the Lord, 47 and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, 48 for he has been mindful of the humble state of his servant. From now on all generations will call me blessed, 49 for the Mighty One has done great things for me—holy is his name. 50 His mercy extends to those who fear him, from generation to generation. 51 He has performed mighty deeds with his arm; he has scattered those who are proud in their inmost thoughts. 52 He has brought down rulers from their thrones, but has lifted up the humble. 53 He has filled the hungry with good things, but has sent the rich away empty. 54 He has helped his servant Israel, remembering to be merciful 55 to Abraham and his descendants forever, even as he said to our fathers."

It is my hope that there are some songs that are special to you this Christmas season. Songs that are expressions of your love, adoration and praise for the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the Son of God born of a virgin.

Jesus loved us so much that He left the majesty of heaven to be born in a stable and laid in a manger. He was born so that one day He would wear a crown of thorns and give Himself on the cross for our sins. He was resurrected from the grave to give us the hope and victory of life now and eternally. Jesus is the reason for the season.

Sometimes when we are singing, we can become so caught up in the music and notes; that it is possible we do not look deeper and experience the truth and reality of the song we are singing. Take the time to notice the poetic form of the following song, then meditate on its meaning for you personally in this Christmas carol.

“O LITTLE TOWN OF BETHLEHEM”

O little town of Bethlehem, How still we see thee lie!
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep, The silent stars go by.
Yet in thy dark streets shineth The everlasting Light.
The hopes and fears of all the years Are met in thee tonight.

For Christ is born of Mary, And gathered all above,
While mortals sleep, the angels keep Their watch of wond'ring love.
O morning stars, together Proclaim the holy birth!
And praises sing to God the King, And peace to men on earth.

How silently, how silently The wondrous gift is giv'n!
So God imparts to human hearts The blessings of His heav'n.
No ear may hear His coming, But in this world of sin,
Where meek souls will receive Him still the dear Christ enters in.

O holy Child of Bethlehem! Descend to us, we pray.
Cast out our sin and enter in; Be born in us today.
We hear the Christmas angels The great glad tidings tell.
O come to us, abide with us, Our Lord Emmanuel.

While preparing an Advent message several years ago, I was especially and personally touched by the deeper reality of Christmas, and it came to me in poetic form. It is my prayer that these words and thoughts strike the deeper chords of your heart and spirit.

Christmas is so much more than the songs and carols we sing.
Christmas is the time to glorify and honor the stable born King.

May the names of Jesus, “God with us”, Emmanuel,
Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Wonderful Counselor,

Who is called the Son of the Most High, Prince of Peace.
Be the way we speak of Him, in our daily routines and existence.

Christmas is so much more than gifts, decorated trees and such things.
Christmas is the time to glorify and honor the stable born child, as the King of kings

Christmas is the time to exalt the stable born King.
It is the time to praise Him by the surrendered lives we bring.

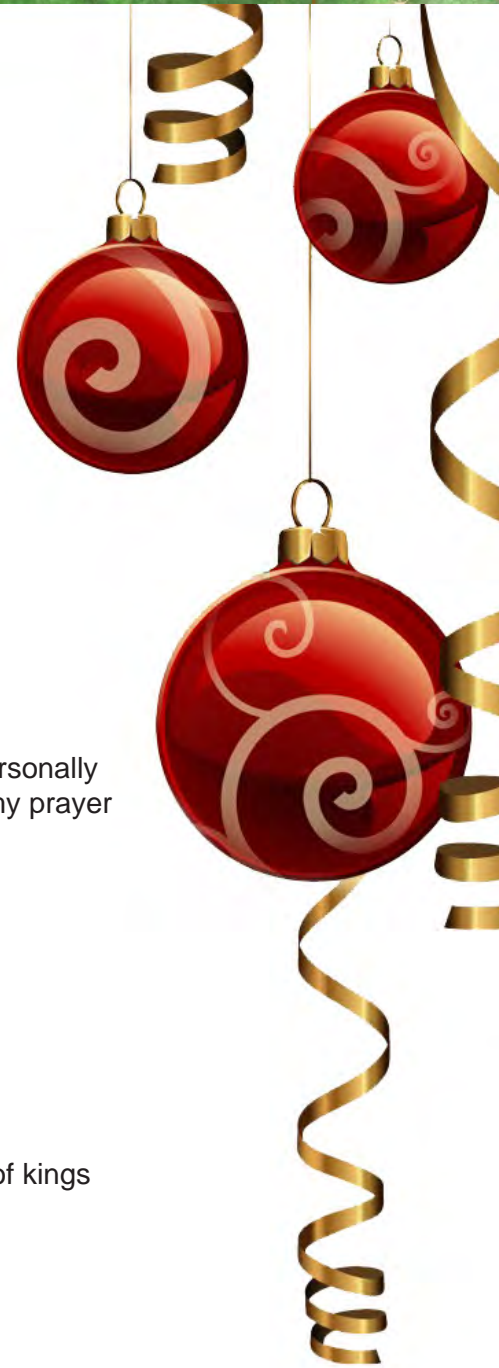
Christmas is so much more than the child lying in a manger.
Christmas is the time to glorify the stable born child as Lord and Savior.

Jesus loved you and me so much He was born in an animal stall;
So that he could become the true vine and the bread of life for all.

Jesus was born in a stable and laid in an animal manger for a bed.
So that He might become Our Savior with a crown of thorns for His head.

Do you know and experience Jesus as more than just a child laying in a manger?
Have you received and accepted Him in your life as Lord and Savior?

Are you experiencing the Spirit of Jesus in your life today?
Then you know the blessedness of Christmas in an eternal way.



*All the Christmas presents in the world
are worth nothing without the presence of Christ.*

David Jeremiah

Annual Congregational Celebration

Sunday, December 10
4 pm in the Harbor

Bring a dessert to share!

All confessing members are encouraged to attend.

We will celebrate what God has done in 2023 and look ahead to 2024, and participate in the selection of new church officers by drawing of lots.

Elder nominees are Steve Rhode, Chris Swanson, Kevin Vander Stoep and Gary Zeutenhorst. Deacon nominees are Knut Brown, Craig Van Drunen, Jason Warren and Aaron Zinn.

Interested in becoming a
MEMBER
at **HOPE?**

Contact the office

We will have a Starting Point Class mid to late January.

This class is for adults and is your pathway to membership at Hope.



919 Grand Avenue
Spencer, IA 51301
(712)262-3016
hrc@spencerhope.org

Worship Services

SUNDAYS: 8:30 am and 10:45 am in the Sanctuary
8:30 am services live-streamed online: www.youtube.com/hopechurchspencer

Sunday School

SUNDAYS: 9:45 - 10:40 am ~ Preschool through Adult

Hope Church Staff

James Runcorn, Lead Pastor
Jay Van Gelder, Pastor of Student Ministries
Julia Andela, Children & Families Director
Austin Bryan, Youth Ministries Intern & Interim Worship/Music
Perry DeGroot, Pastor Emeritus/Congregational Care
Josh Hamrick, Facilities Manager
Jill Lowe, Office Administrator

