

In Touch with Hope

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF HOPE CHURCH | JANUARY 2024

Pastor James Runcorn

Lead Pastor

The mercies of God are new every morning and never end.

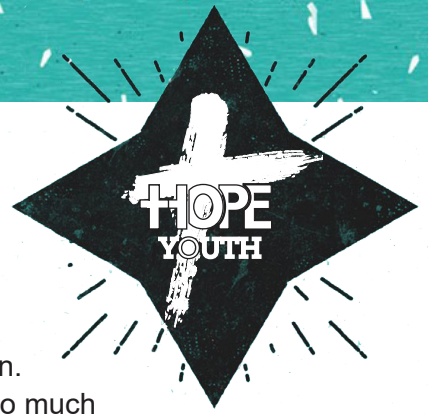
Lamentations 3:22-23

Another New Year, Another Resolution

Does the frustration with New Year's resolutions ever bother you? I know it bothers me. Most of my life I looked forward to the coming of the new year and made all kinds of promises, "This year will be different." "This time, I'll resolve to wake up earlier to exercise." "For the first time in my life I'll make a resolution to actually read my Bible every day...and pray." "I will make wise decisions with my money this time around!" ...and so many others. The problem? I always, without fail, would always fail. Sometimes, the promise to change my patterns involved such a dramatic shift, it was just unrealistic. Other times, I simply couldn't break old habits. Even if I made a good change, it usually only lasted for a couple of days at most. Here's the key: I always made it about me. I don't remember inviting the Holy Spirit of God into the process. New changes were all about relying on myself and my own abilities. Life lesson: I will always fail. You know who never fails? God. His mercies are new every morning. He calls us to newness, but not on our own merit or strength. Remember, His power is made perfect in our weakness. So, as we step into 2024, let us press into Him. As we do, we cast our worries, anxieties and our weakness on Him. We then pray, "Create in me a clean heart." We acknowledge, "By Your power alone, almighty God." He will do a new work within you as you seek Him with all of your heart, soul, mind and strength.

Pastor Jay Van Gelder

Lead Pastor



What a great two nights the youth ministry at Hope Church had. On Dec. 17 and Dec. 20 we brought back Cookie Delivery. Since 2019, we have not been able to do cookie delivering and have really missed this time. The youth had so much fun. They came back all excited and shared how they could have stayed and visited so much longer with the people they met. They heard awesome stories about the years before they were born. It was fun to watch the youth's faces when 2 different places that I had gone to were describing "Party Line Phones". They could not quite grasp how this worked so we had to all stand in a row and act it out. Could not believe that 10 people could be using the same line to talk with people. We also heard stories of not having running water in the house and using "Out Houses".

The night is always a highlight for all of us the people we see and the youth always enjoy the time spent hearing about the past. Thanks all who were able to allow us to come and visit. We stopped at 31 houses this year; the most we have ever gone to in year's past. Thanks to all the drivers who helped shuffle the youth around.



Worship

Merry Christmas! What a way to end the year! Christmas Eve was an awesome day to celebrate the birth of Jesus! I am incredibly thankful for all of the work that everyone put into make it such a great day. This year the worship team had almost 30 volunteers using their gifts to serve the Lord! Thank you, they put in a lot of work to make sure that they were ready! I also want to thank all the families of the volunteers because they allowed their Christmas plans to change so that they could serve that evening. It is wonderful to watch the Lord work when you create the space for Him to work. I can report that there was no hair caught on fire this year.

This last month we also had a Bridge event for all of the Middle school and High school students in the area. It was a great night of worship, fellowship and a great message from Cory Nickel. We had 190 youth in the building to learn about Jesus!

What a great month to end 2023! So many hands and feet at work to serve the Lord. What a blessing!

~ Austin Bryan

Thank You and Welcome!



Austin Bryan

We would like to thank Austin for serving as Interim Worship Director for the past year and a half! It has been a blessing to see you use this gift God has given you and how he's grown you in this time. We wish you all the best as you pursue Youth Ministry and pray for God's continued leading in this next step.

We would also like to welcome Ryan as the Worship Director! Hope Church is blessed with many people with musical gifts and we are excited to have you here using yours in this way.



Ryan Hoskins

Marital Prayer Challenge

Starting in February!

More information to come

DON'T LEAVE JESUS
IN THE MANGER.
DON'T REMEMBER HIM
ONLY AT CHRISTMAS.
INSTEAD, LEARN TO WALK
WITH HIM EVERY DAY.

BILLY GRAHAM

TOBYMAC #SPEAKLIFE

Mission's Focus

TD & Sarah Sherman serve as college missionaries with Cru, formerly Campus Crusade for Christ. They serve at the universities in Lincoln, NE and several others throughout Nebraska. TD & Sarah are passionate about sharing the Gospel with college students, building them up in their faith, and sending them out to live life on mission.

New Year, New Roles

This year, TD began a new role as Co-Team Leader for our staff team. In his new role, he has given direction, training, and help anywhere in between to our staff team and students. It has been a great job fit for him. He has done a great job training and helping lead the team. He has encouraged us all to continue pressing on to reach students on campus who have yet to hear the Gospel!



This fall, Sarah has continued in her role on campus discipling student leader women at UNL - teaching them to share their faith with others and leading them in biblical content and helping them grow in their faith as they lead in their various roles. She also leads our social media and graphic design efforts, and took on the role of training the 3 new interns on our staff team, a job she has loved. She's spent much time training the interns on how to share their faith, talk to others about the Holy Spirit, disciple students, write their prayer letters, grow in their personal walks with the Lord, and more. Though she isn't on campus with students as much as she used to be before having Eli, she's grateful she can train our interns in their jobs and help them become more effective in their personal evangelism conversations and ministry in general.

We're Expecting!

As we close the year, we have so much to be thankful for as we reflect! If only this letter could be longer, We could write pages upon pages of stories of students who have come to know Jesus or been impacted by the Gospel in some way this year. We don't have space here, but you can re-read our previous letters for more stories! In addition to all of this, we would like to share that we are expecting our second baby at the end of May 2024! We are so, so thankful! Having Eli join our family was one of the best things to happen to us, and we are so excited to have another sweet baby joining our family!

Hope Church provides some regular financial support to the Shermans through our Missions Team. If you or your family would like to support their work, you can do so at TD & Sarah Sherman, Account #0684630 at Give.Cru.org/0684630

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth.

Acts 1:8

The Armor of God and His Mighty Power

Pastor Perry De Groot

Congregational Care/Pastor Emeritus

Are there times when you feel powerless as a Christian, weak with little or no spiritual strength?

For the next several months I want to discuss what it means to be strong in the Lord and the power of His might. We will talk about spiritual warfare, which may be a new term or truth for many of us. Since we are involved in a spiritual war; it is important that we know who our enemy is, how he works and what we can do in the battles and the war that is going on. We need to be strong in the Lord and put on the whole armor of God to experience His mighty power.

In Ephesians 6:10-12, we read, "Be strong in the Lord and in His mighty power. Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places."

According to this passage we are in a struggle and war with a formidable enemy and an array of evil hosts. A Christian song writer put it this way, "In this life we are not involved in some recreational jaunt, it's a battlefield, not a recreational room, it's a fight not a game." Many Christians don't believe this; they are not aware of this reality. As a result, they are weak, with little or no spiritual strength.

In the Bible we read the story of Job, who experienced the attacks of Satan, then there is Daniel, whose prayers were not answered because of evil spiritual beings in the heavenly realms. Then there are verses in the New Testament. Jesus, Himself is tested and tempted in the wilderness. In a paraphrase of Romans 7:23, the Apostle Paul says this, "when I want to do good, evil is right there with me. For in my inner being I delight in God's law; but I see another law at work in me, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within me."

In 2nd Corinthians 10:4, we read, "For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world."

In 1st Timothy 1:18, 6:12, we read, "I give you this instruction in keeping with the prophecies once made about you, so that by following them you fight the good fight, holding on to faith and a good conscience. Fight the good fight of faith."

Everyone one of us, who have made a commitment of our life to Jesus and a public profession of our faith in Him as our Lord and Saviour, need to put on the armor of God. We need to know how to battle with the enemy and protect ourselves.

We all use some kind of protective and safety measures to protect our house from thieves, etc. We use locks on our doors, have adequate lighting and maybe even a dog to warn us of intruders. It is vitally important that we are protected spiritually.

Therefore, we need to be protected by the armor of God and know His strength in the temptations and attacks of the evil one. Yes, there is an evil one. And you might ask, who is our enemy?

The devil is our enemy, he is not just some make believe character with a red suit, pointed ears and a pronged fork in his hand. The devil is real and is most often called Satan in the Bible. The following names and descriptive phrases about Satan are also found in the Scriptures:

The god of this world... 1 Cor. 4:4

Masquerades as an Angel of Light... 2 Cor.11:14

A Hinderer... 1 Thess. 2:18

An adversary, restless lion, devourer... 1 Pet. 5:8

A Deceiver... 2 Cor.11:3

Prince of the power of the Air... Eph. 2:2

A Tempter... 2 Thess. 3:5

A beast ... Rev. 19:19

When a Christian recognizes who the enemy is and how he works, then they can resist and fight. We cannot be strong in the Lord and the power of His might, until we put on the full armor of God and take a stand against the devil's schemes. Next time we will begin to take a look at each piece of the armor and how to use it against Satan's schemes.

Consistory News

Present: Pastor James Runcorn, Pastor Jay Van Gelder
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

November 9, 2023 • 7 pm

Opening prayer & Devotion on Heidelberg Questions # 53, 59-61 by Arv Druvenga

REGULAR BUSINESS

Reviewed and approved October minutes

Eric reviewed October financials and they were approved

Eric reviewed October 2023 giving and Arv the attendance analysis

Jay reviewed and Consistory discussed 2024 budget.

Eric reviewed staff salary cost of living increase.

MMSC: approved salary increases for staff and retirement contributions for Pastor James in ARC retirement.

Pastor's report

Sunday service schedule reviewed through and of the year. Thanksgiving Eve service with refreshments following.

Discussed Rooted Series and adding \$250 to adult ministries to purchase.

Discussed Baby dedication to Hope, Pastor James will meet with families interested in baptism vs dedication and determine on case-by-case basis what they prefer, then when children are older they can have a believer's baptism.

Other Reform churches have started doing this as well.

Executive Team Reports

Congregational Celebration will need to approve Articles of Incorporation as a congregation, review 2024 budget, and elect 2 new elders and 2 new deacons by casting of lots

MMSC: to rescind motion approved at October consistory meeting regarding Covenant of the Ordained

MMSC: to approve the requiring of Covenant of the Ordained to be signed at the onset of each term for Pastor positions effective 10/15/2023 and Elder and deacon positions beginning with 2024, (with addition of dates) in same form as approved at October consistory meeting. Still one no vote recorded.

Nominations Team

in process of contacting prospective nominees for elder and deacon

Staff Management Report

Approval of 403(b)(9) retirement plan through Alliance of Reformed Churches.

Have someone interested in worship director position, voted to offer job & compensation package.

Ministry Liaison Reports

Online giving and ACH now available, announcement will be made to congregation

Other Business

Upcoming congregational events, next Executive & Consistory meetings set, Chick Fil A returning, Alliance of Midwest Network annual meeting - Arv & Bob to attend

ELDER MEETING

Opening prayer by Bruce Groen

Have some people interested in Membership Class

Closing prayer by Doug Siepkes

DEACON MEETING

Luke Lovin opened with prayer

Updated contract for snow removal

Josh Hamrick surgery 12/12

Eric will order nativity

Handbook discussion

Jay Van Gelder closed in prayer

Installation of New Elders & Deacons

Unless there are reasonable spiritual objections presented to the Board of Elders, the following people will be installed on January 7 as they were elected at the Congregational Meeting on December 10.

Elders: Kevin Vander Stoep and Gary Zeutenhorst

Deacons: Knut Brown and Jason Warren

Thank you to Barry Anderson, Arvin Druvenga, Luke Lovin and Eric Van Der Heide for serving as Elders and Deacons the past three years.

Concerns for

Please continue to lift up the following people and families in prayer:

- Kathy Houseman who will have surgery on January 24.
- Terry & Erin Stevens - both their mom's have had recent health issues. Terry's mom is Yvonne and Erin's is Kathy.
- Justin & Molly Vail - Justin's mom, Lourene, who's been in the hospital and Molly's brother, Brian, recently diagnosed with lymphoma.
- Ray Ohrtman who suffered a small stroke and is in St Lukes until he is stronger.
- Jami Grady's uncle (and Jill Lowe's neighbor), Dennis Johnson, who is hospitalized.

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, 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.

DATES TO REMEMBER

January 14 & 21 **9:40 am**

New Members/Starting Point Classes

February 1

Marital Prayer Challenge

February 10 **5:00 pm**

Parent's Night Out

February 11 **5:00 pm**

Hope Youth Super Bowl Party

February 25 **5:00 pm**

3rd Annual Chili Cook Off

March 24

Palm Sunday

March 31

Easter Sunday

April 12-14

Middle School Retreat

May 12

Last day of Sunday School

Youth Sunday

June 10-14

VBS! Breaker Rock Beach



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
Ryan Hoskins	Worship Director
Austin Bryan	Youth Ministries Intern
Perry DeGroot	Pastor Emeritus/Congregational Care
Josh Hamrick	Facilities Manager
Jill Lowe	Office Administrator