



Doorway to Hope

The Newsletter of Hope Church, P.C.A.

Our Vision: Training People for L.I.F.E

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Joyful Discipleship

How often do you talk about God in your home? Or with your friends? Co-workers? Neighbors? What impression would they have of who God is based on the ways you talk about Him? For many “God-talk” is associated with oppressive moral supervision. For example, Christopher Hitchens, author of *God is Not Great*, says:

“I think it would be rather awful if it was true. If there was a permanent, total, round-the-clock divine supervision and [keeping watch] of everything you did, you would never have a waking or sleeping moment when you weren’t being watched and controlled and supervised by some celestial entity from the moment of your conception to the moment of your death...It would be like living in North Korea.”¹

Compare Hitchens’ words to the answer in Westminster Shorter Catechism Question #1. *What is the chief end of man? To glorify God and enjoy Him forever.* You and I, by faith, are called to enjoy God (John 16:16-24). Wouldn’t that change the way you talk to your children or to your neighbors about Jesus? Wouldn’t enjoying God change the way we think about obeying His commands? We live in an odd world. We can effortlessly talk about movies, sports, books, and our hobbies. But when it comes to talking about God the Father sending His Son, Jesus, to earn and give us eternal life it gets awkward. Duty trumps delight. And those around us can tell. Even though I’m a pastor, I confess that my “God-talk” in the home

is often done out of duty, not delight. So I agree with Mr. Hitchens. If God is a “Stalin-in-the-sky or a Big Brother”² who is always watching and never smiling, I may do the right thing. But I won’t like it.

How do we start the journey together towards enjoying God and bringing others into that joy? Find the God of the Bible beautiful. Meet the God who is Three-in-One. Delight in the Trinity. Let me paint a picture for you. It may stretch your brain a little! The Bible communicates the truth that God is three persons, yet one God: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. This is who God has always been and always will be. Before God made the world and placed man in it, He was a Father who both delighted in and received the delight of the Son, all through and with the Holy Spirit. The Spirit stirs up the delight of the Father in the Son and enflames the delight of the Son in the Father, binding the Three-in-One God together in perfect fellowship (2 Cor. 13:14). When the apostle John says, “God is love,” (1 John 4:8) he is communicating the astonishing reality that

God has always been other-centered in His being. Self-less love is not something new that came with Jesus, nor is the gospel an announcement calling you to take advantage of God’s new momentary lapse in judgement. God determined before the foundation of the world to give you, through faith in Jesus, what He has always had: a perfect loving community and fellowship. God is so other-oriented in his being that He went through hell on the cross to bring us into eternal friendship in Christ.

Now you can understand why it is that we as human beings have to share what we delight in with other people. We are made in the image of God, in His likeness. When I talk about a great story, a fantastic movie, or favorite song, it is because I just want to share the delight I have in it with you. Our lives could be told as a story of what we delighted in: our parents looking at us with a smile, earth-worms, mud, certain toys, adventures, good novels,



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friends, sports, art, our family, a romantic attraction, travel, our jobs and hobbies. The list could go on and on. God designed you in such a way so that your affections, your loves, had to be shared with others.

Look at the true story of Easter again: Jesus dying on the cross and rising again on the third day. Jesus, being fully human, is showing you what the affections of his heart are as He dies. His desire and delight is first for His Father in heaven: "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" When Jesus has nothing at all, his desire is for His Father! And second, we are told the night before His death that His desire is for you! "I desire that they (Christians) may be with me where I am...and that they know the love which you have loved me." (John 17:23-24) There it is. Jesus' delight is in a people who did not want Him; who found joy in other created things. The Trinity is beautiful because "God is love; not that we have loved God, but that he loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our

sins... We love because He first loved us (1 John 4:7-10)." Do you find the Trinity beautiful now?

What we most find beautiful we will talk about with those around us at work and at home. I pray that the Holy Spirit would teach us to use the language of beauty and joy to describe our God and that He would make our joy in Christ contagious. "One generation shall commend your works to another and shall declare your mighty acts. On the glorious splendor of your majesty and on your wondrous works, I will mediate (Psalm 145:4-5)."

¹ Quoted in Michael Reeves, *Delighting in the Trinity*, p. 110.

² Reeves, 110.



Easter Word Search

Find the Easter words.

*He is
Risen!*



Sunrise Service	Dinner	Resurrection
Palm Sunday	Good Friday	Easter

NYS Presbytery Meeting – An Ordination Examination

by Mike Mailloux

On January 15th and 16th 2016, the NYS Presbytery held a meeting hosted at the 1st Presbyterian Church of Schenectady. In attendance from Hope Church were Pastor Jim Farinacci, RE Bob Hornlein, RE Jeff Butler, Pastor Nate Thompson and his wife Bethany, and myself. We arrived Saturday morning about 8:30 am. The meeting had actually begun the previous afternoon for committee members only. This morning began with prayer and a song “Join All the Glorious Names”, after which the Shepherds Committee conducted business, including review and approval of stated supply, Rev. Keith Fagerheim, for New Hope Presbyterian Church in Vestal, NY.

Subsequently, the Presbytery moderator introduced an item of business from the General Assembly, specifically discussion of a Missouri Presbytery’s requested Overture concerning racial and ethnic diversity. An “Overture” is essentially a request from a presbytery for action by the General Assembly upon a specific matter. After some lively and sobering discussion of the subject of racial reconciliation the Presbytery voted to support the Overture.

The next order of business was from the Leadership Committee, specifically the ordination examination of Nate Thompson. The Leadership Committee noted that they spent time with Nate the previous day where Nate com-

pleted a written and oral examination, on which he achieved a high score. Today, the Leadership Committee requested Nate provide his personal testimony, followed by a time of public examination. The Leadership Committee opened the public examination by requesting questions from the members addressing three different areas of examination: sacraments, church history, and theology. The questions posed tested Nate’s knowledge in each category, demonstrating his knowledge of the sacraments, church history, and theology, including reformed theology. In addition, some questions tested his knowledge of issues that have led some into subtle heresies, such as hyper-grace. Nate provided candid responses to each and every question, demonstrating his knowledge and understanding, and his preparation for pastoring and shepherding the Lord’s flock of believers at Hope Church. It was very encouraging to personally witness how seriously and faithfully the Presbytery members take their responsibility to watch over and care for the spiritual well-being of the Lord’s bride and church in NYS. When the examining members had exhausted their questions, the Leadership Committee then cited the terms of the pastoral call, which were accepted by Nate. A motion and vote was taken for approving Nate’s ordination, which was unanimously approved by the Presbytery.

Pastor Nate’s Ordination: Impressions

By Rae Whitehead

What impressed me most about Nate’s ordination into the pastorate was the commitment and caring of the men of our Presbytery to and for our little church and our young, new pastor. Like the “cloud of witnesses,” these elders surround us with their prayers and concern. Sitting next to our dear and faithful Mike Alford, who has been with us during some of our darkest days as a church, was a reminder to me of Christ’s long-suffering. Seeing Jim Stewart there brought back memories of Malta days (mid-1970’s), when he filled our pulpit before Hope Church was formed, and of his role much later in the Presbytery Commission which sought to bring healing to a splintered church. The many members of Redeemer Reformed Church who were there helped us to realize that we have supportive friends close by.

To see the reverend and august group of men (pastors and ruling elders) gathered around our kneeling Nate, placing their hands on him, praying for him as he faces the challenges of pastoring, moved us to tears of joy and thankfulness. God has “brought us out to a spacious place” from which we can look behind with chastened gratitude and ahead with joyous anticipation of what He will do among us. We praise Him for having brought Nate and Bethany and their children to us. We continue to pray for them as they follow Him here, at Hope Church.

**February 28, 2016
A Special Day in the Life of
Hope Church and the
Thompson Family**



New York State Presbytery Commission: Re Jim Stewart, TE Larry Roff, TE Nate Thompson, TE Jim Farinacci, RE John VanVoorhis, RE Jeff Butler



Pastor Nate and Bethany
Baby Ezra, Jonah and Talitha

Interact in Worship

Two Easter Poems By Luci Shaw

From *Accompanied by Angels: Poems of the Incarnation*

“...for they shall see God”
Matthew 5:8

Christ risen was rarely
recognized by sight.
They had to get beyond the way he looked.
Evidence stronger than
his voice and face and footstep
waited to grow in them, to guide
their groping from despair,
their stretching toward belief.

We are as blind as they
until the opening of our deeper eyes
shows us the hands that bless
and break our bread,
until we finger
wounds that tell our healing,
or witness a miracle of fish
dawn-caught after our long night
of empty nets. Handling
his Word, we feel his flesh,
his bones, and hear his voice
calling our early-morning name.

Getting Inside the Miracle

No, he is too quick. We never
catch him at it. He is there
sooner than our thought or prayer.
Searching backward, we cannot discover
how, or get inside the miracle.

Even if it were here and now
how would we describe the just-born trees
swimming into place at their green
creation, flowering upward in the air
with all their thin twigs quivering
in the gusts of grace? Or the great
white whales fluking through
crystalline seas like recently inflated
balloons? Who could time the beat
of the man's heart as the woman
comes close enough to fill
his newly-hollow side? Who will diagram
the gynecology of Incarnation,
the trigonometry of Trinity?
Or chemically analyze wine from a well?
Or see inside joints as they loosen,
and whole limbs, and lives? Will anyone
stand beside the moving stone? And plot
the bright trajectory of Ascension?
And explain the tongues of fire
Telling both heat and light?

Enough. Refrain. Observe
a finished work. Think—
today, another miracle: the feathered
arrows of my faith may link
God's bow and target.

Foster Loving Relationships

Seven Stanzas at Easter

By John Updike

Make no mistake
if he rose at all
it was as his body;
if the cells' dissolution did not reverse, the
molecules reknit, the amino acids rekindle,
the church will fall.

It was not as the flowers,
each soft Spring recurrent;
it was not as his Spirit in the mouths and
fuddled eyes of the eleven apostles;
it was as his flesh: ours.

The same hinged thumbs and toes,
the same valved heart
that—pierced—died, withered, decayed, and then
regathered out of his Father's might
new strength to enclose.

Let us not mock God with metaphor,
analogy, sidestepping transcendence;
making of the event a parable, a sign painted in the
faded credulity of earlier ages;
let us walk through the door.

The stone is rolled back, not papier mache',
not a stone in a story,
but the vast rock of materiality that in the slow
grinding of time will eclipse each of us
the wide light of day.

And if we will have an angel at the tomb,
make it a real angel,
weighty with Max Planck's quanta, vivid with hair,
opaque in the dawn light, robed in real linen
spun on a definite loom.

Let us not seek to make it less monstrous,
for our own convenience, our own sense of beauty,
lest, awakened in one unthinkable hour, we are
embarrassed by the miracle,
and crushed by remonstrance.

Ed. Note: Note quoted this poem in his Easter Sermon.

Spa Christian School Update

By Mandy Klint, Administrator

Over the past month we have enjoyed meeting several families who are interested in hearing more about the education provided at Spa Christian School. Four such families have already handed in their registration paperwork, which is so exciting! God is doing great and mighty things here! Please be joining us in praying for continued growth in our enrollment, not for our glory, but for His.

At the end of February we had our 2nd annual enrollment dinner, where our current families came together to celebrate what God is doing. Our families enjoyed listening to Lois Suffern (our kindergarten teacher) and Connie Pattee (our 5th and 6th grade teacher) speak about what goes on through the open door of their classrooms. Lois explained the research behind the developmental need for a child to learn through play and exploration before moving on to seatwork. Connie displayed the wonderful connection that can be made in ancient history class between the history book and our Bible. Stories about the Assyrians, Babylonians, Philistines, Hittites, etc. that you find in the Bible align with historical facts about those very same people. What a neat way to show that our Scriptures display truth.

We are looking forward to joining with you for the Hope/Spa Spring Work day on April 9th. Hopefully we'll be done with the snow by then. See you there!

Coming up next month we have our fundraising gala. All are invited to this extremely fun night. Tickets cost \$65 and can be paid for in the office. We'll enjoy great food, get pictures taken at the photo booth, and then enjoy Christian comedian Colin Ryan. See the invitation below. We appreciate your prayers that this event provides necessary funding for the school.



Foster Loving Relationships

Meet Colin Anderson

Let me introduce you to Colin Anderson. He is a very busy guy. He is 9-1/2 and was born on October 15, 2006 at 7:15 a.m. He is currently in the fourth grade at Joseph Henry Elementary in Galway. Colin's favorite subject is math, favorite book is the "Who Was and What Was" series, favorite Bible hero is Paul, favorite sport is basketball, and his favorite foods are goulash and macaroni and cheese. He plays basketball, soccer and baseball. Colin keeps himself busy with many activities. He likes to use his kindle, his nerf guns, and make paper planes. He is in 4H, the Galway Growers, and the beef club. There is also the fact that he helps take care of six sheep, one cow, one rabbit and seventy chickens.



Snapshot on Children's Ministry By Melanie Combs

Happy Spring! I wanted to share a bit about the programs that are running for our children. I was privileged to be the substitute teacher for the K-2 group. What a fun program! I hope all parents will take the opportunity to look over the Sunday School papers that come home as they highlight what was learned and give families ideas to continue learning. There was also a meeting for the Boys Brigade and Pioneer Girls group. One brave girl was there for the program and joined in with the boys for much of the night. The theme for now has been ways to love and serve others. The activity for the evening was building fires and we had many organized piles of sticks all over the floor. (No fires were lit!) The children are looking forward to some opportunities to serve our church community throughout the spring. I encourage all children who can come to join us for these great programs.



Foster Loving Relationships

Welcome, New Members! (Continued)

In our February issue, we heard from our new members, Norm and Natalie Jones. (Thank you both for sharing yourselves!) This month, Macia Lawrence opens her heart to us:

Three years ago, when I followed my husband and cousin through the door of Hope Church, little did I know of the heartache, hopelessness, and despair to come! During the next year, Pastor Jim was to help me through the deaths of my sister-like cousin and my beloved husband of sixty years.

I hurt so much because in my mind I had lost my God and my old church—and then, in my regular attendance at Hope, I found friendship, love and acceptance. I learned that God had held open Hope's door that Sunday, letting me in to where He knew I needed to be. In my time of need, I was surrounded by loving, kind people. I just had to love them back.

To each person who gave a hug, a pat on the back, a promise of prayer or just a warm smile: Thank you! May I be given a chance to give back to someone what was so freely given to me. Next time God holds a door open, may I see the gift He's offering me.

John 10:9 states: *I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved and shall go in and out, and find pasture.* (To me, "pasture" means peace and feeding and the comfort of grass and sky and knowing it was created by God for our enjoyment.)



WIGU2? And WAUH4?

By Rae Whitehead

Anyone who has sat in Jim Wever's Sunday School classes will remember these cryptic messages, which stayed on the whiteboard throughout each quarter. "What Is God Up To?" and "What Are You Here For?" are questions that Jim asked us continually, and they kept popping up during our recent trip South. I should have known what would happen when I saw the box of Gideon Bibles that David packed into the car! Our "vacation" soon became a mission trip as we met and shared with more and more dear people who remain in our hearts as we continue to pray for them.

Some of our contacts we had planned: dear old friends (literally "old," like Jean, who is almost 102; and "old" as in having shared in the birth pangs of Spa Christian School); and we saw relatives along the way. But most of our encounters, which became opportunities for sharing and prayer, were spontaneous, and totally God's doing. (I am NOT a natural missions person!) Lola, a hotel worker in Georgia, has been putting off an operation on a tumor because she's so concerned about her co-workers. I cried with her and talked about Phil. 4. David is a man with a burden who writes poetry and lives in the wilds of NE Georgia. We sat on his back porch and shared Scripture together! Tom, whom we met "by chance" in West Virginia, will sell his ranch and embark on a mission trip around the world. Samantha is a waitress in my hometown of Clarkesville, Georgia, who served us and cried when we gave her a Bible. Some folks said "I really needed this today." One man asked not to be "converted"!

Maybe we should expect heavenly encounters when we begin each day with "What do You have for us today, Lord?" We began our three-week "vacation" with a box of Bibles; we came home with one small testament and an empty box. But our hearts are full. I am not an extrovert, and I often begged for some time alone or sat in the car while David talked—but I am learning that God opens even my reluctant mouth, and He uses our "down-time" for His purposes! May God grant us the grace to see each day as an opportunity and each person we meet as a precious child of His!

Extend God's Hope

Jesus > [Greater Than] Religion: Why He is so much better than trying harder, doing more, and being good enough

by Jefferson Bethke

I read this book about six months ago, and was also working through Philip Yancey's *What's so Amazing About Grace* at the same time, and while they are very different books, they were a good pairing. Jeff Bethke wrote this book in 2013 at the age of 23. He wrote it after a YouTube video of his poem "Why I Hate Religion but Love Jesus" got almost 7 million hits in 48 hours. His writing style is raw and edgy, reflective of his age and life experience. If you don't like reading words in the current 20-something vernacular, this book may not be for you. Or maybe it could be the perfect eye-opener to a different generation.

The first section of the book gives Bethke's personal background. He was raised by a single mother and moved around a lot when he was growing up. He was taught basic, traditional Christianity, but it was only a surface-level belief. As a youth, he tried to "be good" on the outside but was struggling with who he was deep down. As a college student, he worshiped girls, his reputation and relationships. He went to college specifically to play baseball,

but quickly found himself on academic probation, cut from the team and dumped by his girlfriend. This pain broke him and he was finally ready to listen to God. He became drawn in by grace, and God melted his heart. As a believer, he saw a difference in the Christianity he thought he knew and the Christianity of the New Testament. He realized: "The Bible isn't a rule book, it's a love letter; I'm not an employee, I'm a child; It's not about my performance, it's about Jesus's performance for me."

Some other thoughts that he shares in the book include:

- "The sanitized, American Jesus and our "neutered" version of grace (my good works save me but we still call it grace) are not the Jesus and grace of the Bible."
- "Most of the time, we're persecuted, not because we love Jesus, but because we're prideful, arrogant jerks who don't love the real Jesus. We're often judgmental, hypocritical and legalistic while claiming to love a Jesus who is forgiving, authentic, and loving."

The bulk of the rest of the book goes on to compare religion (in its most negative and fundamentalist sense) to Jesus, and here are a few of the chapter titles:

- With Religion, there are Good People and Bad People/With Jesus, there are only Bad People in need of grace
- Religion is the means to get things from God/If we seek Jesus, we get God
- Religion says, "God will love you if...."/Jesus says, "God so loved...."
- Why Jesus Loves the Church (and you should, too)

Throughout the book, Bethke says things that many people are thinking (or at least that I have thought) or have experienced but never wanted to admit or say out loud. I appreciated his candor and genuineness and ability to honestly discuss difficult and uncomfortable topics. This book was easy to read, but if you don't know if you want to invest the time in it, try watching the YouTube poem mentioned above or any of Bethke's other videos to get a flavor of his style.

From Luther's Commentary on Galatians

"So we teach continually, that the knowledge of Christ and of faith is no work of man, but simply the gift of God, who as He creates faith, so He keeps us in it. Even as He first gives faith unto us through the Word, so afterwards He exercises, increases, strengthens, and makes perfect the same in us by the Word."

"Faith connects you so intimately with Christ, that He and you become as it were one person. As such you may boldly say: "I am now one with Christ. Therefore Christ's righteousness, victory, and life are mine." On the other hand, Christ may say: "I am that big sinner. His sins and his death are mine, because he is joined to me, and I to him." "

Extend God's Hope



BIRTHDAYS

4	Paul Miller
4	Miriam Emerson
10	Steve Brumagin
12	Anders Trestick
20	Steve Turner
28	Jim VanVorst

ANNIVERSARIES

13	Bill and Leona Digges
19	John and Sharon Milne
25	Fred and Ruth Richards

BIRTHS

We have been blessed with three new babies since our February Doorway to Hope and rejoice with the following families:

Nate and Bethany Thompson welcomed their son, Ezra Nathanael Thompson to their family on February 5th;

Dan and Naomi Emerson welcomed their son, Levi Daniel on March 1st;

Patrick and Laura Childs welcomed Peyton Eliza to their family on March 13th.

WEDDING

Jim and Terry Cornick announce the marriage of their daughter, Kelly to David Kenyon of Burnt Hills. Between the two of them they are the parents of six sons between the ages of 9 and 17. We wish them God's richest blessing as they begin their lives together.

Women's Retreat May 20-21, 2016

Cornick Home in Queensbury

Our Theme this year is: **"Worship While You Wait"**

We have been in a waiting period as a church and most of us are also regularly waiting on the Lord for something.

Ladies, join us at this year's retreat as we consider such questions as:

- How does being in community with other people help you persevere through the waiting periods of life?
- What are some of God's promises that you can claim while you are waiting?
- Why is waiting essential to your faith?

**Retreat Registration Forms will be available on
Sunday, April 17th with further details.**

**Total Cost for Friday 7:00 p.m. through Saturday Evening
Supper is only \$20 per person**

**Ladies—The Committee is very excited and we hope that you will all be
able to join us.**



Newsletter Deadline

**Next Doorway to Hope
Deadline is May 15th.**

DOORWAY TO HOPE STAFF

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