



Doorway to Hope

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

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

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Listening to the Stories We are Told and Watch

Kenneth: "Mr. Jordan, do you know why I love television so much?"

Tracy Jordan: "Because despite cell phones, iPads, and computers, it's still the most effective portal for poltergeists?"

Kenneth: "On TV shows, nothing ever really changes, the people you care about never leave, and the bad guy always gets what she deserves."

30 Rock, "My Whole Life is Thunder"

It was scandalous! Christians from the local church were both outraged and embarrassed by the actions of this person who claimed to follow Jesus Christ. Clearly, this person did not believe the Bible to be God's Word or care about holiness any more. What was their offense? They were caught having a conversation *in front of* a movie theater! They were not even in the theater enjoying a story written in the cesspool of depravity, otherwise known as Hollywood. But by being seen in front of a theater, they obviously are too comfortable with impurity and do not care about Jesus' reputation.

Of course the above situation is extreme, but it does raise the question: how should Christians relate to and interact with the countless number of movies, tv shows, and music our friends and family are regularly devouring? Is there anything of value found in pop culture that we can either learn from or use to make Jesus known?

Let's start by considering the example of the apostle Paul in Athens (Acts 17:16ff). While waiting for his friends to arrive Paul wandered about the city. Everywhere he looked he saw evidence of idol worship. This was a city where every god was recognized and honored, except the One True Living God. He not only looked and had compassion, in imitation of Yahweh and Jesus (see Exodus 3:7; Luke 7:13), but he was also emotionally affected. He had a knot in his stomach and probably tears in his eyes as he heard the stories of unbelief in Christ that explained each idol. One of the tales was significant

enough to use in conversation with the Athenians. There was one altar in particular, that was erected to honor and ask for help from the "unknown god."

Who was this 'unknown god?' What was the purpose of this altar? Long ago, Athens was hit with a brutal plague, which led to countless numbers of burials. Unsure who was offended, the leaders of the city worked to sacrifice and pray to every god they could think of. After completing their checklist of known gods, people were still dying! Clearly, they overlooked somebody. Thus, a man named Epimenides was summoned from Crete. Much to everyone's surprise, he declared that there was still one god that no one had thought to ask for healing and mercy. They forgot about the 'unknown god.' Perhaps there *is* someone out there who is offended by their actions and is now looking for worship and attention. Epimenides is said to have prayed,

(Continued on page 2)

Inside This Issue

<i>Learn God's Word and Apply it in Our Communities</i>	pp. 1,2
<i>Interact in Worship with Easter poems</i>	p. 3
<i>Foster Loving Relationships with the Milnes and by Sharing our Thoughts and Ideas</i>	pp. 5,6
<i>Extend God's Hope through our children, Spa Christian School and the Kenya Team</i>	pp. 7,8

(Continued from page 1)

“O thou unknown god! Behold the plague afflicting this city! And if indeed you feel compassion to forgive and help us...we will sacrifice to you, acknowledging our pitiful ignorance of your name.” The next day, after the animal sacrifices, death’s grip on the city weakened. By the following week the plague had cleared up. An altar was raised in honor of this ‘unknown god.’

Here is what is assumed by Paul as he prepared to enter Athens to publicly declare that everyone must put their faith in Jesus Christ to have their sins forgiven and enter paradise on Judgment Day. First, everyone is made in the image of God and is therefore religious. Second, because everyone is made in the image of God, they know some truth about the one true God. Third, because of sin, everyone is a mixture of truth and falsehood. Thus, every culture will at time value things God values and at the same time cherish things God hates. Fourth, this mixed bag of truth and falsehood is found in every cultural story. Because our non-Christian friends borrow and use truths found in the Bible, we are free to identify them and use them in order to gain a hearing for the gospel of Jesus Christ among our neighbors.

Look at how Paul did this in Athens. He started by affirming what is true, “I see you are very religious. You want to know what the spiritual realm is like.” He then borrowed their story about the unknown God and even quoted Epimenides of Crete: “In him we live and move and have our being.” Paul also did the research and knew of another pagan poet named Aratus, who said, “We are indeed his offspring.” So Paul preached: “What you declare as unknown, I now declare to you as known. The God of the Bible and Jesus, whom He sent, both fulfill your longing for forgiveness and are the answer to the questions about the world.”

I am obviously paraphrasing Paul’s words, but you can see how this works. Part of loving your neighbors well is to learn what they value by listening to the stories they enjoy. And right now 99% of American households own a television and it is on about five hours a day! We haven’t said anything about film or binge-watching Netflix.

If I can rephrase Kenneth on 30 Rock, “I love television because in a world where everything changes, I have to say good-bye to my loved ones and it seems like the bad guys have it good and the good guys have it bad, I get to escape to a world where those things aren’t true.”

I love the honesty of the writers of this show. Our world is incredibly sad, compounded by a lack of justice for the weak and poor and oppressed. But for 30 minutes or an hour I can live in a world where happy endings are possible. And because eternity is written on every human heart (Ecclesiastes 4:12), we can use these stories to then say, “Do you want to hear about the true story of Jesus Christ, who was crucified for our sins, died and was buried and was raised on the third day? Because His story is a true story, there really is such a thing as “they lived happily ever after.”

Are you listening to the hurts and hopes of your neighbors in the stories they tell? They too are groaning in pain, longing for the new creation. They need you and me to point them to Jesus, who is making all things new.



Pastor Nate

Why I Joined the Ballston Spa Business Professional Association’s Board

As a Session last month we considered these responsibilities of pastors and elders from the book of Titus, articulated well in *The Imperfect Pastor* by Zack Eswine (p.218). Look closely at #2,3, and 5.

1. Get to know local and ordinary persons and begin to disciple those who are gifted to lead (Titus 1:5).
2. Spend time getting to know each local town and seek its welfare in this way (1:5).
3. Become savvy to local narratives that oppose the gospel (1:10-11).
4. Spend time getting to know local families for their pastoral care (1:11).
5. Become familiar with the history and literature of the place (1:12).
6. Cultivate a congregational culture that is relational in its ethos (2:1-6).

It is impossible to become familiar with a place along with its beliefs, hopes and sorrows without interacting with those neighbors outside of the church. Serving alongside our neighbors on the BSBPA Board to make Ballston Spa a great place to live and raise families is a means to love our community and get to know them. My prayer is that the service would gain a hearing for the gospel and give our church a reputation for caring for the town that God has placed us in.

Pastor Nate

I'd like to attempt to compare Camelot to the Kingdom of God. There is a movie called "First Knight" about King Arthur, Guinevere, Sir Launcelot, and the Round Table. There are a lot of interpretations of the story of Camelot. This is one of them. I've written down some of the quotes King Arthur (played by Sean Connery), said during parts of the movie. Let me show you how some of them compare to what the Bible says.

"In serving each other we become free," says King Arthur. This, he says, is the "heart of Camelot." Galatians 5:13 states: "You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another in love."

The Knights of the Round Table, in the movie, have this special phrase that they say to each other while putting their hands upon each others' shoulders: "Brother to brother, yours in life and death." I John 3:16b says: "And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers."

Arthur tells Launcelot about the belief of Camelot: "You hold nothing back; you give all of yourself." I find that this parallels Hebrews 12:1b: "...let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us."

"There are laws that enslave men," King Arthur says. This sounds like Galatians 3:23b: "...we were held prisoners by the law, locked up until faith should be revealed." And Romans 7:25b states: "So then, I myself in my mind am a slave to God's law, but in the sinful nature a slave to the law of sin." But then Arthur continues, "...and laws that set them free." Psalm 19:7: "The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul. The statutes of the Lord are trustworthy, making wise the simple." Also, I Timothy 1:8 says: "We know that the law is good if one uses it properly."

Here are some other quotes from the movie. "You risked your life for another; there is no greater

love." Arthur says this to Launcelot, who risked his life to save Guinevere. John 15:13: "Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends."

Most importantly, I like hearing this next statement because I love what it means! Arthur says, "Camelot lives in us. It's a belief we hold in our hearts"! It's not the buildings or the wealth or the external things that make up Camelot! In Luke 17:21, Jesus says, "...nor will people say, 'Here it is,' or 'There it is,' because the Kingdom of God is within you."

I enjoyed finding nuggets of truth in this story. I also enjoyed the acting, the beauty of the people of Camelot with their bright blue clothes, the rugged scenery, and beautiful outfits. Connery does a great job being King Arthur. He is a noble figure and in the end, well, he demonstrates that "Camelot lives on" because it's his belief, and he sacrifices everything for that.

Good News from Within Our Church Community

Nick Cutler has been accepted into the counseling program at Reformed Seminary in Jacksonville and will be starting his studies in June.

Ben and Amanda Bowman have been certified as Foster Parents in Schenectady County and presently are caring for a six-month old little girl.

The Galway Odyssey of the Mind Team that the Perkins boys (and Leslie) are in have qualified to participate in the State finals in Binghamton.

Three new covenant children are on the way—a Thompson baby in June, an Emerson baby in August and a Childs baby in August.

Leona Digges just celebrated her 90th birthday with her family.

Interact in Worship

Good Friday

Am I a stone and not a sheep,
That I can stand, O Christ, beneath Thy cross,
To number drop by drop Thy blood's slow loss,
And yet not weep?

No so those women loved
Who with exceeding grief lamented Thee;
Not so fallen Peter weeping bitterly;
Not so the thief was moved;

Not so the Sun and Moon
Which hid their faces in a starless sky
A horror of great darkness at broad noon—
I, only I.

Yet give not o'er,
But seek Thy sheep, true Shepherd of the flock;
Greater than Moses, turn and look once more
And smite a rock.

—Christina Rossetti



...FOR THEY SHALL SEE GOD. Matt. 5:8

“They only saw Jesus—and then but the outside Jesus,
or a little more. They were not pure in heart...They saw
Him with their eyes, but not with those eyes which
alone can see God...the thought-eyes, the truth-eyes, the
love-eyes can see Him.” —George Macdonald

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
out of 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 saying our early-morning name.

—Luci Shaw

At Communion

Whether I kneel or stand or sit in prayer
I am not caught in time nor held in space,
but thrust beyond the posture I am where
time and eternity come face to face;
infinity and space meet in this place
where crossbar and high upright hold the one
in agony and in all Love's embrace.
The power in helplessness that was begun
when all the brilliance of the flaming sun
contained itself in the small confines of a child
now comes to me in this strange action done
in mystery. Break me, break space, O wild
and lovely power. Break me; thus am I dead,
am resurrected now in wine and bread.

—Madeleine L'Engle



Foster Loving Relationships

Let's Talk!

What are YOU thinking about?? We at Doorway to Hope would love to hear from you! Give us your articles, and let's talk! We appreciate so much your willingness to submit articles when asked, but it would be great to get unsolicited work! Kids, this includes you! We love your pictures as well as your written work! (We ask that articles be original and signed, and we do reserve the right to edit or not include.)

Go OUTSIDE and Find Spring!

By Rae Whitehead

The redwing blackbirds are back! Their raucous calls of "tweet-tweet-tweet-SQUACK" are filling the air. The breeze over the dwindling snow is fresh and cold, but the sun, oh the sun is strong! On days like this I said to "my" school children, "Open your Kindergarten eyes! What do you see? Listen carefully. What do you hear?" On March 20, it could be snowing, blowing, or both; rain or shine, we'd head outside for our Spring Walk. Sloshing through puddles and crunching through that hard left-over snow, we'd stalk that illusive season, and we would find wonders to delight our hearts and our minds.

We would need keen ears and quick eyes, and yes, it helped to have a grown-up along to interpret some of those signs of spring or to point them out. But the sun on our faces and the keen wind that reddened our noses brightened our eyes and pulled laughter from our insides out into the air, where it joined the noise of those mad spring songbirds.

Don't we all, kids and grown-ups alike, need the same admonition—spring, summer, fall, or winter? "Open your eyes! Really LISTEN with your ears! But first, GO OUTSIDE!" How many children these

days run outside to play after school? Do your small children get to play in the mud in the springtime (or summer, as mud is scarce in the northeast this time of year)? Can they spend hours outdoors, seemingly unattended, and undisturbed? Do they know how to be alone, without any technology at all? Do they know how to PLAY?

The sad answer to this question is "No" for many children in our country in the 21st century. Many children today do not seem to have the inner resources, including imagination, to be able to play on their own, without the gadgetry that is endemic in our culture. And scientists are finding that the lack of free, open-ended play is changing their brains. In her article in the Jan. 28 '09 issue of "The Scientific American," Melinda Wenner writes that "...a lack of opportunities for unstructured, imaginative play can keep children from growing into happy, well-adjusted adults. 'Free play,' as scientists call it, is critical for becoming socially adept, coping with stress and building cognitive skills such as problem solving."

We often think that organized sports can take the place of "free play." However, such sports come with a

set of pre-determined rules; when a child is engrossed in imaginative play, he must make up the rules as he goes along. If she's with a friend, she has to communicate the "rules," and in the give-and-take of working them out, social and verbal skills are built. How well I remember my Kindergartners looking longingly at the play equipment as they waited their turns at an organized game during the annual Field Day. "When can we PLAY?" they'd wistfully ask. How they needed to run and jump and yell and roll and twirl! Children NEED to play!

So as spring tiptoes into your backyards, go outside with your children to find her footprints! Look for the pussywillow, the catkin, the skunk cabbage, the tiny spirals of fern! Attune your children's ears to the first returning songbirds, the migrating geese and spring peepers. Encourage the messy mud-work of dams and rivers in your driveway! Get them out of the house, away from those gadgets, and help them FIND SPRING!



Foster Loving Relationships

Hope Church Family,

I'd like to invite you to our Appreciation Dinner, happening on April 14th at Ballston Center Church. Our desire is to share some time with those who have shown us love over the years, reminiscing, hearing about what is currently going on, and just saying "Thank You" to our prayer and financial partners. The invitation is below. Please let us know in the school office if you plan on attending. It's a come and go as you please type event, with a presentation from 6-7. Feel free to stop by for 15 minutes, or stay for all 3 hours. It should be an enjoyable evening with friends.

Prayerfully,
Mandy Kergel <<<
mandykergel@spachristian.com

Ladies Brunch with Sharon Milne



Saturday, April 21st

9:00 to 1:00

Come out and join your friends at Hope Church and Spa Christian School to get our church and properties ready for the Spring.

Bring rakes, shovels, wheelbarrow, cleaning supplies

Most of All—Come and Help!

Extend God's Hope



Snapshot on Children's Ministry
By Melanie Combs



Things are progressing well for Sunday School and Children's Church so far this year. Here are a few highlights to be thinking about.

Camp Hope: Splash of Reading will be taking place August 6-10, 2018.

If you would love to be a part of Camp Hope this year, please talk to Melanie Combs.

We are moving right along with Catechism Questions. It would be a great tool for family study if you used the website to go back and review all that we've done so far. We will revisit all the questions again when we start at Question 1 sometime in September.

The mirror you see is to symbolize seeing **YOU** right on this page! :) We need **YOU** to be able to continue the children and youth ministries we desire to provide for our children. We are small but we are mighty when we stick together to do the work that needs to be done.

Please be prayerfully considering how you can be involved.



Easter Word Search

B M A L M H B B K I N G R N R
N O I T C E R R U S E R E O O
A P O S T L E S E Y S C D I O
S E C I F I R C A S H J E T S
N S N A M O R O O R R E M A T
R C D S G T T R I I K S P V E
O Y R A M B C S S V Z U T L R
H L O V E L T E M M A S I A Y
T C R O W N N Y L O H S O S Z
X C R U C I F I X I O N N K Q

APOSTLES
CHRIST
CROSS
CROWN
CRUCIFIXION
HOLY
JESUS
KING
LAMB
LOVE



MARY
REDEMPTION
RESURRECTION
RISEN
ROMANS
ROOSTER
SACRIFICE
SALVATION
SAVIOR
THORNS

Extend God's Hope



Kenya Team plans are moving forward. This is the hard stretch, with lots of work to raise funds and take care of little logistical things, but the trip will be here before we know it. Pray for team members to stay encouraged even when support comes in slowly, or plans get complicated, and life gets busy. Pray for the folks in Kenya who are doing a ton of work to prepare for us to come, and for the incredible ministry opportunities that are opening up.



BIRTHDAYS

- 4 Paul Miller
- 4 Miriam Emerson
- 10 Steve Brumagin
- 12 Anders Trestick
- 17 Katherine Childs (16th)
- 20 Steve Turner

ANNIVERSARIES

- 13 Bill and Leona Digges (69th)
- 19 John and Sharon Milne (50th)
- 25 Fred and Ruth Richards

GARAGE SALE

April 28th
Benefit Kenya Mission
Trip

You can now bring your donations and place them on the far side in the youth room underneath the sanctuary.



Newsletter
Deadline

Next Doorway to Hope
Deadline is May 15th.



DOORWAY TO HOPE STAFF

DIRECTOR: LORD JESUS
TYPIST & LAYOUT Sally Jenkins
EDITOR: Rae Whitehead
SUPPORT: All the Prayers of All of
the Church family

Did you know that Hope Church has a page on Facebook now? When you get a chance, check it out. At <https://www.facebook.com/BallstonSpaNY/>

April Calendar

Hope Church
Presbyterian Church in America
206 Greenfield Avenue
Ballston Spa, NY 12020



Mother, Daughter Tea!

Ladies, in honor of Mother's Day, we will be hosting a Mother, Daughter Tea, on Saturday, May 19th at 11 a.m.

Whether you are a daughter, the mother or perhaps the Grandmother; or you can even borrow or adopt one of the above, All ladies are welcome!



Tea Party

We will sampling an assortment of fine teas and enjoying Scrumptious tea sandwiches along with some delicious sweets.

Please mark your calendars for this fun upcoming event.

More details will follow, but if you have any questions,

Please speak to Marybeth Gibbins.

Interact in Worship

Jake's Spring Walk

Sixteen-month-old Jake was wanting a walk. Definitely. He was shaking the bars of the safety gate and making urgent noises. Shoes on. Coat on. And we are ready to go. As I scoop him up to carry him down the stairs, he helps, by swinging his body toward the door. Once outside, he wriggles his body to get down, and begins his adventure. Two steps forward...and...there's a stone! Making many comments about it in his own amazing language, he squats to examine it. It just fits in his fat fist. On we go, down the drive, stopping for more stones, until he realizes he must relinquish some before more will fit. Oh, dear! Dilemma! We solve it by fitting some stones into his pocket. He is very pleased. He has already wiped any dirt off them with one of his intelligible words: "Yuck!" (He is fastidious.) We toddle on. He finds some big stones to sit on. Joy! A truck zooms by, and Jake is transfixed, yelling "Uck! Uck!" and making truck noises jubilantly.

Our walk becomes a real adventure, for me as well as for my little grandson. We pass newly opened crocuses, which he's not very interested in until we focus on the bees circling the flowers and burrowing in for nectar. Jake is delighted, and makes a humming sound. We spot two cats enjoying the spring sunshine. We walk into someone else's driveway, at his insistence, to investigate. Jake has had previous experience with cats, and says "át, at" pointing to his wrist where a cat has cuffed him. We pass three dogs, and a kind lady gives Jake a biscuit to feed one of them. Throughout the walk, Jake notices the stones, and discards some while picking others up. The spring breeze is blowing his blond hair and his cheeks redden. He looks up at the blowing branches, enjoying the wind, but unable to express what it is. He just smiles all over his whole compact, chubby body!

On the way home, we spot a digger, about which he has been "reading" in several of his vehicle books. We make digging motions with our arms, and after examining the bucket, Jake looks into the hole nearby, and accidentally drops the big pine cone he's been carrying into the hole. He's interested to see where it went, but is happy to replace it with a tiny pinecone from the ground. We arrive back home, having walked 1/8 of a mile, if that. But oh the things we learned, and the experiences and sensations we had!

And I know that the next time he sees a cat or a dog or a digger, he will have much to say about them, telling me or his mom or his dad whole paragraphs about his experiences on his spring walk.

