



Doorway to Hope

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

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

December 2017 · Vol. 20, No. 5

E-mail: info@hopechurch.us Website: www.hopechurch.us

Christmas Again?

Christmas is nearly here. Again. It is the one time of year where most everyone delights in the repetition of food, family and faith. Even the irritable Scrooges among us smile... eventually. We at Hope Church are planning to join our neighbors again in the annual Christmas parade, feast with our church family again, and sing again of God's mysterious glory revealed during that first not-so-silent night on what will be our third Christmas Eve with you all.

How do you and I prepare for the glorious monotony of the Christmas season? Consider the surprising response of the shepherds. They were watching their flocks by night. Another ordinary day. Then suddenly heaven bursts onto the scene! Everyone is surrounded by God's blinding glory in the darkness. An angel of the Lord appears with the good news that Christ the Lord has been born, and he will be found lying in a manger. Unable to resist the cosmic joy, thousands of angels exploded into sight and song, saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!" The darkness returns, the shepherds find baby Jesus wrapped in swaddling clothes, and they go home praising and worshipping God! The Scriptures tell us that the shepherds, after seeing glory, simply went back to work in a small town. There was no celebrity tour. They didn't write a book or sell the movie rights.

God's glory showed up in their 'cubicle.' And yet when it was finished the shepherds returned to their sheep. They went back to telling stories and eating meals around a fire, working to feed their families. It all seems so...anti-climatic.

Consider this insight from the book the elders are currently studying, *The Imperfect Pastor*, by Zack Eswine. Read this more than once. "God seems to seriously imply through the returning of the shepherds that seeing God's glory, hearing his voice, receiving his good news through faith, and beholding his love was never meant to deliver us from ordinary life and love in a place—it was meant instead to provide the means to preserve us there (p.81)."

Let me add to the picture. God's glory came as a person in Jesus Christ. But for thirty years Jesus stayed in one place! He swung a hammer with his dad, shared a bathroom with his brothers and sang God's praise in the local syna-

gogue. For thirty years Jesus learned the names of his neighbors and ate meals with them (Luke 2:52). Stop there. The one who knitted everyone together in their mother's womb had to learn names. He recorded memories the same way you and I store cherished holiday joys. He was so ordinary that when He started teaching and preaching, everyone said, "Isn't this Joseph and Mary's son? Aren't his brothers James and Joseph, Simon and Judas (Matthew 13:55)?" This is Jesus of Nazareth. The second person of the Trinity was content to stay in a small town for 30 years.

Here's what Jesus is teaching us through the familiar Christmas story. It tells us to glory in being present in one place for as long as God would have us there, rather than always looking for the bigger and better elsewhere. The Christmas story teaches us to purposely learn the names of our neighbors as we go through the cycles of births, weddings, and funerals together. It

(Continued on page 2)

Inside This Issue

- Learning God's Word with our Men and Through Reading* pp. 2,3
Interact in Worship with Poetry and Our Children pp. 4,5
Foster Loving Relationships with Brother Bob, Spa Christian School and Those Who Struggle with Dementia pp. 6-7
Extend God's Hope as We Prepare for Kenya and Serve Others pp. 8-9

(Continued from page 1)

teaches us that seeing God's glory equips us to return and stay in a particular community through the criticisms, frustrations, sufferings and sorrows (see Jer. 29:4-7). Ordinary perseverance and witness for decades.

I want to invite you to be challenged with me on this. The story of the gospel begins with God planting Himself and being forever associated with a small town, Nazareth; the place where nothing good happens. The challenge and invitation is simple: Experience the wonder of God's grace in Jesus through faith and stay with us here for a long time. Even after you discover that there are actual sinners in the church! There is glory in staying where God has planted you to annually experience the 'agains' with your neighbors and pray for their welfare, to learn forgiveness with them and bear one another's burdens (Galatians 6:1-2). Do you believe that? Or are you continually restless looking for something or someone better?

We know the end of the Christmas story. Jesus comes back to earth, as a man, bringing heaven with him (Rev. 21:2). He returns to the ordinary. It turns out that Jesus believed that mundane things like returning to work and eating meals with family were worth dying for (Luke 22:15-18). These 'agains' will continue for eternity in the new creation with our Immanuel, God-with-us. The blood of Christ spilled onto the dirt of Calvary for the forgiveness of sins so

that God might dwell with us in our ordinary working and eating humanity.

I think of the Hobbits of the Shire, the delightful food and friend oriented creatures in Tolkien's Lord of the Rings. They look forward to six meals a day with one another. Their lives consist of gardening, working in the green fields in order to feast with friends. It is a mundane, joyful repetition. Yet, as one author put it, "The Shire and the ways and lives of hobbits is something that the wise of Middle-earth, including the future king Aragorn and the wise wizard Gandalf, and later Frodo himself, *believe is worth great sacrifice in order to save.*" (Matthew Dickerson) Frodo returned to the Shire after his grand adventure to feast with his friends after evil is vanquished.

I look forward to celebrating the Christmas season with you again, as we look forward to the day when sins and sorrows no longer grow, and Jesus' blessings will flow as far as the curse is found. May God's grace equip you to joyfully return home like the shepherds.



The View Atop Panther Mountain

Some of the men from Hope joined with other men on the weekend of November 11-12th for a Men's Retreat hosted by the Adirondack Bible Chapel in Piseco.

Dr. Bruce Ware was the speaker for the weekend up at Camp of the Woods. He wanted to impress on us men that Jesus was a man like us, tempted in every way, yet without sin. He began by flooding our minds with the deep doctrine of the Trinity, worked through the humility of Jesus' incarnation and ended with the gospel reality of Jesus' perfect obedience on our behalf. The four sessions challenged our minds and built up our faith.

We also had the joy of spending extended time together at meals, talking after the sessions, and climbing Panther mountain. Thanks to all who came and God-willing there will be similar events to grow in grace together in the future.

Learn God's Word

Read Your Way to Christmas

By Rae Whitehead



One of the favorite parts of our Christmas preparations is getting out the box of Christmas books. Christmas time has always included reading those books together. We started with the cardboard and picture books, and graduated as children grew to the chapter and grown-up books. I tried to get a good hard-cover book for our children each year, and often they centered around the Christmas Story. Those books have given me so much joy over the years, that I'd like to share some of the titles with you. (Sometimes I've had to beg "Please can I read to you?") Actually, really good books written for children will be enjoyed by everyone in the family, no matter what the age. Madeleine L'Engle said that she writes books, not young adult or children's books.

My favorite cardboard Christmas book is Guess Who's Coming to Our House by Joseph Slate and illustrated by Ashley Wolff. With simple text and wonderful pictures of the stable inhabitants, it evokes a sense of anticipation, and then of joy, when the holy family arrives. This is great for toddlers and two to three-year-olds.

A picture book that my Kindergartners enjoyed each year is The Year of the Perfect Christmas Tree by Barbara Cooney. (Check out her other books; she's a sensitive and gifted children's author and illustrator.) It describes in southern mountain idiom the struggles of mother and daughter whose man has gone off to the Great War. They manage with faith and perseverance to dress Ruthie as an angel for the Christmas play and to take to the church, as

was the custom, a very special tree from the "tip-tip-top" of the "highest craig" on Grandfather Mountain. The best part of the story comes at the end, when Papa comes home from the War, and we realize that the story is true, because "My aunt Ruthie told me so." The illustrations are wonderful, and if you ever go to Pine Grove, North Carolina, you can find that "highest craig" on Grandfather Mountain.

Holly and Ivy, by Rumer Godden and illustrated by Barbara Cooney, is the story of an orphan girl and a doll—but really it's a story of the childlike faith and perseverance of a little girl who has nowhere to go for Christmas. Rumer Godden's books for adults are, I think, dark, but her children's stories are delightful and beautifully written. Again, Barbara Cooney's pictures are incredible. She actually visited Ms. Godden in Scotland to get the local color of this lovely book. I read this with my second graders, but younger children, and older, will enjoy it.

The Christmas Miracle of Jonathan Toomey, by Susan Wojciechowski and illustrated by P. J. Lynch, is another beautiful book for all ages above five. It tells the story of the changing of a woodcarver's bitter heart through the carving of a crèche.

A book that I could never get through without choking up, even when reading to my second graders,



is A Certain Small Shepherd, by Rebecca Caudill. It is the true story of a little

boy who lived in Hurricane Gap somewhere in the southern mountains, and "not so ago at that." He could not talk, yet was picked to be a shepherd in the Christmas play in his one-room school. Through the birth of a child born to a couple lost in the snow, Jamie finds his voice. As he gives the meager contents of his Christmas stocking to the family, he speaks, and both families worship.

The above comprise a sampling of my favorite Christmas books. Listed below are more wonderful Christmas stories, which I've pulled out of our Christmas box early. You might want to consider giving one of them to a special child this Christmas; or check them out at your library! I've listed them according to age appropriateness, beginning with youngest—though as I've said, good books are good for any age!

How the Grinch Stole Christmas, by Dr. Seuss

The Friendly Beasts: An Old English Christmas Carol, illustrated by Tomie dePaola

Christmas in the Country, by Cynthia Rylant, illustrated by Diane Goode.

The Remarkable Christmas of the Cobbler's Sons, told by Ruth Sawyer, illustrated by Barbara Cooney

Pedro, the Angel of Olvera Street, by Leo Politi

(Continued on page 4)

Interact in Worship

(Continued from page 3)

The Little Fir Tree, by Margaret Wise Brown, illustrated by Jim LaMarche

The Best Christmas Pageant Ever, by Barbara Robinson

The Gift of the Magi, by O. Henry

The Twenty-Four Days Before Christmas, by Madeleine L'Engle

And, of course, The Christmas Carol, by Charles Dickens

Have fun—and enjoy reading together!

Heaven's Gift (Faith Alone)

Words by James Montgomery Boice

When far from God and lost in sin
I took God's book and looked within,
I found a gift from heaven's throne,
A righteousness from God made known.

That gift Christ won at dreadful cost:
Propitiation for the lost.
My substitute, condemned He died,
And turned God's wrath from me aside.

Now in Christ's righteousness alone
I stand before God's awesome throne,
And grasp what only God could do:
Be just and justifier too.

Christ paid the price to set me free:
His blood poured out on Calvary's tree.
Now nothing as my own I'll call,
For all is Christ's and Christ my all.

All merit, boasting set aside,
By faith alone I'm justified.
Before the throne I take my place
And rest in God's amazing grace.



“It was love, mere love; it was free love that brought the Lord Jesus Christ into our world. What, shall we not remember the birth of our Jesus? No, my dear brethren, let us celebrate and keep this festival of our church with joy in our hearts: let the birth of a Redeemer, which redeemed us from sin, from wrath, from death, from hell, be always remembered; may this Savior's love never be forgotten! But may we sing forth all his love and glory as long as life shall last here, and through an endless eternity in the world above! May we chant forth the wonders of redeeming love and the riches of free grace...”

~George Whitefield, “Contemplating Christmas”

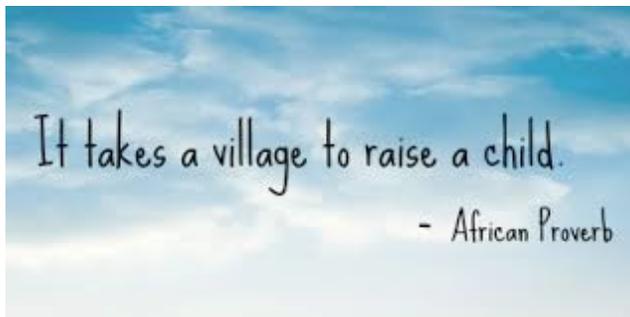
Foster Loving Relationships



Snapshot on Children's Ministry
By Melanie Combs



Sunday School and Children's Church have been running smoothly. Thank you to all involved. Each morning we start service with the children's catechism question. Hopefully your children are having fun with that. The kids' sermon notes all have a copy of the question so you can bring that home and review it, or you can go the New City Catechism website. We are working to pull together something for the children to do for Christmas Eve service. Look for information about that to come out in the bulletin.



In this season of thankfulness, I know I speak for all those at Hope Church that work with your children -we are so thankful to be working with your children AND with you. We take the teaching of your children seriously. We want to partner with you to raise each child up in wisdom and knowledge of the Lord.

I want to share a quote with you that I'm sure you've heard before. Wikipedia has a good definition of this proverb:

"It takes a village to raise a child is a [proverb](#) which means that it takes an entire community to raise a child: A child has the best ability to become a healthy adult if the entire community takes an active role in contributing to the rearing of the child." This proverb is old enough to have its roots lost to history but many attribute it to being an African proverb. It is a valuable "earthly" proverb as we define a "village" as being everyone around you and your children; family, school, town/neighborhood, and church. I saw another quote that goes with this that states if it takes a village then "do you know your village well?" Your child is always learning as he/she observes and interacts with those in this "village." Do you know what your child is learning? A quote that is often used at Spa Christian School where I teach goes something like this "Your child is always memorizing things -what are you helping make sure your child is memorizing?" For example: Is your

child focused on memorizing the procedure of a video game or this week's catechism question?

I want to focus on how Hope Church is endeavoring to be a strong "village" component for your child. We seek to help your child memorize those things that bring salvation, joy, and an intimate relationship with our Savior. We offer Sunday School classes and a Children's Church program with material that we have carefully tailored to help your child on his/her journey to understanding and learning more about God. We have a Children's Catechism section of our worship service to help your children learn the "core doctrines of our faith," as stated in The New City Catechism book. We offer sermon notes for your children to help them focus and interact with the teachings our pastor brings each week. Yet we only meet at church once a week. That is not enough time to fully impact the things your child learns. We encourage you to bring the resources from each program home for your child to use throughout the week to keep the learning in their minds. For if they aren't working to "memorize" the things they are learning at church, they will be busy memorizing other things that may or may not be fruitful.

I hope that helped you understand a little more about the part our church plays in the "village." We want to be a support to you so please feel free to talk to any of the Sunday School leaders, or children's church volunteers, or even myself if you have any questions. I pray you are able to learn all you can about the other components of the "village" that is helping raise your child so you can bring everything back to an understanding of how it fits in with God's will for your lives.

Here are some links to information about the programs we use here at church.

The Gospel Project:

<http://www.ministrygrid.com/web/thegospelproject/training-viewer/-/training/the-gospel-project-for-kids-leadership-training/the-gospel-project-for-kids-parent-resources>

The New City Catechism

www.newcitycatechism.com

And have a look at the website for Great Commissions Publications where we get the children's Sunday School material from.

www.gcp.org

Foster Loving Relationships

Another Facet of Elder Bob's Legacy
By David Whitehead

A few days ago, I visited Bob and we got talking about his life. He mentioned that he was involved in the Battle of the Bulge, in World War II. Rae and I were intrigued: Here was an aspect of Bob's life that we did not know (and we have known Bob for over forty years): an important part of our country's history that our brother experienced first-hand. I followed up the next day with more questions. Bob told me that all I needed to know was on a small card that he carries in his wallet. After I had studied that card, he said that I could ask him more questions!

The little card that Bob gave me was his honorable discharge from the Army. It thanked him for his service. To view the card and get the information from it, I had to use a magnifying glass because the print was so small. The following is what I found: Bob was drafted when he was eighteen years old. Because of his training (which he started when he was fourteen), he had become a tool-maker, or a machinist. His job in the Army was to support those in battle by repairing the big guns that had been pulled into battle. Most of the damage to the guns happened because of being dragged through woods and rough terrain. The outfit that he served in was the Heavy Maintenance Company. His outfit was support for the battles that took place in Normandy, Northern France, Ardennes, Rhineland, and Central Europe. Because of Bob's service, he was awarded the European-African-Middle Eastern Theater Ribbon and the Victory Metal. He served in the Army from October 9, 1943 to January 14, 1946.

Bob, we so appreciate your service for our country! And we are so thankful for your service to the Lord and us all over these many years at Hope! We will continue to remember you in our prayers!



Hope Church Family,

"For the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere. And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace." James 3:17-18

This is our year verse for the 2017-2018 school year. Our students are focusing on God's "Wisdom from Above." Wisdom is more than just knowing something, but it's then putting it into practice. One pastor described it to the children as: "Knowledge helps me. God's wisdom helps everyone around me." At school we gain knowledge that we can then put into practice as wisdom. Your prayers are appreciated as we seek God's wisdom from above as a school, and as individuals.

Thank you for allowing us to borrow some of your reading camp's decorations to create excitement for our "Saddle Up and Read-A-Thon" during the month of October. The Read-A-Thon is a fundraiser where the students get people to sponsor them for minutes read during the month. The money is going to buy new desks for our 1st and 2nd grade classrooms. We also want to thank the Anderson family for their willingness to bring in some of their animals for a petting zoo as a reading reward.

On Oct. 21st we went to a conference at the Teacher's College in New York City on reading and writing. We learned a great deal about how to improve our reading and writing programs, as well as received affirmation on things we did well. Our staff are always striving for academic excellence within their classrooms, in order to honor Christ by learning more about Him and His world, and this was a great tool for working towards this.

We were excited about serving with you at the Fall Work Day on Nov. 4th. Our families look forward to this time to come alongside of you, getting to know you better, and really acting as the body of Christ as we clean up the building and get it ready for winter. We are thankful for so much that was able to be accomplished as we worked together.

Thank you for your love and prayers. So many of you have helped us in countless ways and I am in amazement at His blessings. If you'd ever like to see more of what is going on at Spa, feel free to stop by on a school day and I could walk you around. You are a blessing to us.

Prayerfully,
Mandy Kergel <<
mandykergel@spachristian.com

Foster Loving Relationships



Christian Service Brigade or Boy's Brigade, as many know it, is a Christian organization that puts an emphasis on training young boys to become young men. With an emphasis on scripture memory, outdoor activity, serving in the community, and faith, there are many men who attended Boy's Brigade as kids and have become leaders when they are older due to the positive impact it had on their childhood.

Hope Church has been affiliated with Boy's Brigade for over 30 years and has started it up once again. If your son would be interested, Boy's Brigade meets at Hope Church on Friday nights from 7:00-8:30. If you have any questions regarding Boy's Brigade, you are encouraged to contact, Nick Cutler, one of the leaders.

(518)320-4574 or ncutler4321@gmail.com

Bright and keen for Christ~



What: Christmas Craft Night

When: Friday, December 8th, 7:00-8:30

Where: Hope Church Lounge

Who: Girls in Grades One and Up

Join us as we make a few special Christmas Crafts to celebrate the season.

Register now with Melanie Combs or Sally Jenkins.

Finding Grace in the Face of Dementia

John Dunlop, M.D.

Reviewed by Sally Jenkins

“Dementia, dignity and honoring God—you must be kidding! Chances are you have never seen those three thoughts in the same sentence. How can such a tragedy as dementia be dignified, and how in the world can God be honored through it? As followers of Jesus, we should desire that God be honored in all things, so that includes our approach to the tragedies of life, even dementia.”

Thus begins the introduction in this book written by John Dunlop who is a Christian well versed in God's Word, a medical doctor (geriatrician) and caregiver for parents with Alzheimer's disease. Because we are all created in the image of God we should be treated with dignity regardless of our mental capacities.

Naturally, I was particularly interested in this book when Pastor Nate gave it to me to process for our church library. I have been overseeing the care of both of my parents the past three years and they both had Alzheimer's disease. Their journeys were very different from one another with both progressing to the point where we realized last winter that they could no longer be in their home alone. My mom was very frustrated because she knew that she was confused and was losing touch with reality. In April we moved them together to the Home of the Good Shepherd where they received wonderful care. Graciously, the Lord took my mom home this past July and she no longer suffers. As they moved from their home to assisted living and now to memory care for my dad, it has been a great relief for me to become the “care organizer” instead of the primary caregiver.

There are constantly new things to learn and better ways to give love and guidance to a person with Alzheimer's disease, and this book has been a great encouragement to me. Just to whet your appetite here are a few of the chapter titles:

- Can Dementia Be Prevented or Treated?
- How Does it Feel to Have Dementia?
- The Experience of Caregiving
- How Can We Honor God through Dementia?
- Respect the Dignity of Those with Dementia
- Grow through the Experience of Dementia
- End-of-Life Issues

In the Appendix John Dunlop has written a letter to his family giving them guidance in how to oversee his care should the day come when he is the patient instead of the caregiver. It is so well done that I am making a copy for myself that I can use as a framework should that day come for me.

The back cover of the book states, “Dunlop provides readers, particularly caregivers, with a biblical lens through which to understand the experience and challenge of this life-altering condition. *Finding Grace in the Face of Dementia* will help us see the purposes of God as we love and care for those with this disease.”

Extend God's Hope

Kenya 2018 Mission Team Now Forming

BibleWise

Jesus' First Followers
—John 1

Follow Me

When Jesus chose some of His followers He said to them, "Follow me." Follow the paths to find the four men who followed Jesus. When you reach each name, unscramble the letters. All four paths begin at START.

TANALENAH DWEARN MISNO TEREP PPLIIH

Used by permission: Bible Puzzles for Kids Ages 6-8. Cincinnati: Standard Publishing Group, © 2006

The team to Kenya is beginning to come together. It could potentially be a fairly large team, which is exciting, and will likely include some Hope folks.

Team members are currently praying about their commitment, and we will know by December 1st who is planning to go. Then it gets crazy, with trying to raise funds, take care of shots and passports, and starting the training and team building component. The three churches we will be working with in Kenya are also excited, and looking forward to seeing what skills the team will have to offer.

Please pray that God makes the commitment clear to the right people, and for all the logistics that need to take place. A video about previous trips can be viewed at: <https://youtu.be/iSjWbh8hrvc> For more information contact Brian or Hellen McKeon: hbmckeon@gmail.com



Garage Sale Fundraiser

To Support the Kenya 2018
Mission Team

Sometime in April

But...Now

Spend those cold winter days going through your cupboards, cellars, kitchen drawers, etc. setting aside things you can donate to this garage sale.

Reformation quote:

“God does not want to redeem us through our own [goodness], but through external righteousness and wisdom; not through [righteousness] that comes from us and grows in us, but through one that comes to us from the outside; not through one that originates here on earth, but through one that comes from heaven. Therefore we must be taught a righteousness that comes completely from the outside and is foreign.”
~Martin Luther, *Commentary on Romans*

Extend God's Hope



In a recent publication of Saratoga Bridges, Chef and Co-Owner of [Hattie's Restaurant](#) Jasper Alexander says, "DeAnna is working out great for Hattie's. She is simply fabulous and could not be a more perfect fit for our team. Originally, we thought DeAnna was going to be one of our dishwashers; however, her true abilities are with our customers. And they love her as her positive, upbeat personality shines through her hard work. DeAnna is an example of what happens when hiring someone goes right. We feel it is for the greater good -- for us and for her -- and hope to spread these opportunities to the community."

Congratulations, Deanna. Your Hope Church family is proud of you!

DOORWAY TO HOPE STAFF

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



Christmas Eve
 Candlelight Service

Sunday, December 24th
 6:00 p.m.

Join us as we celebrate the birth of our Savior.

The offering for this evening will benefit the PCA Ministerial Relief Fund which helps meet the needs of PCA Widows and Disabled Pastors .



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



- 2 Gunner Waddell (Stomski)
- 4 Rosemary Hathaway
- 15 Stan Trestick
- 16 Natalie Jones
- 16 Ray Gibbins
- 23 Niya McKeon
- 23 Laura Childs
- 24 Jamin Emerson



- 14 Jim and Terry Cornick
- 17 Bob and Betse Smith
- 28 Steve and Liz Brumagin

CONGRATULATIONS

Congratulations and Best Wishes to Rattan and Neera Aggarwal who recently celebrated their 50th Wedding Anniversary.

WORSHIPPING TOGETHER

On Sunday evening, November 19th, we participated in a joint worship service at Ballston Center ARP Church focusing on "Celebrating God's Grace Through Music."

Our worship team participated as did the musicians from Ballston Center and a wonderful time of worship was followed by a time of fellowship featuring "Make Your Own Sundaes."

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



Hope Church
Saturday, December 16th
Beginning at 6:00 p.m.

Dinner will be catered.

Cost: \$7.00 for ages 12 and up; \$3.00-\$5.00 for children depending on age

Entertainment will include skits and games
Sign up in the foyer now.

Money can be given to Debbie Cutler