



# Doorway to Hope

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

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

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## Community with Jesus and His People

It has officially been a year since we landed in Ballston Spa to live among you all! Bethany and I regularly say to one another, "I am so glad God brought us to Hope Church and to this community." Thank you for your hospitality and friendship and patience. Being here has been refreshing for our family as we come out of a season of grief and hardship. We look forward to many more years of fruitful ministry and friendship in Christ!

Community. Belonging. Acceptance. Fellowship. Friendship. As mentioned above, Bethany and I have experienced these things here at Hope. These are characteristics that are supposed to be found in any local Biblical church. Listen to the description of the early church in Acts 2:42-47:

*And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. And all who believed were together and had all things in common. And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, praising*

*God and having favor with all the people.*

The early church gathered together daily to eat, to pray, to study God's Word, to share their wealth and to rejoice. They lived life together. This commentary follows Peter's sermon at Pentecost telling us that the new believers were from differing cultures across the ancient world. So the picture is of all kinds of people together living in community because Jesus found them.

There's more! Luke records this final detail in vs. 47: "And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved." This community was attractive to outsiders! How did the early church grow at such a rapid rate in a world without social media? Jesus-centered community. It is like Jesus' words in John 13:35 were made visible: "By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another." (John 13:34-35)

Have you experienced this kind of fellowship? It almost seems too good to be true. New churches are started all the time because their current church does not look like the 'early church in Acts.' Talk to long-time followers of Jesus and they can tell you sad stories of church as communities falling apart. Stick around Hope Church long enough and you will learn that everyone here is a sinner, including your pastor! So how do we cultivate Christ-centered community at our church knowing that sin and selfishness is always lurking in dark? What is the secret?

The secret to Biblical community is found in the common denominator among every member of the early church. What was it? Everyone knew that they killed Jesus. Some may very well have chanted, "Crucify him!" and it cut them to the heart (Acts 2:37).



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They owned their guilt in Christ's death. (Acts 2:38)  
Have you?

Hear the words of the old negro spiritual, "Were You There?":

Were you there when they crucified my Lord? Oh  
were you there when they crucified my Lord? (Ohh,  
sometimes it causes me to tremble)

Were you there when they laid Him in the tomb?  
Well, were you there when the stone was rolled  
away?

Have you trembled in repentance, taking honest responsibility for killing Jesus, the Author of life, whom God raised from the dead? According to Acts, this was the entrance and the lifeblood of real Christian community. They were in awe of God's acceptance of those who hated and murdered His beloved Son (Luke 20:9-19). The awe led to worship, joy, generosity and love for one another. The gospel created community and friendship despite racial, cultural and socio-economic differences.

This kind of gospel community is a goal of our small group discipleship ministry and what we do here at Hope Church. However, there will be times when sin rears its ugly head and friendships will face friction. Then we are forced to ask the hard question: what binds us together? For if community itself is both the answer to that question and the goal, the church will fracture. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a German pastor during WWII, writes, "Innumerable times a whole Christian community has broken down because it had sprung from a wish dream...By sheer grace, God will not live even for a brief moment in a dream world."<sup>1</sup> We all come to a church with unspoken expectations filled with hope. These same expectations function as a law that we expect our friends to keep, which will be broken. And when the dream starts to die because of friction, we become accusers of one another, blaming God for His church and ourselves for being foolish.

God has bound us together in fellowship, friendship and

family through our mutual faith in a crucified and risen Lord (Ephesians 2:19-20). That humble confession of faith in Jesus, according to Acts, is what builds community and real friendships. In him we are granted the humility and patience to bear with one another (Eph. 4:1-2). As Rev. Sauls points out, "Real friends not only agree but disagree; real friends not only applaud each other's strengths but challenge each other's weaknesses; real friends not only enjoy life together but struggle through life together; real friends not only praise one another but apologize and forgive one another."<sup>2</sup> Jesus' unending love in friendship with us demonstrated on the cross calls us to show the same unending love for one another (1 John 4:7-21).

So this is a humble plea to join a small group and take the risk to join the community that Christ died to make you a part of. Devote yourself to the gospel and see what friendships God gives you in Christ. We currently have three options:

- Discipleship Group at the home of Patrick and Laura Childs: Wednesdays at 6:30pm
- Ladies Discipleship Group at the Church, led by Leslie Perkins: Wednesdays at 6:30pm
- Discipleship Group at the home of Daryl and Debbie Cutler: Thursdays at 7:00pm.

Pray for God to bless us as we follow our crucified Lord who also calls us His friend. "*This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you.*" (John 15:12-14)

<sup>1</sup>Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together*, 26-30.

<sup>2</sup>Scott Sauls, *Befriend: Create Belonging in an Age of Judgement, Isolation, and Fear*, pp.4-5.



Website  
Updates

A quality website is a great resource to show potential visitors that we are here. It is one of the main ways people decide whether or not to check out our church. Here are a couple of new things that are now available for you and our visitors:

First, as you know small groups are discussing the sermon each week. I have been putting together study guides to use with the small groups and on your own. You can find the study guide for that week's sermon right next to the download button. Simply click on the notes/guide button next to the message.

Second, the pastor has a blog! Don't worry, I am not simply emoting on our website. I have been using the space to upload the discussion questions, to share good quotes or further thoughts on that week's sermon. Let me know if you find it helpful! You can find it here: <http://www.hopechurch.us/from-the-pastor/>. From the home page, click on the resources link and scroll down to click on 'Blogs.'

# Learn God's Word

## **Straight Talk**

By David Powlison

Christian Counseling & Educational Foundation

“Men don’t talk honestly with each other.”

“Women don’t talk constructively with each other.”

Do those comments ring bells for you? Of course, neither generalization is always true. Moral issues apply across gender lines. But both comments are true enough to make you think.

Men don’t talk honestly? It’s the easiest thing in the world for a conversation to remain superficial and self-concealing, never getting to anything that actually matters. Empty words. And, of course, many women do the same, and just keep it light. Are your conversations pointless?

Women don’t talk constructively? It’s the easiest thing in the world for a conversation to be revealingly honest, but never get anywhere helpful. Unfruitful words. And, of course, many men do this too, saying what they really think and feel, but not going anywhere good. Do your conversations rehearse what’s wrong but never pursue making it right?

How do we begin to change how we talk with each other? Here are five truths to orient you.

First, Jesus says that God is actively listening to every word, even the most casual, unthinking things we say (Matt. 12:36). He takes note of what we are saying and weighs our words. Are your conversations empty, misleading, inappropriate, or judgmental? Or is the way you talk nourishing, constructive, timely, and

grace-giving? (Eph. 4:29) The Lord gives the rating “Empty” to any conversation that skims over the surface of life and never gets real. The Lord gives the rating “Harmful” to any conversation that digs up dirt and tosses it around. But he sizes up a life-giving conversation with a hearty “Yes and amen! Keep it up!”

Second, Jesus never said a pointless word to other people. He was never just marking time or keeping things that matter at arm’s length. He always engages the important matters. He never just describes, analyzes, and complains about what’s wrong. His conversations always go somewhere helpful. Jesus speaks life-giving words: candid, constructive, relevant, and redemptive. And one of the constructive things Jesus talks about is helping us to assess the quality of what we talk about. “The mouth speaks out of the abundance of the heart”—either good or evil (Matt. 12:34).

Third, our God teaches us to have meaningful conversations with him. The Psalms and the other prayers in Scripture are candid, constructive, relevant and grace-filled. They teach us to remember who he is. As we listen, we learn to talk honestly about what is good or bad about us. We learn to speak of hard things as well as happy things in our circumstances. We learn to cry out where we need help, and sing about how we are grateful. Our prayers can express care and concern for others—“I thank God every time I remember you, and I pray that your love will abound more and more with knowledge and all discernment” (Phil. 1:3,9). Prayer gets to

what most matters and to what’s true.

Fourth, our God then teaches us to have meaningful conversations with each other. The way we talk with him directly relates to how we talk with each other. Ephesians 4:15 says that we grow up in Christ by lovingly speaking truth with each other. For a few people that includes preaching and teaching. For everybody that means our daily conversations. How do we encourage each other daily in the face of sin’s deadly deceitfulness? How do we comfort each other in whatever afflictions and difficulties each one of us faces today? How do we talk about what matters in a way that makes a difference?

Fifth, the Holy Spirit generates wise conversations. So you don’t skim over the surface. So you don’t stay stuck in the mud. Scripture demonstrates how every conversation can go somewhere good. It even captures how, in some important moments, what must next be said is to be silent. Sometimes there are no more words to say. Perhaps you are grieving. Perhaps you are thinking. Perhaps you are praying. Perhaps your quietness communicates how much you care. Perhaps silence is saying that there is no point to saying anything more right now. When Jesus was silent before his accusers, his silence was the most eloquent thing that could be said. A meaningful silence expresses what is true, constructive, most appropriate, and grace-giving. And then you will find the right words at the right

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*(Continued from page 3)*

time. In Gethsemane, Jesus had things to say to his Father, to his friends, and to his betrayer. On the cross, Jesus had things to say to his Father, to his tormentors, to the repentant thief, to his mother...to all of us.

Of course, nothing we'll ever say is that momentous. But everything we say does matter. So what do you talk about, and how do you talk? Where can you listen in and get a feel for what wise words sound like? Let me suggest an unusual starting point.

Listen in to how Scripture shows us what it's like to talk with God.

Talk about the same kinds of things with other people.

Our Father teaches us to traffic in reality—addressing the best and the hardest things in life. You can't live in reality without seeing both, and remembering your Lord in the midst of it. Facing the hard things, you can be honest about your need. Receiving the good things, you can express joy and thanks. As you learn to pray about what matters, you are also learning to talk with other people about what matters. It's a curious thing, but entirely reasonable once you grasp the principle. Jesus' conversations and prayers are about the same things.

He's committed to you and working in you. You, and I, and all of us together can become much more honest and much more constructive!

## **What is Operation Christmas Child?**

By Rae Whitehead

Yes, we fill shoeboxes with small gifts every fall (Marybeth makes sure of that!) The boxes go to Operation Christmas Child. And that's about all we know—unless we look up Samaritan's Purse and read PrayerPoint, its prayer ministry publication, which is what Fred Richards urged me to do so that I could let our readers know a little bit more about those shoeboxes.

Franklin Graham, president of Samaritan's Purse, writes in the fall edition of PrayerPoint that since 1993, more than 135 million shoeboxes have been distributed to children in more than 100 countries. Operation Christmas Child provides an opportunity to give gifts to children at Christmas time AND to tell them about God's greatest gift.

The shoeboxes are just one facet of Samaritan's Purse. It also ministers to veterans and their families and to victims of natural disasters in the United States. It provides agricultural help and wells for people suffering from drought and famine in countries like Niger and Kenya. It provides

education in refugee camps in South Sudan, transportation to medical facilities from refugee camps in Greece, a medical center in Angola, physical and spiritual seeds in Bolivia. It is indeed a multi-faceted organization! Integrated into all the physical help is the evangelism that is at the heart of all that Samaritan's Purse does.

So send your prayers with those shoeboxes, for the children who receive them, and for the Christian brothers and sisters who will be presenting the boxes and the Gospel!

And if you're interested in receiving PrayerPoint, which contains specific prayer requests along with report about Samaritan's Purse work around the world, talk to Fred Richards.





## How do I talk to my student?

### **Get permission from the student's parents.**

Ask the child or teen's parents for their preferred method of communication, whether that be e-mail, phone or strictly in-person at church.

### **Don't be discouraged if your student seems shy or doesn't want to talk very much.**

Keep praying daily, and keep letting them know that you are doing so. Continue to remind your student that they can approach you if they need to talk about anything or have a specific prayer request.

**Students may be the ones to initiate contact.** Students do often contact their Prayer Champions with specific prayer requests, and we love to hear stories of God working through that. Sometimes parents choose to be the go-between for their children and their Prayer Champions, or older students can simply establish that relationship on their own. It is ultimately up to the students and their parents.

**Regardless of how much or how little communication you are afforded with your student, remember that your prayers for them do make a difference.** God loves your student more than we can understand, and daily lifting your student up in prayer to Him is the most caring thing you could ever do for them.

Ed. Note: As individual church members many of us have "adopted" a young person from our congregation to faithfully uphold in prayer. The Pray for Me Campaign has been instrumental in organizing this as we uphold the next generation in prayer.

Question: How does God guide His people to make decisions according to His will?

Dear Sir,

It is well that the Lord has promised to guide his people, for those who are aware of their own weakness and fallibility. It is for our guidance that He has given us the written Scriptures to be a lamp unto our feet, and encouraged us to pray for the teaching of his Holy Spirit, so we may rightly understand and apply what the Bible teaches.

It is clear however, that many Christians commit awful and perplexing mistakes while claiming to know God's will. Scripture cannot deceive us, if rightly understood, but it may be perverted for selfish gain. And the Holy Spirit does not mislead us, though it may appear that way at times. Here are some examples:

Some people when making a decision try to cast lots (roll the dice), causing hurt and pain. Others open the Bible and act on the first verse they find, which is the same way non-Christians use their favorite authors. Everyone likes 2 Samuel 7:3, "Go and do all that is in your heart, for the Lord is with you." Ignoring the context, this sounds wonderful! The Holy Spirit uses promises to give us peace, but applying random verses to confirm what we want has led to all kinds of evil and confusion.

Still others claim they have committed their ways to God, seek his help and claim it is God's will because they have a peace about it. But our self is deceitful and when our hearts are fixed on one thing we can already make the decision for ourselves and then when asking God take any hints in our favor to be His will. Or again, folks have made decisions because of a remarkable dream. I have seen countless evils in my town where some act in clear violation of God's commands in the Bible and yet still believe themselves to be serving the Lord. In these many ways weak or new believers have stumbled in offense to the gospel and given opportunities for evil to be spoken of the Truth.

So how then may we expect the Lord to guide us? In general, he guides and directs his people, by giving them the light of His Holy Spirit, in answer to prayer, in order to understand and love God's Word. The Bible is not to be used like a lottery. Nor should we take isolated commands ripped out of context as direction. Those who study the Scriptures, become convinced of their weakness, as the word of God dwells richly in them. Treasuring up doctrines, precepts, promises, examples and commands of Scripture molds us into a frame of spiritual wisdom. *This enables us to determine right and wrong, according to God's will, like a musical ear judges sounds.* Believers are seldom mistaken when influenced by the love of Christ, which rules in their hearts, and the desire to glorify God in all that they do.

# Foster Loving Relationships



Snapshot on Children's Ministry  
By Melanie Combs



## Children's Church and The Gospel Project

You've hopefully heard the name by now -The Gospel Project! This is the program Hope Church has adopted for Children's Church. I was trying to decide how best to explain it but I think the website for The Gospel Project does it very well. The following are some excerpts from The Gospel Project for Kids website describing the program.

### *The Big Picture of God's Story*

*The Gospel Project® for Kids immerses kids and preschoolers in the gospel through every story, theological concept, and call to mission from Genesis to Revelation. Ultimately, the gospel message changes everything; heart transformation can only take place when a child experiences the gospel. Through The Gospel Project® for Kids, kids and preschoolers will understand the Bible is not just a collection of stories, but one unified story—God's story of redemption.*

### *Every story casts His shadow.*

*66 books. Dozens of authors. A holy canon thousands of years in the making. Every word, every verse, bears His testimony. Of the Holy Messiah. Jesus Christ. Eternal King. The Gospel Project® is a chronological, Christ-centered Bible study for Kids, Students, and Adults that examines how all Scripture gives testimony to Jesus Christ. Over the course of three years, participants will journey from Genesis to Revelation and discover how God's plan of redemption unfolds throughout Scripture and still today, compelling them to join the mission of God.*

*There is even a little video on the website that one of the publishing leaders put together for parents. The link is: <http://www.ministrygrid.com/web/thegospelproject/training-viewer/-/training/the-gospel-project-for-kids-leadership-training/the-gospel-project-for-kids-parent-resources>*

On that link you can find information about an app you can buy that has extra activities that go along with each lesson. There is also a free version that has some limited activities.

The Children's Church leaders are excited about having a program that is consistent and Bible based. There is so much content in each lesson there isn't even time to get to it all. If you ever have any questions you can ask me or any of the Children's Church leaders. Papers come home each Sunday with ideas for further discussion as well.



### Dear Parents

In a previous newsletter mention was made of all the materials that come home with your children on any given Sunday. THESE PAPERS ARE IMPORTANT! Our lives are so busy. Sunday School teachers and Children's Church leaders, and even our pastor, all know that you are busy people. While we understand, we don't want to let you use that as an excuse to NOT utilize the amazing resource these take-home papers are.

Every Sunday School lesson has a paper that gives YOU –the parents- a glimpse into what amazing information your child has received from God's

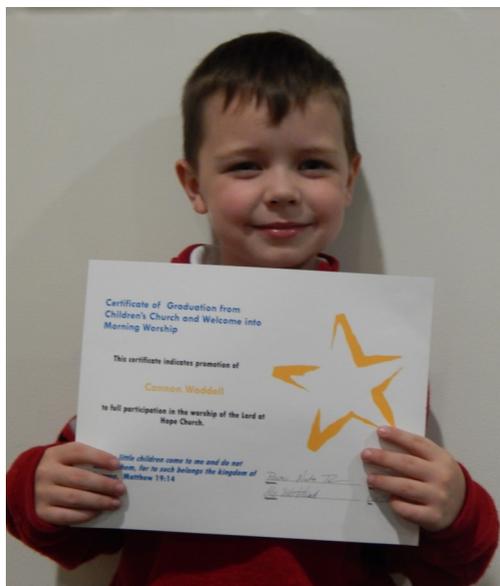
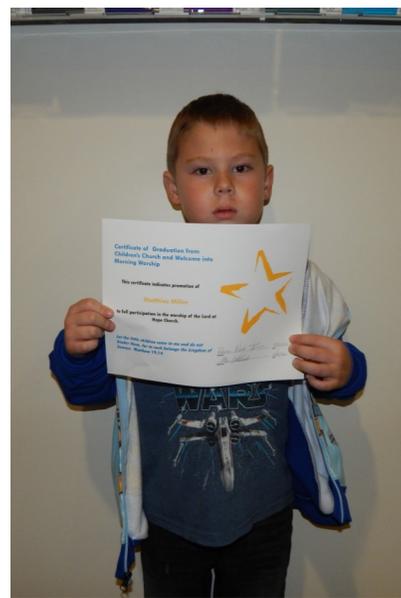
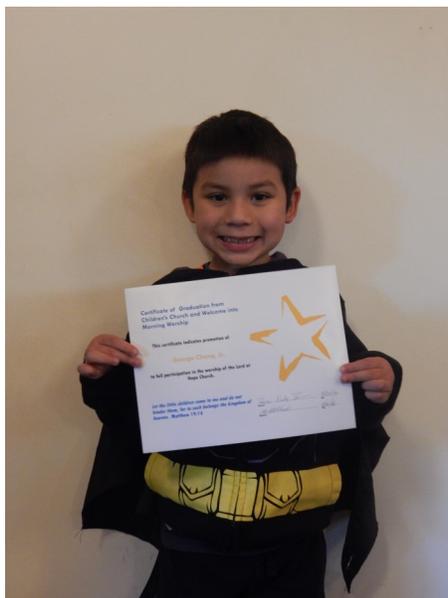
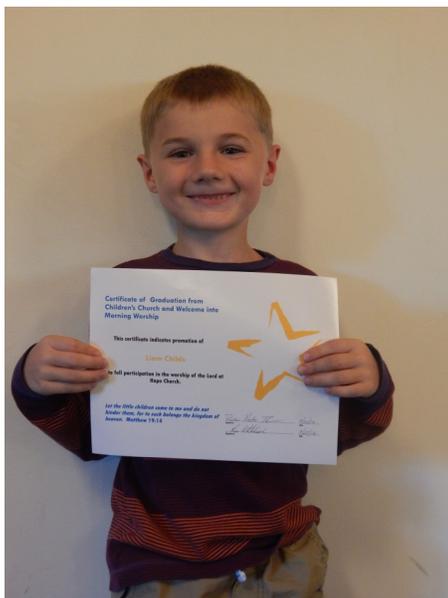
Word! Every Children's Church lesson has a take home Bible Card that gives you further discussion questions or information to use with your children to help cement the lesson in their young minds. Jill Galarneau's Sunday School class does some fun review games in class but think how helpful it would be for the children to review a bit at home or in the car with some question and answer type games with you. The Communicants class has a lot of information to cover that cannot be completed in 30-45 minutes on a Sunday morning. Try reviewing those catechism questions in the car, or before bed, or as part of your family devotion time. That will even help you learn them!! (BONUS!!) The children's sermon notes that your children sometimes do (and sometimes don't) could also be a good resource to bring home and use to further discuss the sermon with your children.

Look for those teachable moments in the week that may help make a transformative connection in your child's life between what was learned in a class on Sunday and life all week. I have heard some of the teachers comment on how well the sermon went along with what was just learned in Sunday School. Have you noticed any of those times? Please help your children notice them too!

Thank you for your dedication and devotion to the many, many things that go on in your child's life. Please remember that you are the PRIMARY connection your young children have to growing up with a biblical worldview. We all as a church community want that for you and your children. These perhaps annoying little papers that you have to remember to help your child bring home CAN HELP with some of that by providing consistency. Please remember what Proverbs 22:6 says: (ESV) *Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it.* All our efforts here at Hope Church are to help you with that training.

# Foster Loving Relationships

## Six-Year-Olds Graduate By Rae Whitehead



Why are our six-year-olds pictured here (other than the fact that they are so darn cute)? They have just “graduated”! Liam Childs, George Cheng, Matthias Miller, Niya McKeon and Cannon Waddell are now in first grade. They have left Children’s Church and now attend the full service. They have taken a step toward full participation in the life of the Body of Christ at Hope Church. We congratulate them and encourage them to help out with the offering-taking, with ushering and greeting.

We encourage you all to help our six-year-olds to feel at home with us and to participate in the singing, Bible reading and responses. Melanie Combs prepares companion pages to complement the sermon each Sunday for each age group. Parents, please help your “graduate” to get and complete the page for him or her and to enjoy the experience of worshipping more fully with us all.

**Congratulations, Six-Year-Olds!!**

## Foster Loving Relationships

## Boys Brigade Camping Trip

George Cheng, Jr.



Ask any of the young boys or dads that attended this camp out and you will hear that they had a fantastic time being together to sleep, eat, fish and have fun at the Anderson Farm and Pond. There were even strange sounds in the night and fresh bear tracks in the morning! The boys would be glad to fill in the details for you.



Our fourth annual Apple Pie Contest was held on Saturday, October 22nd with 60 people in attendance and ten apple pies to be judged. The contest was held after a delicious chili and baked potato supper with the Cutler's cooking chili most of day and the Anderson family donating their awesome potatoes. Our panel of three judges (Jeff Butler, Paul Miller, Dean [Nate's uncle]) then set off to judge these ten wonderful pies that were artistically displayed by contest organizer, Marybeth Gibbins.

This year's winners were as follows:

First Place: Laura and Patrick Childs

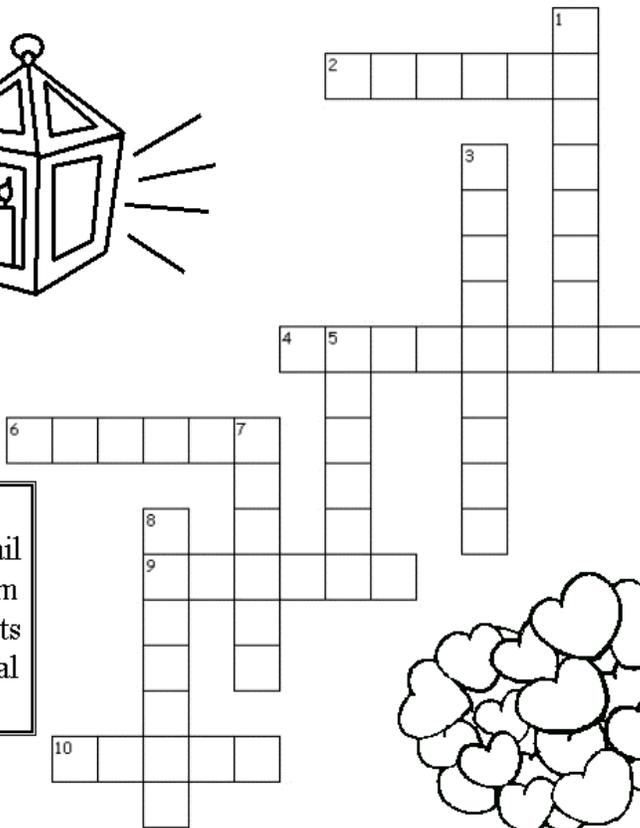
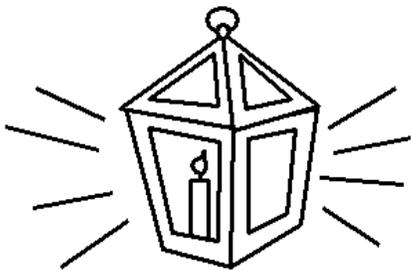
Second Place: Sally Jenkins

Third Place: Kirsten Whitehead and Daniel Turner

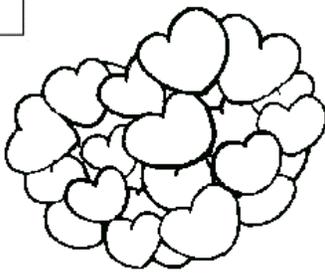
We are already looking forward to next year's event!

# Extend God's Hope

## Child of God Crossword



**Word List:**  
 darkness detail  
 beginning psalm  
 search thoughts  
 wicked special  
 praise always



- Across**
- David asks God to do this to know his thoughts and desires and challenge him.
  - God is light, so if you hide in this God can still find you.
  - David gets upset when he thinks about these people.
  - David wrote his thoughts as a way to \_\_\_ God for all He's done.
  - This is the book in the Bible where David's songs/poems are kept.
- Down**
- God has more of these than all the grains of sand.
  - God knew you from the very \_\_\_\_, way before you were born.
  - We can't get away from God. He is \_\_\_ with us!
  - God was involved in every \_\_\_ of who you are inside and out.
  - You were planned and made by God who made you \_\_\_ and unique.



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

**DOORWAY TO HOPE STAFF**  
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 SUPPORT: All the Prayers of All of  
 the Church family

## BIRTHS

Congratulations to Brian and Hellen McKeon at the birth of their new son, Joshua Matete McKeon. Joshua was born on September 3rd and joins his sisters Niya and Sameera in their family home in Pattersonville.

Prepare...

**Salutation**

Luke 1:35

Framed in light,  
 Mary sings through the doorway  
 Elizabeth's six-month joy  
 jumps a palpable greeting,  
 a hidden first encounter  
 between son and Son.

And my heart turns over  
 when I meet Jesus  
 in you.

By Luci Shaw



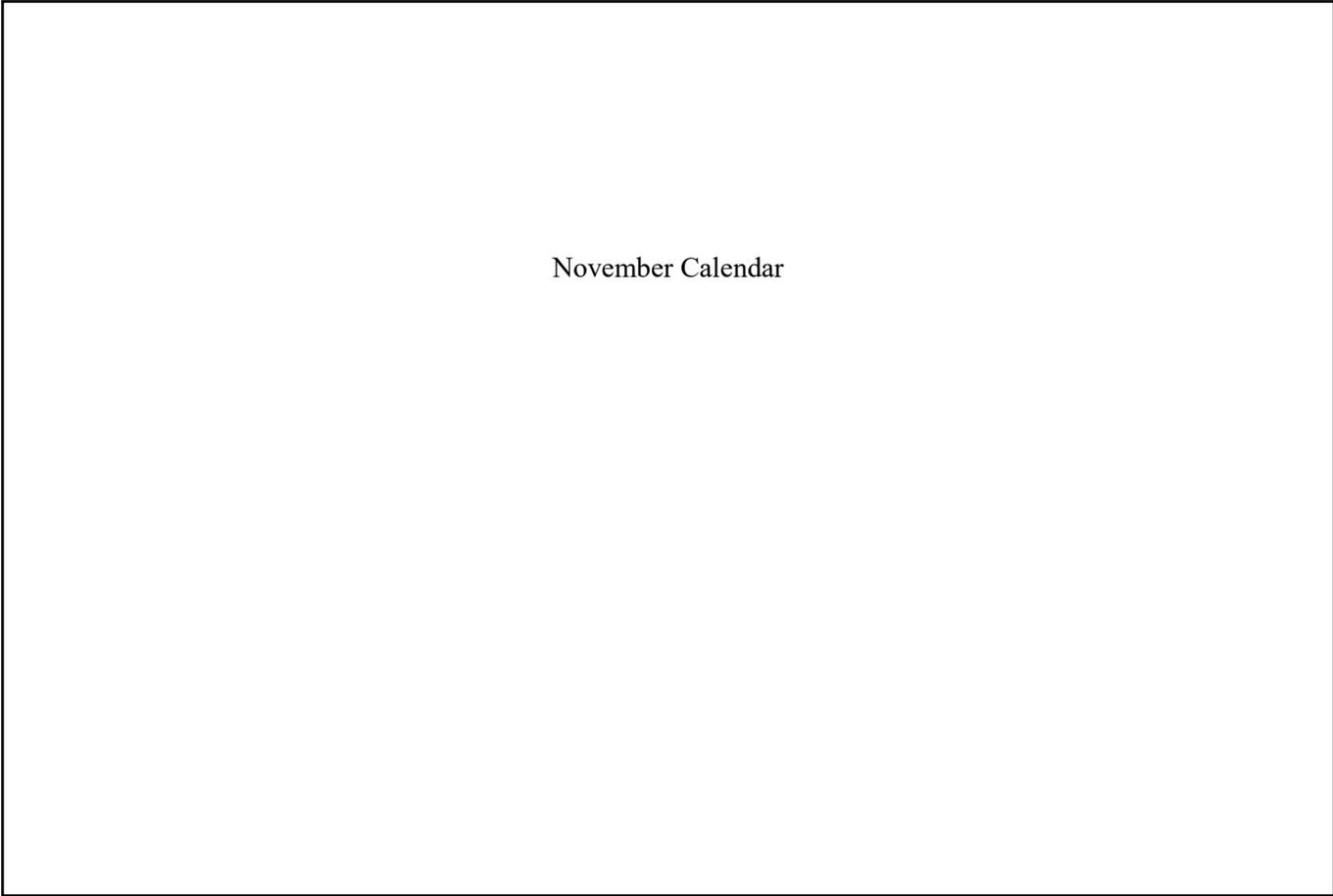
## BIRTHDAYS

- 1 Mike Mailloux
- 5 Stephen Butler
- 16 Jill Martz
- 16 George Cheng
- 19 Jonah Thompson

## ANNIVERSARIES

- 30 Ray and Marybeth Gibbins

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



November Calendar