

Visions of Hope

January 14, 2018



F4356 State Hwy 97
Edgar, WI 54426

Mission Statement:

Hope's Mission is to teach the Bible and follow Christ's example by giving back to the community and those in need

Website:

hope4centralwi.com

Sunday Worship
9:30 am

Sunday School
8:45-9:30 am

Communion
1st, 3rd and 5th Sundays

Pastor:

Mark Reiff

pastorreiff.hopechurch@gmail.com

920-634-1246 (cell)
715-352-2555 (church)

Secretary:

hopelcsec@gmail.com

Duties List

January 14

January 21

Ushers

Andy Yoder

Ron Kunkel

Brian Remus

Ken Schilling

Greeters

Gary & Dianne Bauman

Keith & Cassi Bauman

Readers

Jen Kunkel

Hayley, Ashley, Natalie

Acolyte

Jaicee Kunkel

Haylee Schreiber



With Christmas, New Year's Day, and now even the Feast of the Epiphany (the Holiday Season) behind us, we enter into a period that might termed "the winter doldrums." Like a sailboat at sea with no wind to fill its sails, many of us seem to be adrift with no sense of purpose in the remaining days of January. I took down my Christmas tree this past weekend and, no doubt, many of you took down your Christmas decorations some time ago. And so the brilliance and excitement of the holidays is over and we are left with ...well, a long January.

When I lived in Seattle the month of January was very depressing. This was the case not just for me but for most everyone. With the brightness of Christmas and the New Year celebration behind us, in that urban community, the remaining days of January seemed dreary, dark, gray, and endless. After my first couple of years of living in Seattle I decided I had to do something about this dark mid-winter malaise or else I knew I would succumb to it.

What I did was simply this; I invited people into my home every weekend either on Friday or Sunday night. I turned on the lights, lit candles, built a fire in the fireplace and had dinner with friends from church. These weekly events not only gave me something to look forward to but busied me in getting the house ready for weekly guests. All of this prep work together with my pastoral work, even in the dreary, drippy wetness of a Seattle winter, gave me no time to think about how darkness can easily overcome the soul.

Whether you know it or not, Seattle is the epicenter of clinical depression in America. I have never lived anywhere where depression was so rampant. This depression wasn't due simply to the darkness of their winter but, I believe, was also part and parcel of another more desolate truth that Seattle is also the epicenter of the "none zone."

Perhaps you have never heard of the "none zone," but it is an actual term applied to the Pacific Northwest. It references to the fact that, when people in that region are polled about their religious affiliation, a majority of respondents say "none." People with a religious faith are definitely a minority in Seattle, Portland, and most of the Pacific Northwest. Is it any wonder that they live with so much depression? After the colorful lights of their secular celebrations are extinguished there is only darkness and emptiness.

By contrast with the urban culture around me, I found that the people of the church were vibrant and filled with light even in the darkness of a north Pacific winter. There a powerful "take away" for all of us in this reflection on winter.

I have said in a sermon or two, that your Christian faith is not, as most of us might think, the light at the end of the tunnel. Rather, it is the light that the Christian carries with him or her into the darkness of the tunnel. In Christmas and in Epiphany we celebrate Jesus Christ as the light of the world! This assertion is at the foundation of who we are as followers of Jesus Christ. We carry this Christ and his light with us as we go about our lives of work and witness in the darkness of the world that surrounds us.

Yes, most of us have already taken down and stored away the outward trappings of Christmas. But, hopefully and faithfully, the light of Christmas is not merely an outward, physical, and decorative adornment in our homes and in our lives but, rather (and much more importantly) it is an interior and spiritual reality that informs every aspect of who you are and how you live your life in an ever-more darkening secular age.

As the multi-colored electric lights of Christmas fade and dim into a distant memory we could choose to remember to daily rekindle the light of Christ and his radiant spirit in our lives. This Jesus, this Christ, this incarnate Son of God is, after all, as the scriptures put it, "a light unto our path and a lamp unto our feet."

"Let your lights so shine before others that they may see your good works and give praise to your Father in heaven."

Pax Christi,
Mark Reiff+

Note of Caution:

With the flu and cold season now upon us and threatening to get worse, we need to remind ourselves to exercise caution when coming to church and in the expression of our greetings to one another. If you are sick it is probably best to stay at home. Shaking hands is one of the most efficient ways of spreading wintertime disease. Until at least the end of March please do not shake hands during the exchange of peace during our services of Holy Communion. You can simply speak your greeting of peace to one another. And please (and we all know this) cover your nose and mouth when coughing or sneezing. Wash your hands frequently especially after a public gatherings.

Ephesians 4:31-32 Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.

If Jesus appeared on CNN tonight and was asked what it would take to inherit eternal life, the sound bite would be: "‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind;’ and, ‘Love your neighbor as yourself’" (Luke 10:27 NIV).

We often notice the actions of others, some good and kind and some just plain nasty. We often make assumptions about another person’s character or worth. But we get extremely angry when other people make the same assumptions of us. Why is it that our first instinct is to think the worst? What if Jesus did that to us? After all; He could make a judgment based on our kindness and forgiveness of others. How can we give back to each other what Christ first gave us? He gave up His life for us to show how much He loved us and to prove His willingness to forgive our sins. Do we deserve any of those gifts? Not at all. However, we can show our love for God by being as kind, loving and forgiving of others as we can.

Be kind to one another, not so easy to do. How many times in a day do we lose our temper, snap at those we love, because who will forgive us first? Those who love us most, of course. We tend to ignore those we work with, or go to school with, and interact with each day, because we are so into ourselves we tend to ignore those around us. Sometimes, we are so wrapped up in our life, our problems, what we are trying to get done, we simply tune out others. You see, being kind requires us to actually care for others. It requires us to concentrate on their needs. It forces us to look away from ourselves and look at others.

Like many of the things I write, this is a hard thing for me to own up to, the fact that I get so busy doing things at home or for church, that I can get short tempered with those I really want to help. Kindness, this is something we sometimes overlook, often take for granted, and seldom think about. If you asked most people they would tell you that they are "kind" to others. Most of the time they are probably right. But God has told us to be kind to others, and again, in our attempt to be living within His will, this is another facet of our life we must be aware of. Being kind in a Biblical sense means that we need to put others before ourselves. Look at serving others instead of serving ourselves. Kindness requires our focus be on someone else.

Only God can change a human heart. He uses us as his instruments; to touch peoples' lives and soften their hearts so He can speak to them. Our acts of kindness to others is a way for God to speak to someone who needs Him. We never know where a person really is in terms of their faith walk, but God does. Our kindness to someone at a critical point can be the act that opens them to hear God's voice speaking to them. One thing that identifies us as Christians is the fact that we are kind and loving to others.

We all notice when we get great service or when people are kind to us. We also complain when we get horrible service while shopping or eating out. But we are more likely to accentuate the bad service and forget to be thankful for the excellent customer service and kindness of others. It’s a two-way street, be kind and be thankful. And did you ever notice that kindness breeds more kindness.

“God loves you, and I love you”. We should say this statement to someone, anyone, every day. Let’s all pray for God to help us focus on being kind to others. Never underestimate how God is using you in the lives of others. It is usually in those simple acts that God uses us the most. Practice being kind to others each day so that it becomes natural. Our nature is to focus on ourselves first and others second. God wants us to change that nature to focus on others first and ourselves second. That means we must trust God to look out after our needs. We should pray that our faith can be increased to trust Him to care for us, while we focus on caring for others.

Each day is a great day and a gift from God. It is unique because it is like no other day, and when it is gone, will never be back. Make the most of each day and to everyone you meet today, BE KIND!

Colossians 3:13 Be tolerant with one another and forgive one another whenever any of you has a complaint against someone else. You must forgive one another just as the Lord has forgiven you.

In His love and service,
Rose Schilling

Hope's Happenings

Sunday:	January 14	Attendance 89
Offering:	Regular	\$1375.00
	Building	145.00
	Sunday School	\$6.00
	Loose	\$20.00
	Well	\$150.00
	Sign	\$30.00
	Mission	\$45.00
	Total	\$1771.00



Let's give Pastor Mark a warm welcome by attending his Installation as Hope's new Pastor on Sunday, January 21 at 9:30 am. Following the worship service there will be a potluck dinner in his honor. Looking forward to seeing everyone there!

PRAYER CONCERNS: Please remember the following people in your prayers



Brian Asplund—cancer
Anna—health issues—Ken Schilling's niece
Bob Kudingo—colon cancer—Rose Schilling's foster brother
Dennis Woik—cancer—friend of Chad Bender
Stan Blaszkowski—internal injuries sustained in fall—Michelle Bauman's dad
Marge Manecke—health issues
Corinne Kane—friend of Cassi Bauman
Linda Krahn—breast cancer—sister in law to the Kamenick's
Mildred Imhoff—chemo treatment—Ken's mother
Grace Schraufnagel—cancer—friend of the Streckert's
John Hamann—home recovering
Shyra Martyn—breast cancer—Randy and Sara's daughter-in-law
Don Hanson—health issues
Leroy Syring—recovering from a stroke
Bill Brayton—DeEtta Peterson's brother
Dylan & Logan Weichelt—sons of Bryan & Stacey
Sawyer Mueller—microcephaly—Daryl & Beth's son
Jennifer Bohman—prayers of healing

The Bulletin Board

- Annual reports are due into Barb by Friday, January 19
- Worship and Music Committee meeting will be held on January 23 at 2:00 pm instead of February 6
- Annual meeting will be held Sunday, January 28 immediately following worship service
- We will be tying blankets on Sunday, January 28 starting at 1:00 pm. These blankets will be given to the Salvation Army Transitional Center and the Wausau Warming Center. Everyone is welcome.
- **Mark you Calendar:**
 - February 4—Confirmation
 - March 18—First Communion
- Would you like to make some Valentine cards for our Veteran's in King? The Card Ministry will again be sending cards to them. If you are interested please put them in Barb's office before February 9. Thank you.



Our January and February mission projects will be collecting items for the Wausau Warming Center and the Salvation Army Transitional Center Wausau. We will be collecting items both months. If you would like to donate, there is a tub along by the coffee bar.

Shopping lists are available on the coffee bar and bulletin board with pictures. Contact Audrey Kamenick @ frontier.com (715-352-2714). Items needed: Instant Oatmeal Packets, Soft Breakfast Bars, Fruit and Applesauce cups, Peanut butter and jelly, Creamer and Sugar, Hand and Foot Warmers. Winter Socks —NEW (Men, Women, Children), Laundry Soap, Cleaning Supplies, Long Underwear (NEW), Hats, Gloves and cereal.