

Visions of Hope

March 4, 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

March 11

March 18

Ushers

Larry Peterson

Ron Kunkel

Brian Remus

Lowell Borchardt

Greeters

Jodene Leffel

Brian Remus

Readers

Ron Kunkel

Kylie, Reagan, Hayley

Acolyte

Riley Bauman

Hayley Schreiber



Sometimes I am at a loss for words. Honestly, I often have writers block. This is especially true when I am trying to write a substantive message for a congregation when my life is filled with so many demands and swirling emotions. It is in such times that I urgently seek out our God of peace and consolation. And I also seek out the reflections of others perhaps wiser than me. It is when I do this that I often find gems like the one I share with you below. The words are those of Lutheran scholar and teacher Gordon Lathrop.

"Fragments of old sorrows float down to us through the ages: "The Galileans whose blood Pilate mixed with their sacrifices...the eighteen who were killed by a falling tower in Siloam..." That is all we know of those events. Did they have to do with armed rebellion? Were they both incidents of Roman oppression? Was the last a dreadful accident? It does not matter. They are named simply as sorrows, and in the terse words are echoes and whispers of unconsolated weeping and unrelieved horror.

These words echo all the sorrows which assault us today, fragments of human pain calling out from short television accounts of starvation or quick headlines of brutal murders.

The way of Lent is not the way out of all of this, the way of baptism, or of penance which is a return to our baptism, is not a way of distinguishing ourselves from others, making ourselves less sinners and so less liable to God's wrath.

On the contrary, Lent is a way into standing with the others. These suffering ones were not great sinners. Their lot is our lot. "You will all perish." To repent is to acknowledge one's own need of life, to join with all those so desperately in need of life and to wait for God. That is the truth of baptism. That is the truth of penance as a return to baptism.

The way of Lent is the way of such repentance. We, all together, are to be Israel, the barren fig tree tended by the severe mercy of God until it bears fruit. The way of Israel in the desert was written down for us. And in that story we meet the burning truth of God, we encounter God's name which destroys all names – and we learn what that God does: "I have witnessed the affliction of my people...and have heard their cry."

This kind of repentance – standing with the suffering and sinful ones, turned toward God for life – is the way of Lent because it is the way of Jesus. The story of the cross is yet another among the dreadful fragments of sorrow. He is himself made the barren, and finally the uprooted fig tree. He is crucified with all the crucified. He is not distinguished from them. But just there he is God's mercy with us all. He is the burning bush itself. He is the name above all names. He is God hearing human sorrow and answering with life."

As the British novelist Graham Greene once said, "You can't conceive, my child, nor can I or anyone, the appalling strangeness of God's mercy.

Pax Christi,
Mark Reiff+

"Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will direct your paths." (Proverbs 3:5-6)

If we exercise trust and acknowledge the Lord in every area of our lives, His promise is that He will guide us. As the old saying goes, "we plan, God laughs". God might take us to some unwanted places, but He will also guide us through those scary times. Abraham didn't know where God was sending him, but he packed up to go anyway. Read Exodus 17:1-7.

So why do we act like He has forgotten about Hope Church? That is not so, God has a reason for all things that happen in this world and especially at Hope Church. If we go into panic mode then we give Satan more and more attention, and we give him more and more power. We eventually give him more power in our lives than God, as we let our panic and fears control what we think and what we must do going forward.

The changes in our church can and will, force most of us to reevaluate our vision for Hope Church and our role in the community. God has something to say to us about that. *He says, "Do you feel weak? I will strengthen you. Do you need assistance? I'll be there--I will help you. Are you weary and feel like you cannot take another step? I will hold you up."* These are not simply words but they are the promises from God. Would God lie to you? Of course not. Do you think He is talking to everyone but Hope Church? He is talking to Hope Church--He is talking to all of us. We simply have to pray and to believe what God said He will do, He will do just that, He will fulfill all those promises.

We need “wait upon the Lord”; He alone will grant us the power of the Holy Spirit and the wisdom to make wise decisions. He has already put a good and faithful Pastors at Hope to help us figure out what we need at this very moment, and how to plan for our future. This will also be of great benefit to us as we focus on where we want to be as a church and what type of Pastor will be the best fit for us. When we look back on all the things we have gone through as a congregation, we can be very thankful that Pastor Mark was placed at Hope church just as we needed a clear path on moving forward. Pastor Mark has given us so much to be thankful for, preparing our new confirmands, getting our youth group going and helping us to read and learn from the bible. Pastor Mark’s resignation is a very hard decision for us to go through. But, just like all of us he also deserves our respect and has asked that all of us respect his privacy.

The right answers will be there for us as long as we focus on what God’s will is for Hope Church. Our individual wants and needs should take a last place in our efforts to make the future of Hope Church bright and purposeful. Yes, we all hate change, and let’s face it; an uncertain future makes us worry. But if we bond together as a congregation we can overcome the doubts and fears Satan is trying to weigh upon us.

To know God’s guidance, we must put aside our own will and seek the will of the Lord who has called us for His purpose, He created us because He loves us. So after putting all that effort into our creation, God decides to never abandon us, time and time again He has shown mercy to all our foolish deeds. The basic principle in determining the will of God in any situation is to empty ourselves of our own will and to commit ourselves to seeking and obeying His will. Oh, but we have to test Him, just to make sure He really wants you to have blind faith and follow where He leads even if we don’t know where we are going. Time and again God takes it in stride as we try to test His commitment to the future of Hope church.

If we claim to want to know God’s will, but we’re not willing to do it unless it agrees with our will, we’re kidding ourselves. In this case, all we really want is God’s approval of our plans, so we need to ask Him for His plan for us. Only God knows the future and He will sometimes take us in another direction but He knows the hardships that will happen if we follow our will and not His. We’ll never know God’s direction that way, because God reveals His will only to those who are committed to trust and obey Him.

To find God’s will we must walk in constant communion with the Lord, taking everything to Him in prayer. *“Call to me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know”* (Jeremiah 33:3). We need to realize that our steps are ordered by the Lord. When we walk with Him and are committed to His purpose, He will work in our life orchestrating everything for His honor and glory.

If we trust in Him, the process becomes a beautiful blending of God’s faithfulness and mercy and of our obedient trust in Him. Our heavenly Father wants the best for us. He has a perfect plan for our lives. The key to living out His plan and being in tune with His will, is not only believing in God, but obeying Him as well. We must have faith and obey because, *“without faith it is impossible to please God”* (Hebrews 11:6).

All things happen in God’s time and the success of that journey God takes us on depends on the faith we show, and our willingness to give up testing and trying to out-smart God. He guides and provides and we must accept and obey. Let’s pray that we all remember that all the glory goes to God, and we must leave our wants and egos at the church door. “I told you so”, is not appropriate now. We all have a stake in our future and our vision for Hope Church, this means it will take the entire congregation from the youngest to the oldest and all in between to keep the faith going forward.

So, let all of us pray unceasingly for the hope, future and vision of Hope Church. And pray for God’s grace and peace as we start a new venture for Hope Church. A great future awaits us, if we surrender to God’s will and look toward Him for guidance.

Your sister in Christ
Rosie Schilling



Hope's Happenings

Sunday: February 28 Attendance 55
 Offering: Regular \$187.00
 Total \$187.00

Sunday: March 4 Attendance 102
 Offering: Regular \$3020.00
 Building \$95.00
 Sunday School 4.00
 Well \$100.00
 Loose \$15.00
 Sign \$25.00
 New Worship Center \$220.00
 Mission \$75.00
 Total \$3554.00

PRAYER CONCERNS: Please remember the following people in your prayers

Brian—cancer—friend of Leroy and Beth Syring
 Jim Krause—open heart surgery—Jodi's father in law
 Brian Asplund—cancer
 Bob Kudingo—stem cell replacement—Rose Schilling's foster brother
 Dennis Woik—cancer—friend of Chad Bender
 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

- **Tuesday, March 13, 10:00 am Bible Study**
- **Wednesday, March 14, 2:00 pm Bible Study**
 - 5:30-6:45 pm Confirmation—this is for ALL youth
A light supper will be provided and will continue throughout Lent
 - 7:00 pm Lenten Services
- **Saturday, March 17, 10:00 am Adult Instrument Easter practice**
- **Sunday, March 18, First Communion for 5th graders**
 - Adult Choir practice after worship

Mission Project



March is the time for collecting health items to fill our kits sent out in the fall. If you would like to donate any of the following items needed to aid us in making the LWR Personal Care Kits, please leave them in the tote by the coffee area. Kits mean so much to people who have lost everything in a disaster or who left all they have behind to escape violence, many who are now living in refugee camps. We will be collecting the following items: Lightweight bath size towels (20"x40" or 52"x 27"; Bath size bars of soap, any brand (NO mini or hotel size bars); Adult-size toothbrushes; Sturdy, tough combs (NO picks or fine toothed combs); metal nail clippers. This year Thrivent is assisting us with costs in purchasing items. Please sign your name and address on the sheet by the tote if helping by bringing in items so they can see how many people were involved with this mission project. Any questions, please talk to Carol Anderson.