

# Visions of Hope

June 10, 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 School  
8:45-9:30 am

Communion  
1st, 3rd and 5th Sundays

**Emergency numbers:**

Rev. Scott Miller  
715-214-5567  
pastorhopechurch@gmail.com  
715-352-2555 (church)

**Secretary:**

hopelcsec@gmail.com

**Duties List**

**June 17**

June 24

**Ushers**

**Larry Peterson**

**Jay Borchardt**

*Gary Bauman*

*Scott Bauman*

**Greeters**

**Pam Ludwig**

*Brian Remus*

**Readers**

**Jerry Anderson**

*Jen Kunkel*

**Acolyte**

**Reagan Borchardt**

*Kylie Mueller*

## What are you willing to lose?

I have consulted, over the past few years, with congregations that are struggling. I first ask them to send me anything they've published over the past five years, like annual reports or planning documents, and their budgets. Sometimes, not always, reading these helps me understand how they are framing their struggles. I then meet with the governing council and we talk. The question I ask is: "What do you want as an outcome from our time together?"

The overwhelming answer is, "We are declining and we want to turn that around."

They look around their spiritual community and see a decline of younger members, shrinking Sunday school attendance, declining worship attendance, and an aging population. They want more people in the pews, and more importantly, more money in the offering plate.

Lately, I've been thinking a better question to ask initially would be, "What are you willing to lose?" It confronts the basic myth in congregations that are struggling that the answer to whatever they see as their problem is always addition – We need to add more to our worshiping community, to our Sunday school, and to our offering plate. In their minds this logically means adding more "programs," contemporary music, a dynamic youth pastor, a better facility, a youth room, a fancy stewardship drive, and the list goes on. Unfortunately, growth, both spiritually and numerically, is initially about subtraction not addition. In fact, I'd say that it is never about addition!

A rich young ruler comes to Jesus and asks, "Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" Jesus' first response is to rebuke him, "Why do you call me good?" He then goes on to recite some of the commandments to which the young man responds gleefully, "I have kept all these since my youth!"

"One thing is lacking. Sell all that you own and distribute it to the poor, and you will have treasures in heaven, then come, follow me!" He had to be willing to lose something in order to gain something. Like most congregations, he wasn't willing to lose anything. Therein lies the problem.

Ask the question, "What are you willing to lose?" at your next congregational gathering and I can guarantee that a really long, awkward silence will follow. The only evidence of whether or not a congregation is going to "turn it around" is if they're willing to lose initially. When a congregation says it wants to "grow" (whatever that means) it means they want more people and more money but aren't willing to sacrifice anything to make that happen.

What needs to be lost? Let's start with structure. We have all bought the lie that what it means to be a church is somehow connected to committees, meetings, and volunteering to do the business of the church within the walls. There are no more dreaded words than, "So, what committee would you like to serve on?" to send people scampering for the doors. What does "serving" have to do with a committee? I love sharing with people that for the past two years I've been leading a spiritual community that doesn't have a single committee. We meet once a year, at a dinner, in order to fulfill our legal requirements. At that dinner we light a candle for every person and organization we've supported over the past year, and we light a lot of candles! Without radically transforming the structure, we're just wasting time.

Secondly, we need to lose our financial understanding of the church. While the vast majority of economist subscribe to Keynesian economics, in the church we practice austerity. As resources get scarce the immediate response is to "cut back." Austerity doesn't work, just look at Greece (or the US). Pulling our heads into our shells and using what little we have on ourselves only makes matters worse. Church on the cheap is at its core a faith issue. It is the result of our failure to trust God and make disciples. With no vision beyond "paying the bills" revenue will continue to decline which causes us to cut back more which creates more decline. It's time to trust God.

Our budget is a moral document; it tells us what we value. A close look at most congregational budgets tells me what is valued is us! There is no missional element happening, and thus nothing for anyone in the congregation to get excited about except paying the bills. Congregations have to adopt a simply guideline for budgeting with the goal of one dollar externally for every dollar spent internally. If we adopt this we'll see a Pentecost event right out of the pages of Acts!

Thirdly, we need lose membership (or whatever fancy name you put on it). Jesus was very clear: “Go, make disciples.” He never said, “Go make members.” Membership has become so distorted that today it implies privilege. “I’m a member so your task (meaning the professional clergy and staff) is to take care of and serve me.” Membership no longer means obligation to the mission of Christ. Membership is completely inwardly focused. Spiritual transformation happens when we lose our distorted understanding of church membership and start focusing on following Christ out into the world. (It’s never been about us.)

Fourthly, we need to join the 21<sup>st</sup> Century technologically. Everything must change. We are a visual people. Help me and the rest of the world see the Spirit moving among us and out into the world.

Lastly, and most importantly, lose our individual history. “Forget the former things, do not remember the past. Behold, I am doing a new thing.” (Isaiah 43:18) I’m not talking about our collective history (I’m a big fan of understanding our collective history), but the misleading, revisionist individual histories that start with, “Thirty years ago we...” The people we’re trying to reach don’t care what we did thirty years ago, they care what we’re doing today and plan to do tomorrow. Most churches are not the living embodiment of Christ in the world today, they are a museum or better yet, a mausoleum. Get rid of the old pictures of long gone pastors, confirmation classes, and all the junk people stuck us with fifty years ago in honor of something no one remembers. Open up the doors and windows because our place has the smell of “Something old.” It’s excess baggage that is holding us back.

“What are you willing to lose?”  
Pastor Scott



**PRAYER CONCERNS:** Please remember the following people in your prayers

Arden Viegut—heart problems  
Ron Kunkel—home recovering from gall bladder surgery  
John Hamann—home recovering  
Jim Imhoff—health issues—Ken’s Dad  
LuAnn Mohr—home recovering—Barb Mohr-Borchardt’s mom  
Tammy Blake—cancer—Bonnie’s stepdaughter  
Don Hanson—heart attack—doing ok  
Dorothy—rehab in Rhinelander—Bonnie’s mom  
Brian—cancer—friend of Leroy and Beth Syring  
Brian Asplund—cancer  
Marge Manecke—health issues  
Corinne Kane—friend of Cassi Bauman  
Linda Krahn—breast cancer—sister in law to the Kamenick’s  
Mildred Imhoff—health issues—Ken’s mother  
Grace Schraufnagel—cancer—friend of the Streckert’s  
Shyra Martyn—brain cancer—Randy and Sara’s daughter-in-law  
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

# Hope's Happenings



Sunday: June 10 Attendance 78

Offering:	Regular	\$1135.00
	Mission	\$10.00
	Sunday School	\$3.00
	Loose	\$460.00
	New Worship Center	\$435.00
	El Salvador	\$100.00
	Total	\$2143.00

Anyone who would like to lead in worship by singing with the choir this coming Sunday, please join us to run through music at 8:15 Sunday morning.

This will be an all-contemporary service with lots of singing.

This includes young people as well!

## The Bulletin Board

- In case of an emergency you can contact
  - Pastor Scott Miller—715-214-5567
- No Communion on Sunday, June 17 but will be held June 24
- **Wednesday June 13 & 20**
  - NO 2:00 pm & 7:00 pm Bible Study
- Pastor Scott will be on vacation June 12-26
  - June 17—Brent Aschenbrenner with FCA
  - June 24—Chaplain Michael Wikstrom from Ft McCoy will lead the service with communion



Call committee will be holding open discussion sessions June 13, and June 20, 7:00 pm to entertain thoughts from the congregation in the selection of a new pastor. Your ideas are valued as we move forward in this process.



We will be collecting soap in June for Lutheran World Relief. Imagine not even having soap to keep your hands clean or to wash up with when fleeing violence, or in a refugee camp or country with extreme poverty. If you find you have a little extra soap on hand or when shopping next time, please consider bringing some soap to church. New bars of any brand soap **in their original wrapping**. All bar sizes are accepted, however bath-size bars are highly preferred. Any questions ask Carol Anderson.

Our second mission project for June is to collect food for the local food pantries. Summertime can be difficult for struggling families. Your donations are greatly appreciated. The crate is set-up in the foyer for items to donate.



We have set up a new building fund, it is called "New Worship Fund". If you would like to donate to this fund please mark on your envelope 'New Worship Fund'. This is different from the building fund so please specify.