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# HOPE HEADLINES

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## To Us a Child of *Hope* is Born

This is the definition of *hope*: Eager expectation plus *waiting*. Can you feel the tension in that? The *waiting*, that there is a time lapse between expectation and fulfillment, is an inescapable part of *hope*. *Hope* is having faith that the ship will right itself, but not during a commercial break; not during a word from our sponsors. It's going to take some time, possibly *a lot* of time. The waiting doesn't *deduct* from *hope*; it *cultivates hope*.

The Book of Revelation comes from the late first century. Persecution against Christians was increasing. Revelation is full of *hope*; it's full of eager expectation for God's intervention *combined with* lots of *waiting*. Already in **Revelation 5**, the Lamb who was slain enters the throne room of God. But then, there's 11 chapters of *waiting*; three full cycles of unraveling the present age—symbolized by seven seals and then seven trumpets and then seven bowls. *Hope* is composed of eager expectation *and waiting*.

*Hope* is like an olive tree. It takes 40 years for an olive tree to bear mature fruit. 40 years! You plant one for your child.

I'm so grateful that there are people in this world with *hope*. Kirby Broadnax works in inner-city Cleveland to repurpose vacant lots for the benefit of neighborhoods. Maha Mehanna works at peaceful relationships between Israelis and Palestinians. These two people are willing to be links in a chain of goodness for which they may not see the end product. People like Kirby and Maha inspire us with their eager expectation *and waiting*. They are people of *hope*.

I'm so grateful the people of Hope have *hope*, people who are willing to be links in the chain of God's goodness. The Hope Home has certainly been a work of hope—a project full of eager expectation *and waiting*.

May God bless your 2019 with *hope*!

~~Pastor Dave

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\*\*\*Our Annual Congregational Meeting will be January 27, after sharing a fellowship meal together!\*\*\*

## Greetings From Mary Raber (our Mission Partner)

Dear Friends:

There's a Ukrainian Christmas carol that I've only heard a couple of times. It's about the three wise men (Magi). It starts out like other carols. With the star and the Child in the manger. The Magi go off on their journey, bearing rich gifts. So far, so good. But then song adds a twist I've never heard anywhere else:

*...but the king's soldiers cross the steppe*

*And bring the innocent ones into the chamber for questioning.*

*But they do not fear the torment of prison,*

*Nor King Herod's deceit!...*

Matthew the Evangelist doesn't go into details (Matthew 1:1-2), but I always assumed that the Magi sort of blundered into Jerusalem because they got turned around following the star and needed to ask for directions. Or perhaps they naively assumed that courtesy demanded they check in with the local authorities. But whatever the origin of this song, it comes from a different imaginative world from my own, implying real-life knowledge of soldiers, interrogation rooms, and crafty rulers. Did you ever think of the Magi being forcibly detained?

Certainly, the gruesome end of the story – the slaughter of all the baby boys in Bethlehem – is a sinister reminder of how dangerous it was to come looking for a new king in Jerusalem.

Nor has the mood of the world changed. It's easy to forget in the frothy good cheer of the season that to celebrate Christ's birth is to align ourselves with His Kingdom and take a stand against the evil that separates us from God and from each other. The end of the song promises what that means:

*Hurry, bring gifts to Him*

*To the little Child, Jesus Christ!*

*He will dry the tears of the weeping mothers*

*And will give good things in a hard time.*

My Christmas wish for all of us is that we would have a deeper and better knowledge of all the good things that Christ gives – even in a hard time.

### **Prayer requests**

I plan to return to Odessa by mid-January. Please pray for safety in travel.

You are probably aware of the new tensions between Russia and Ukraine in the Kerch Strait between the Black and Azov Seas. Thank you for continuing to pray for peace in the regions. So far, I don't think my plans will be affected, but you never know...

In February I look forward to attending another retreat for pastors and their wives from the militarized zone (eastern Ukraine). Once again, Mission Network

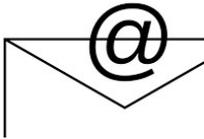


is able to underwrite some of the costs of this event, which means too much for the mental and spiritual health of the participants. Please pray that the retreat would be helpful, and especially that it would take place! The president of Ukraine has declared martial law in border provinces, and if that continues, it could affect the ability of our friends to travel out of the region to the retreat site.

My biggest project for the first half of the year is to apply for temporary resident status in Ukraine. I know from experience that this can be a tremendous bureaucratic hassle. Pray that I will be able to find accurate information about what I need to do to apply, and that the clerks I encounter will be willing to help and not hinder.

Amazingly, Odessa Seminary continues to attract and challenge students from all over the former Soviet Union. This spring I am scheduled to teach a survey course on women in the history of the church, and several others subjects. Instructors, students, and staff alike all need energy, creativity, and wisdom. Thank you for interceding on their behalf.

I am more grateful that I can say for all of your prayers and loving support. Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!



*Remember when email was the great new way to easily and quickly communicate. Well...today there is texting, Instagram, twitter and more; however, email is still the most efficient way the church office communicates with the congregation. Please continue to check your emails, especially for messages specifically for you or any committees/commissions you are on. Our work depends on your responses!*

## **Adult Sunday School**

Classes will resume after the New Year. Join us for "Inside the Disciples Studio" on January 6 & 13, and learn about the faith journeys of several people within our congregation. On January 20, Margaret Wiebe will 'take us' on her Mennonite Central Committee Learning Tour to Honduras and Guatemala.

## Mennonite USA Conference 2019

Our biennial Mennonite Church USA will be held this summer, July 2-6 in Kansas City. We are entitled to send 3 delegates and the church covers part of the costs. Registration opens in February with lodging following on a first-come-first-serve basis. If you are interested in representing Hope, please contact Pastor Dave or the church office.

Our high school youth will also be attending this convention.



## Race Returns to Bethel Campus!



The Neuf 9K and 2-mile run returns to the campus of Bethel College on **January 12, 2019** to honor the memory of Russ Neufeld, a former MC USA and Hesston College employee. The race will start at 10 a.m. outside of Mojo's Coffee Shop on the campus of Bethel College, North Newton, Kansas. The Neuf will raise funds for the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society, and the Russ Neufeld memorial scholarship at Hesston College. Register & read other details about the race at [www.runtheneuf.neuf.ca](http://www.runtheneuf.neuf.ca) <<http://www.runtheneuf.neuf.ca/>> We would love to have you join us for this fun community event!

### January Lists:

#### Greeters:

Jan. 6-Mike & Kim  
Jan. 13-Randy & Joanna  
Jan. 20-Renetta Gooden  
Jan. 27-Heidi J./Heidi H-L

#### Worship Prep:

Jan 6-Ruthie (1<sup>st</sup> fruits)  
Jan 13-Karen  
Jan 20-Joanna  
Jan 27-Heidi J.

#### SS Superintendent

Jan 6-Ruthie  
Jan 13-Justin  
Jan 20-Joan  
Jan 27-Cynthia

#### Nursery:

Jan 6-Jordon & Emily  
Jan 13-Mike M; Isaac  
Jan 20-Donovan; Luke  
Jan 27-Eldon & Annette

#### Hospitality:

Jan 6-Amy; Joanna  
Jan 13-Cindy; Amy  
Jan 20-Heidi J-L; Cindy  
Jan 27-Delaine; Heidi J-L

#### Head Usher: Scott

