
HOPE HEADLINES

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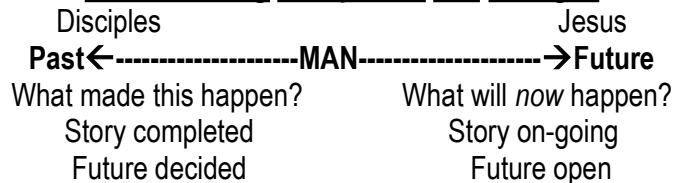


God's Open Road

"For I know the plans that I have for you, says the LORD—plans for your well-being and not for harm, to give you a future with hope" (Jeremiah 29:11).

At some point, each one of us will face a life-changing event. Such events take many forms: Entering school, graduation, entering the work force, dating, marriage, divorce, making new friends, major illness, job advance, career change, relocating, birth of a child, death of parents, retirement. These are just to name a few. At some point, each one of us will face a life-changing event. And even in our short list of examples we notice two broad kinds of life changes, namely, **predictable** changes and **unpredictable** changes. As we reflect on the year 2020, isn't it amazing how many small and large life changes we experienced—**all** of which were **unpredictable**!? we experience an unexpected life-change, it's natural to look to the **past** to explain the **present**. We wonder, "What brought this on, were there precursors, could I have seen this coming, could I have done something for things to have turned out differently?" Jesus' disciples looked to the **past** to explain the **present**. About a man born blind, they asked, "Who sinned this man or his parents?" But Jesus answered them, "**Neither** this man **nor** his parents sinned." Jesus looks to the **future** to make sense of the **present**, where "**God's works** might be revealed in him."

Understanding Unexpected Life-Changes



Jesus teaches us to arrange our lives, not by **what happened** but by **what now**? Because **what now OPENS** the **future**. **Jeremiah 29** concurs with Jesus' perspective. The LORD says to the exiles, "**I** have **plans** for you ... **plans** for the **what now** ... **plans** to give you a **future with hope**. Perhaps it is precisely **life changes** and **life challenges** that make **hope** come alive and **thrive**. Is that true of 2020? Do some of its hard lessons kindle **hope**? Given COVID, political division, racism, Jesus asks, "**What now**? How can God's works be revealed in us?" God has **plans** for us in 2021, for a future with **hope**!

Brothers and sisters, it's now 2021. Behind us is an unexpected, life-changing year. We may think, "What brought this on, were there precursors, could we have seen this coming, could we have done something for things to have turned out differently?" As we walk into the future, God will not vaccinate us against every contingency. But God **does** have **plans** for us ... **plans** for well-being, wholeness, shalom. Jesus calls us to arrange our lives by **what now** ... to walk **with hope** ... and to be **ready** for **God's works** revealed **in us** this year!

~~Pastor Dave

Mark your calendars for our annual meeting on **January 31** following worship. At this time, we will make final



decisions on the 2021 spending plan and the ballot. There will also be a presentation on a new Witness & Outreach ministry with Working Men of Christ. The meeting book will be available the week prior with statistics and reports. You are invited to attend in person or via Zoom.

DISCIPLESHIP COMMISSION NEWS

Sunday School for the winter quarter:

- Preschool class – Ruthie Goering & Carole Stevens
- Youth class – Dawn Epp & Debbie Kasitz
- Faith Seekers class – Dave Stevens
- Adult Class – Marcus Loganbill (see article below)
- Our youth group will continue to meet on their regularly scheduled Wednesday evenings at Hope. Youth Sunday, normally held the first Sunday in February, will be postponed to a later date along with the Dessert Auction. A big thanks to our youth leaders– Michelle Jantz, Donna Heide, Greg Shelly, Randy Pinkerton & Scott Luty – for their creativity during the fall and making it all work during Covid.

ADULT SUNDAY SCHOOL

Beginning January 10, Marcus Loganbill will begin a Sunday School series on criminal justice reform, entitled *Outrageous Justice*. The curriculum was developed by Prison Fellowship, the nation's largest Christian nonprofit serving prisoners, former prisoners, their families and a leading voice for criminal justice reform.

The class will meet for six to ten Sundays, depending on the length of our discussions and the availability of guest speakers. We will not meet on January 31 when we have our annual congregational meeting.

The study is designed to introduce us to what is going on in the criminal justice system – where we've gone right, and where we've gone wrong. We will learn how to engage with the criminal justice system, advocate for change, and make a difference.

Each lesson will begin with open-ended questions to stimulate discussion. We will read Scripture verses which relate the topics being introduced and will watch a video segment. It is recommended that you bring paper and pen to our sessions, as you may wish to record some of your thoughts or answers to questions.

This Sunday School study is very timely as Witness and Outreach has made the decision to support and learn from a local prison ministry, Working Men of Christ. Our hope will be to call on members of WMoC to help to educate us and work with us in efforts to change our current system and make life better for those who are at risk of incarceration, who are currently incarcerated, and to those who are recently released from jail or prison.



Working Men of Christ offers housing and mentoring to those coming

out of incarceration to help them become productive, healthy members of the body of Christ and their families. We believe that a healing approach to all those affected by crime and incarceration can contribute to healthy, prosperous communities. Our ministry is grounded in the conviction that we are all made in God's image, and there is no one who escapes His Love. Jesus, who was also put on trial, convicted, and executed, continues to offer hope and healing for all who seek Him. Through the awakening offered by a Christ-focused life, those who were broken are made whole again and are mobilized to serve their neighbors, breaking the cycle of crime. Working Men of Christ begins the work with each student while they are still incarcerated and nearing

release. Before being released, they complete a workbook called "The Captivity Series: The Key to Your Expected End" by Katie Souza. Upon release, they come to live at one of our discipleship houses where they participate in daily Bible study. The cost to stay in the houses is \$125/week. Through mentoring and community involvement residents are reintegrated into society with a solid foundation. This has proven to be an extremely effective process as evidenced by our 4% recidivism rate over 7 years compared to the national average of 67.8% over three years! For even more information and testimonies, go to their website at www.workingmenofchrist.org



TECHNOLOGY NEWS

Hope worship information

With the arrival and installation of our new sound and technology system, worship coordination with in-person and Zoom attendees has improved. Our average in person attendance is 22 and our Zoom average is 35-40. Michelle Jantz has been training a group of people who will help run the technology side on Sunday mornings. We are thankful for those willing to help in this ministry.

Zoom information

The church has two zoom accounts that are available for commission meetings, small groups, Bible studies and other church gatherings. We are happy to give you the access information.

Hope website

Our church website is a place for useful information. You can access our weekly bulletins as well as Pastor Dave's sermon transcripts. Currently Vision Council is in the process of deciding if we have our website redesigned for easier use, and online giving.





WHAT IS SANDWICH SATURDAY?

Sandwich Saturday is a ministry of St. John's Episcopal Church in downtown Wichita and four other cooperating churches, who are responsible for preparing sacks lunches on the first Saturday of each month to distribute to those in need. Hope is responsible for the first Saturday of each month.

Our sack lunch is a ham and cheese sandwich, a small bag of chips, a banana, two cookies and a bottle of water. We are grateful to our purchasing group – Kim Voth, Cindy Fast, Joan Stambaugh, Michelle Ernt – who makes sure all of the items are ready to go.

Each month a person/family/group sign up to put the lunches together and take them to St. Johns. Usually, they are also responsible for distribution, but during Covid have the option of just dropping them off. Please consider putting a group together and sign up for the month of your choice on the bulletin board. There are many options. If you have never done it before, Marcus Loganbill is happy to help you out the first time.

FROM THE DESK OF MARCUS LOGANBILL

\$ Most of us will soon be receiving a stimulus check from the government. We are encouraged to spend this money to help stimulate the economy.

As we begin this New Year with great uncertainty and anxiety, perhaps it is time to pause and consider what we might do with our stimulus checks. Jesus, whose birth we just celebrated, encourages us in Matthew 19 to go and sell all our possessions and give to the poor. Very few of us will meet that level of stewardship in our lifetime, but maybe we could part with our stimulus monies.

Although there are some in our congregation who truly could use a stimulus at this time, many of us still have jobs, health care, housing, and the ability to pay our bills. There are many of our neighbors who have almost nothing and very little hope or stability. We continue to be a nation of “haves” and “have-nots”.

Perhaps we could use a television upgrade, new countertops in the kitchen, a new barbecue grill – and now – here's some money that we weren't expecting!! However, what will our purchase of a new grill do for the single lady working at Dollar General who is struggling to provide for her family? Very little if anything. Would it not be better and more in line with our faith, if those of us who “have”, gave our stimulus dollars directly to those who “have-not”?

Throughout this pandemic we have been encouraged to “stick together”, to “support each other” and to “perform random acts of kindness”. What a blessing it would be if we could act on those words by giving all or at least a significant portion of our stimulus checks to those in need. Some of us may be in a position to donate; others of us may not be and we can be respectful of one another's choices.

As Mennonites, we are certainly familiar with organizations or individuals who have suffered greatly in the last months. There is no end to whom monies could be donated which would assist those in need. For those of us who have enough, let's consider using our stimulus dollars to do something truly stimulating.



MENNONITE MEN USA

As a part of God's reconciling work, we are called to dismantle racism and build relationships across racial divides. On Saturday, **January 23, 2021**, from 9:00 - 11:30 a.m. EST, Mennonite Men will be hosting a Zoom meeting, open to all genders, with members of Seeking the Beloved Community, a group of Black and White men in Elkhart, Indiana, who have been engaged in this work for seven years. A number of these are pastors and members of Mennonite congregations. This is a regular, open, monthly meeting of men seeking to build relationships, especially among men. They seek to deepen bonds with each other, across race and culture, within families, among local churches and neighborhoods. They seek to confront racism, expose

privilege, and engage in activities that promote shalom and demonstrate God's Beloved Community. This interactive Zoom meeting will consist of presentations from members of Seeking the Beloved Community, whole group conversation, and breakout sessions. As we engage with this group, we will discover

- What happens when Black and White men come together,
- The gifts and challenges of building such relationships,
- Hidden truths and fears revealed in our gatherings,
- How we change as a result of our experience together,
- Personal experiences of privilege, racism and change,
- How building community helps as a step to dismantle racism,
- Ways the Spirit works to form God's beloved community.

Through this event, we will encourage deepening relationships across racial forms of belonging, dismantling racism, and participating in God's community. We suggest a donation of \$25—all of which will go to Seeking the Beloved Community to minister to needs in their neighborhoods. However, we invite anyone to participate regardless of ability to make a financial contribution.

Register at the following website and we will send a Zoom meeting link to you.

<https://seekingthebelovedcommunity.netlify.app/>

"The end is reconciliation; the end is redemption; the end is the creation of the beloved community. It is this type of spirit and this type of love that can transform opposers into friends. It is this type of understanding goodwill that will transform the deep gloom of the old age into the exuberant gladness of the new age. It is this love which will bring about miracles in the hearts of (humanity)." ~~Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

January 3-Marcus
January 10-Michael U.
January 17-Donna H.
January 24-Mike M.
January 31-Kendal

Pianist:

January 3-Vicki
January 10-Amy
January 17-Cynthia
January 24-Laurie
January 31-Ruthie



Worship Prep:

January 3-Connie
January 10-Lori
January 17-Ruthie
January 24-Ruthie
January 31-Heidi




Worship Leader:

January 3-Amy
January 10-Mike V
January 17-Lowell
January 24-Lowell
January 31-TBA

Scripture Reader:

Happy
New Year

January 2021

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
31 Annual Meeting-via zoom/& in person					1 	2 Sandwich Saturday
3	4	5 Kendra Gooden Mike & Kathleen Lehman	6 Michelle Jantz	7 Dawn Epp	8	9
10	11 6:30 Music committee	12	13 Small group zoom	14	15	16 Jason Jantz
17 Jordan Regehr	18 Zoom reserved	19 7:00pm Vision Council-zoom	20 7:00pm witness & Outreach-zoom 	21 Russ Rommbaum Mike & Kim Voth	22 Karen Zehr	23
24 Isabelle Jantz	25 	26 7:00 Worship-zoom	27 Russ Gooden	28	29 Isaac Epp	30 Katrina Miller Josh Gooden