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# HOPE HEADLINES

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*(Pastor Dave's column will return next month.)*



## Update on the Welcome Statement process

Vision Council continues to wrestle with the next steps in the Welcome Statement process. We have been unable to decide or identify what comes next. Please continue to pray for Vision Council that a path becomes clear.

We reviewed a deeper dive in the survey data and found some insight. First, there is a definition misunderstanding. For many, a welcome means the church affirms the people named in the statement. This seems true for those who have knowledge of MCUSA activities or other churches engaged in a welcome/discernment process. For others, a welcome statement means indicating people are welcome and it may or may not mean the church holds a position that affirms the individuals. This lack of mutual understanding leads to the disagreement about the need for a welcome statement. Vision Council agrees that clarity around the definitions is needed.

Why does it matter? Unfortunately, many churches, actively discriminate against people in marginalized groups in their congregational life and institutional practices. This means that the church is experienced as a harmful place by those who do not fit in to the dominant society and as a result, they have to assume that church is not a safe place for them unless we specifically let them know that we are open and affirming to them. Publicly acknowledging that a particular population is welcomed (implied affirmation) lets them know three things: 1) we are a safe place for them; 2) it suggests that the church has educated itself about issues related to the group and; 3) they will not suddenly become a topic of controversy and discussion or their presence in the congregation will not suddenly be questioned. Public affirmation is a symbolic act of prophetic witness indicating a commitment to justice, hospitality, and the dignity of others.

Traditionally, welcome statements involve a welcome (implied affirmation) to individuals regardless of race, ethnic identity, gender, age, sexual orientation, economic situation, education, ability, and other factors which give rise to discrimination and marginalization. When the welcome statement was identified as the #2 priority in the congregational survey, it was believed that the only group of individuals that may cause controversy at Hope was the acceptance and affirmation of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer+ people. Thus, began the work on exploring what it might mean to affirm LGBTQ+ people. Therefore, the focus in the last 18 months has been on this community. It is not to exclude other groups, only to tackle the issue of what a full welcome might mean to this community.

An exploration and dissection of the comments on the survey reveal that we have defined the opposites of the issue on acceptance and affirmation of LGBTQ+ individuals clearly. Of the 143 comments shared on the pulse survey, 35 comments clearly fall to one extreme or the other. 23 comments for full affirmation and inclusion, 12 for same sex relations are a sin, and 108 somewhere in the middle. Further dissection indicates that of the 108 in the middle, some lean slightly one way or the other, yet the largest (by far the majority) fall somewhere in the middle. Yes, to affirmation: 23, Leaning Yes and unclear: 22, Somewhere in the Middle: 72, Leaning No and unclear: 14, No, same sex relations are a sin: 12. The majority of responses are in the middle. We have successfully identified the voices at each end of the spectrum; however, I am left with the question of what does this "Middle Majority" think?

We are also aware of the ongoing stress of the pandemic and our inability to meet in person for continued discernment. We understand it is important to the congregation to keep moving forward. We are also not interested in forcing a decision. Over the course of the process we have had periods of high energy and time for reflection or breaks while we work on other ministries.

We continue to have conversations about what comes next, including the timing of next steps.

So, while we do not have a lot of answers right now, we will persevere to discern and explore options that focus on bringing us together rather than dividing us. We want to keep our common ground in mind. I encourage you to continue conversations amongst yourselves, in small groups, book studies, or other gatherings. As you uncover insights, I hope you will share them with me or any member of Vision Council. I have set up a new email to receive information for Vision Council or for me as moderator. It is [moderator@hopemennonite.org](mailto:moderator@hopemennonite.org). Please direct correspondence to that email.

Lastly, we have learned about a variety of ways to pray and some of those methods are tactile. I have a rock that says "HOPE." I use it to help symbolize holding the Hope congregation in my hands as I pray for us all. I ask you all to pray for Vision Council and Hope as a congregation. I've placed a basket of these "Hope rocks" near the front door and I invite you to pick one up and use it in your prayer and reflection.

Blessings to you all,

~~Michelle Jantz, Moderator



The amphitheater at **Camp Mennoscah** is being rebuilt/refurbished and we're signed up to help!! Working Men of Christ and Hope Mennonite Church will be working on this project and possibly other projects on **Saturday, May 15**. Lunch will be provided. Other details such as our time and place of departure will be forthcoming. If you are interested in helping, please let Marcus Loganbill know prior to Sunday, May 9.

#### **April - Second Chance Month**

In the United States, nearly 1 in 3 adults has a criminal record, which limits their access to education, jobs, housing, and other necessities for a full and productive life. Even after their debt to society is paid, these men and women face some 44,000 documented legal restrictions, in addition to widespread social stigma. After release from jail or prison, these returning citizens

enter a "second prison", almost as restricting and confining as the first.

Each year, **Prison Fellowship** designates the month of **April** as **Second Chance Month**. During April, supporters of **Prison Fellowship** and advocates for criminal justice reform help to raise awareness of the barriers faced by returning citizens and to unlock second chances for these men and women who dream of a better tomorrow.

One of the most imposing barriers to returning citizens is affordable and adequate housing. Here in Wichita, **Working Men of Christ** has been providing housing, spiritual support and mentoring for those coming out of incarceration, helping them become productive, healthy members of the body of Christ and to reunite with their families.

Here at Hope Mennonite, we wish to recognize Second Chance Month by committing ourselves to supporting Working Men of Christ. **Witness and Outreach and the Working Men of Christ Committee** are issuing a challenge to our members to "purchase" a **"Ticket to Security and Stability"** which will support new WMOC students with all or a portion of their rent for their first month or two.

Those attending Hope in person can pick up their tickets at the Witness and Outreach bulletin board. Those worshipping regularly on zoom will receive your ticket via e-mail. The ticket is simply a "refrigerator reminder" of this ministry and your donation. If you are able to make an "above budget" donation to this cause, feel free to bring in or send in your donation any time during the month of April.

Please make out checks to Hope Mennonite Church, designating Working Men of Christ as the recipient. All donations will count toward our \$12,000 goal for WMOC for 2021. To this date, we have collected \$6,375 toward our goal.

We are grateful for the work of WMOC here in Wichita and are eager to partner with those who are navigating through the "second prison". We pray that we may all be blessed by new relationships we are fostering through our shared worship and service to our Lord and Savior.



Discipleship

## Discipleship News

Justice.”

\*The Faith Seeker’s youth and mentors continue to meet during this important time in their spiritual journey. A service of baptism will be celebrated later this spring.

\*The preschool Sunday School class meets regularly each week. Thanks to Ruthie Goering for her leadership.

\*We are excited to announce that our youth group will be participating in a summer trip “Mountains 2 Missions,” July 5-11. It will be a combination of a spiritual adventure trip and service project in Oregon. We will have 8 youth and 2 leaders participating

\*Upcoming adult Sunday School – Beginning April 11, this class will be discussing the book “What is the Bible and how do we understand it?” This publication is part of the series “The Jesus Way,” small books of radical faith. Questions addressed will be what is the purpose of the Bible, how was the Bible born, what is the center and spirit of the Bible, who gets to interpret the Bible and what impact does the Bible make. You are invited to join following worship in the sanctuary or on zoom. This will be a 5 Sunday series.

\*We are not following our usual Sunday School hiatus – off during June, July and part of August – but will hold Sunday School for all ages through June.

\*Beginning on May 23, Pastor Dave will lead us in a Sunday School series on racism through the end of June.



## Update to Hope Mennonite Covid19 Policy Dated July 2, 2020 Effective Date: March 24, 2021

All Covid-19 screening, social distancing, mask, and cleaning requirements will stay in place according to the current Covid-19 Church Policy. The return to normal church activities is contingent based on the status of the Covid19 pandemic, infection rates and health care guidance from local, state and federal agencies.

- Hope Mennonite Church is open to all internal activities and group meetings except for the following:
  - Kitchen use
  - Nursery use
  - Playing of musical wind instruments
  - Singing in groups, choir, and services
- The youth group is approved to use the kitchen in May for Bierock fundraiser.
- Modified fellowship is allowed after Sunday service. Fellowship will follow these guidelines:
  - Fellowship should take place in Fellowship Hall, not the sanctuary
  - Masks will be worn
  - Social distancing should be respected
  - Coffee will not be served

This policy will be reviewed each month when Vision Council meets for adaptation regarding kitchen use, external guests, and full opening including singing, wind instruments and community events.

Until fully open (September 1, 2021, if things continue going in a positive direction) please continue to coordinate facility use with the church office.

### April Reminders:

(April 1-Maundy Thursday)

#### Scripture Reader:

April 1-Connie, Scott, Kyle  
April 4-Ruthie  
April 11-Donna  
April 18-Randy  
April 25-Lori M.

**Zoom Host:** Brenda

#### Worship Leader:

April 1-Pastor Dave  
April 4-Lori M.  
April 11-Renetta  
April 18-TBD  
April 25-Lori M.

#### Worship Prep:

April 4-Cynthia  
April 11-Heidi  
April 18-Connie  
April 25-Lori M.

#### Pianist:

April 1-Cynthia  
April 4-Laurie  
April 11-Ruthie  
April 18-Vicki  
April 25-Ruthie

#### Communion Servers- Maundy Thursday-




Marcus, Dianne

#### Mowing:

April 4-Randy  
April 11-Travis  
April 18-Jim B.  
April 25-Dave Z.

**Tech Person:** Month of April  
Michelle J.

# April 2021

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
				<div>1</div> 	<div>2</div> 	<div>3</div> <div>Sandwich Saturday</div>
<div>4</div> 	<div>5</div> <div>Brad &amp; Michelle Ernt</div>	<div>6</div> <div>Leon &amp; Treva Greaser</div>	<div>7</div> <div>Russ &amp; Berni</div> <div>Zoom-small group</div> <div>7:00pm Faithseekers</div>	<div>8</div> <div>Red &amp; Charla Kremer</div> <div>7:00pm Women's Bible Study</div>	<div>9</div> <div>Sam Harder</div>	<div>10</div>
<div>11</div>	<div>12</div> <div>Zoom-small group</div>	<div>13</div>	<div>14</div>	<div>15</div> <div>7:00pm Women's Bible Study</div>	<div>16</div>	<div>17</div>
<div>18</div> <div>Youth Sunday Faithseekers</div>	<div>19</div> <div>Cynthia Loganbill</div>	<div>20</div> <div>7:00pm Vision Council</div>	<div>21</div> <div>Leslie James</div> <div>6:00pm Witness &amp; Outreach</div>	<div>22</div> <div>7:00pm Women's Bible Study</div>	<div>23</div>	<div>24</div>
<div>25</div> <div>Vicki Howard</div> <div>Family Promise Week All week</div>	<div>26</div> <div>Chase Ingram</div>	<div>27</div>	<div>28</div>	<div>29</div> <div>Shelby Kaufman</div>	<div>30</div>	