
HOPE HEADLINES

A PUBLICATION OF HOPE MENNONITE CHURCH

Volume 36 Number 8

August 2021



Caring for One Another as the Church During a Major and Emotional Decision

"Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another just as God in Christ has forgiven you" (Ephesians 4:32)

Former AMBS Professor of New Testament Mary Schertz said years ago, "Maybe there's *more than one* right Christian response regarding the church's relationship to non-heterosexual persons."

It is the responsibility of all of us at Hope to care for one another during our time of major and emotional decision on this subject.

Our care for one another will be directly dependent on how we understand each person *in relationship to God*.

If you are *affirming* towards persons LGBTQIA+, where do you think people at Hope who are *traditional* on human sexuality stand with God? Do you consider them off-base with God because their view is outdated, they are giving in to the judgmental and unjust dispositions of culture, in denial of human realities, refer to Bible verses from widely different contexts and risk missing the "forest" (of God's love) for less important "trees"?

If you are *traditional* on human sexuality, where do you think people at Hope who are *affirming* stand with God? Do you consider them off-base with God because they are under the under the power of Satan's deceptions, giving in to the liberal sexual dispositions of culture, too spiritually weak to obey difficult but clear biblical guidance—missing the obvious "trees" for some nebulous "forest"?

Is that how we see each other—I'm right and you're wrong, because there's only one right and one wrong Christian position on this important matter? Is that how we see each other—in or out of favor *with God*, because there's only one right way?

Perhaps Professor Schertz is right. Maybe there is *more than one* right Christian response. If so, *affirming* Christians at Hope are simply following Jesus as sincerely and faithfully as they know how. If so, *traditional* Christians at Hope are simply following Jesus as sincerely and faithfully as they know how. God has given *all* of us "power to become children of God" (John

1:12). Moreover, we are *all* the forgiven of God, through God's kindness and tender-heartedness in Jesus Christ. If we treat each person at Hope, regardless of *affirming* or *traditional*, as someone for whom Jesus gave his life, we will have the best spiritual footing from which to care for each other.

Shepherding Lord, as we enter a time of decision, grant us the clarity we can handle. Grant us also the grace and humility to deal with the unclarity and limited understanding which is our inescapable human challenge. And towards your beloved at Hope with whom we disagree, grant us the kindness and tender-heartedness you have always shown to us. Amen.

~~Pastor Dave



Hope to have a new one soon!

With covid we were unable to produce a new picture directory last year. Well, that will hopefully change this year! Look for info in the coming month if you would like to have a new picture taken for the upcoming directory.



Update on bulletins!

MennoMedia no longer publishes bulletins. But, with covid, we have had a very good inventory to use up. So, if you get a lent or advent bulletin, or your bulletin on a certain Sunday has a different cover then your seat mates never fear, we are just using up the bulletins we have left. After those bulletins are gone, we will be producing our own bulletin.



**Trevia Greaser was recognized in the Wichita Business Journal being named in the Excellent in Health Care: Geriatric Care publication. Congratulations to one of our 'own' front line workers.

**Anna Voth has accepted a teaching position at Collegiate High School, and is now living in Andover.



TECHNOLOGY CORNER

Zoom account update: We no longer have two accounts for zoom. With meetings returning in person, vision council was ok with not renewing our second account. We did update our CCLI licensing. We can now stream songs legally over YouTube. With technology come extra costs! Oh, the joys! 😊

Assembling and Encouraging with High-tech and Low-tech

“Let us consider how to motivate one another to love and good deeds, not abandoning our assembling together ... but encouraging one another” (Hebrews 10:24-25).

It's great to have a new sound and video system! We have been living into their expanded potential. In the near run, this substantial upgrade provides smoother Zoom productions of our Sunday worship services. Beyond that, many have already sensed in this new technology the long-term possibilities for the mission of Hope Mennonite Church. Do we discern on-line options for worship and other activities of congregation life as *regular and permanent* features of our ministry? Vision Council has appointed a Task Force on Digital Ministry to investigate the opportunities and challenges. The members are Barb Voth, Heidi Johnson Laws, Lee and Marvin Schmucker.

As we discern the possibilities, it will be important that we share honestly about the opportunities and challenges of digital church—for those within and beyond our fellowship.

We are certainly grateful that during the last year we have had electronic means to gather for various meetings, including worship. This has enabled most of our ministries to advance, if sometimes in modified form (e.g., Women's Bible Study, Congregational Meetings, Virtual Pre-school Sunday School).

It's also true that we have experienced the limitations endemic to “on-screen community.” Any number of technological glitches, like visual, auditory, and bandwidth issues can interfere with clear communication. Discussion in a Zoom meeting tends to be more hesitant and “clipped,” and lacking the liveliness of in-person presence. Some claim that Zoom attention span is shorter than in-person attention span. And some aspects of worship are simply not possible virtually, at least as currently conceived, because they assume people are present with each other (e.g., baptism, anointing). And finally, some people just get “Zoomed-out” from on-line

overload at work or school, and therefore find virtual church meetings simply excruciating.

When I was Pastor at Eden Mennonite Church in Moundridge, I got a call from the chaplaincy department at McPherson Hospital. I was informed that “a member of our church” was a patient there and wanted me to know. Because of HIPAA regulations, they couldn't tell me the name. So, I went to visit. As it turned out, I didn't know the person at all. Yet the individual considered Eden “his church,” because he tuned in regularly to our Sunday radio broadcast. If on-line becomes a regular part of Hope's mission, we may face a similar challenge: Are you a member of Hope if you only participate virtually? What are our responsibilities to people who connect with us solely on-line?

There will be other challenges: How do we feel about video footage of us being transmitted on the web? How do we feel about additional kinds of “performance consciousness” that are inevitably part of worship service production when streamed or recorded on electronic platforms? How do we feel about simultaneous two-venue (in-person and on-line) Sunday School? Can we maintain the ability to really discuss as we learn? I've been learning, with a lot of help, how to teach two-location Sunday School. It's do-able and also requires new skills and awareness.

We also know that some people value the caring opportunity that happens during the Zoom fellowship time following worship.

For younger generations, the use of electronic communication for many aspects of life may be more natural. We will have to engage the generational differences about the place of technology in ministry, in light of the perspectives and needs of more than one generation.

In the New Testament, the word for church is *ekklēsia*, which means, “the assembly.” The New Testament does not and cannot conceive of church any other way than as an in-person gathering of people. Technology enables us to expand this meaning. Do we maintain in-person church as the *preferred* mode of church and on-line church as *provisional*, or are they both equally viable?

What we have before us is an opportunity to explore these and other questions in action, and to learn by doing. If you have suggestions, I encourage you to communicate with the Task Force.

~~Pastor Dave



Vision Council met on July 20th with the Deacons to discern the process and language of the decision related to the welcome

statement. In addition to a review of the constitution and bylaws the group crafted the question to be put forth to the congregation and discussed congregational care as we prepare for this important decision.

In September, we will conduct a ballot process related to whether or not we move forward with a welcome statement. The ballot will be available in both paper and electronic formats. The decision period will be open from Sunday September 12th through Sunday September 19th . Paper ballots will be available after the Sunday Service on both the 12th and the 19th and available at the church office throughout the week. An electronic ballot will also be distributed via email. Members and regular attendees, including youth are invited to complete the ballot. We ask for one ballot per person.

The Vision Council and Deacons will meet the week following the ballot process to review the results. On Sunday, September 26th after the morning service a short congregational meeting will be held to announce the results.

I realize this may seem like a long time away, however the Vision Council and Deacons wanted to provide ample time for the congregation to prepare as well as comply with the church constitution and bylaws. The September date also allows for the busy summer months to pass, where many members are traveling and when we have several events planned. Additionally, this lead time offers us time for prayerful reflection and processing of this important decision and final step in this portion of a journey at Hope.

As a congregation we have been discerning the inclusion of the LGBTQ+ community (non-heterosexuals) for the last two years, some would say it has been even longer. This decision will center around whether or not Hope will be fully inclusive of the LGBTQ+ (non-heterosexual) community including same sex marriage.

We know that this is an emotional topic. Pastor Dave and the Deacons are available for conversation, processing and prayer. We also encourage you to lean on your regular support groups. You may also see some additional congregation care activities to help us all hold this body of Christians close as we come to the end of a long and challenging process. Thank you for your ongoing engagement and conversation.

Vision Council: Eldon Chlumsky, Cindy Fast, Renetta Gooden, Lori Regier, Todd Kasitz, Shelby Kaufman, Tyler Kaufman, Chris Teufel, Karen Zumwalt

Deacons: Leona Adrian, Dianne Birkey, Marcus Loganbill, Wendy Weins

Pastor: Dave Stevens

Moderator: Michelle Jantz

HOPE FRIENDS TO RESUME

The Care and Nurture Commission hopes to resume Hope Friends meals this next school year. Hope Friends begins with a fellowship meal for all who wish to come, from 6-6:30 pm. There is a recommended donation cost. After the meal, the youth group and choir meet. Other groups have also used the evening to have dinner meetings. The dates this fall are September 8,15,22; October 13,20,27; November 10,17. In order to prepare for the meals, a head count is very important. If you think you will eat on a regular basis, **please sign up on the bulletin board.** Look for more details on the meals themselves in the next newsletter.

SCHOLARSHIP NEWS

While the world has functioned differently recently, our Hope Mennonite Church college students have forged onward. The Scholarship Committee provides \$3,000 per student per year for each student that attends a Mennonite postsecondary institution. This past February, 2021 the Scholarship Committee suspended the annual fund-raising efforts that assist this fund. Plans are in place to restart these efforts February, 2022.

In the past we have asked the congregation to:
"BID HIGH AND BID OFTEN"

While we will continue to ask the congregation to bid, we want to add to our fund-raising library of mottos:

"DOUBLE UP, MAKE A DIFFERENCE"

We missed an entire year of fund raising. While our students continued to work hard, their expenses did not take a vacation. Please consider supporting our fund-raising efforts by planning to multiply your gift by "2" in February, 2022.

Open Us

By Carol Penner

God of great gifts,
For the world as we know it, we give you thanks!
The world in all its nearness,
our own special corners, our own dearest vistas,
the way it meets us each morning
when we open our eyes.
For the food you provide, we give thanks,
the shape and feel of it in our hands,
the taste of it in our mouths,
a rich harvest produced by our rain, your sun, your soil.
We open ourselves to this bounty.
We give thanks for the way you people the world,
the particularity of each special person
we know and love,
the shape of their smiles, the way they tilt their heads,
the warmth of their embrace, the quality of their company.
We open ourselves to love.
We give thanks for all this world in its immense beauty,
its staggering strength, its heights and depths,
the breadth of it, beyond our knowing.
And yet you know it, you know us,
you have made yourself known.
We thank you for the contours of your love
in the form of a son who is bread and wine
and water and truth.
We are eager to be like him, to be born again
in his likeness.
Open us to the Holy Spirit:
thank you for the possibilities that await us this week,
that love can win, that hope can blossom,
that faith can find a way in this world even in hard places.
We pray for all who need comfort and peace and help,
especially those near to us; fill them with your goodness.
We long for your healing power
for those we know who are sick.
God of the great wide world
and ourselves in this corner of it,
make us into a community that is open -
cratered by the splendor of your creation
and filled to the brink with thankfulness.
Amen.

Carol Penner is an assistant professor of theological studies at Conrad Grebel University, where she teaches and writes in the area of practical theology after serving many years as a pastor in various Mennonite congregations. To read more of Carol's prayers, visit www.leadinginworship.com where it originally appeared.



August reminders:

Worship Prep:

August 1-Lori M.
August 8-Ruthie
August 15-Heidi
August 22-Cynthia

Coffee:

August 1-Travis
August 8-Marvin
August 15-Randy & Joanna
August 22-Scott & Connie
August 29-Greg & Dawn

Memorial Garden:

August 1-14-Marcus
August 15-28-Ruthie
August 29-Sept 11-Connie

Worship Tech for August: Michelle J.

Zoom facilitator: Marvin

Mowers:

August 8-Randy P.
August 15-Travis
August 22-Jim B.
August 28-Dave Z.

Scripture Readers:

August 1-Donna H
August 8—Lori M
August 15-Marcus
August 22-David E.S
August 29-Mike M.

Worship Leaders:

August 1-Lori M.
August 8-Natalie
August 15-Natalie
August 22-Marcus
August 29-Lowell

Pianist:

August 1-Vicki
August 8-Cynthia
August 15-Cynthia
August 22-Laurie
August 29-Ruthie

Song Leader:

August 1-Kendrick
August 8-Kendrick
August 15-
August 22-Lowell
August 29-Lowell

