
HOPE HEADLINES

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Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. Matthew 5:4

As we enter the third year of pandemic, I can't think of a word from our Lord that we at Hope Mennonite Church need to hear more.

Over the past two years, loss has taken many forms. We have friends and family members who have died from COVID. We have experienced separation from loved ones due to restricted travel, access, and quarantines/lockdowns. Important events including celebrations have been delayed, curtailed, or cancelled. There have been drastic changes in the workplace. Some workers have lost jobs or had their hours drastically reduced. Others have accelerated their retirement plans and left significant vacancies. Managers have been organizing complicated safety and virus-testing protocols, orchestrating a dizzying array of quarantines, while dealing with still other employees who are not showing up at all. At the opposite extreme, there are workers who are overworking to make up for the shortages, but, with no end in sight, they are burning out. School and childcare schedules often change dramatically and with little notice. On top of all this, the hopes that the vaccine and public cooperation with its administration would bring the pandemic to an end have been delayed or dashed. When what we thought would be behind us *isn't*, that's big-time loss! And where will we find the energy and positivity to make it another day? All of these factors individually, as well as the cumulative effect of the whole, represent a pandemic of *grief*.

Some of us are dealing with our grief openly, verbally, demonstratively. We cherish those few close relationships where we can unload the deep frustrations and disappointments we feel. Others find the solitude of commuting or walking the dog a helpful time of debriefing, processing, or un-dealing-with-it. Still others address their grief in unhealthy ways. Some of us keep our feelings of loss largely to ourselves. Many among us in the face of grief simply "keep our noses to the grindstone" and "power through," not wanting self-pity or the pity of others; to cope, *we keep going*. All of these are human and understandable responses to stymied hopes and on-going uncertainty.

When Jesus conferred his blessing, that is, God's favor on people who were mourning, his listeners may well have been surprised. Of course! Mourners usually feel unfavored by God and separated from God. Aren't God's blessed people the happy and successful?

But Jesus pronounces God's comfort on the grieving! Comforting is the relational and emotional intervention of God. Comforting is distinct from fixing all the circumstances that cause us grief. God *is* present in the fixing, but not only in the fixing. Jesus' blessing affirms that God is present *in* the grieving, not just on the other side of it. By comfort, Jesus means God's immediate presence and empathy and encouragement. Fifty-two years after my father's funeral, what I remember most is my neighbor Mrs. Littleton (whom I really didn't know that well) holding me in her arms and rocking me—not the usual thing for a twelve-year-old boy in public. The fact that I remember it so well points to the power of a simple caring gesture cutting through the just-keep-going, and the necessary formalities and appearances, to our core need for humanization and unapologetic tenderness. This is what Jesus means. And so, it is no surprise that in the Gospel of John, Jesus gives to the Holy Spirit a title from the same Greek root as the Second Beatitude: *Comforter*.

Dear friends, who laugh and cry and carry on with me, my prayer is that you receive what Jesus confers on you during this difficult time: God's blessing of deep embrace, empathy, tenderness and encouragement at the core of your being—from the One whose name is *Comforter*.

~~Pastor Dave

Church office news



Cynthia Loganbill will be out of the office February 16-March 14. She will be accompanying her mom on a trip to Bogota, Colombia. Kim

Voth will work Monday-Thursday and the office will be closed on Fridays during that time. Kim's hours are 9-1.

FABULOUS FEBRUARY

We will be blessed with numerous special services during this month. On February 13, we will be led in worship by our youth. On February 20, we will be privileged to meet our new mission partner family, Joseph, Rachel, Elijah & Micaiah and hear about their new ministry. On February 27, Open Road (men's ensemble) & Woven (women's ensemble) from Bethel College, will be sharing their music with us. You won't want to miss out!



Working Men of Christ is an organization which provides transition housing, spiritual guidance, and mentoring to returning citizens. Hope Mennonite Church has been actively working alongside WMOC for over one year.

On Sunday, January 9, Hope's WMOC support committee hosted a dinner at Hope for students at the House of Jeremiah here in Wichita. Ted, Scott, Marcus, Brandon, Aaron, Adam, Justin, David, and house director, James were all in attendance. Dustin and Shannah Stalder, WMOC Regional House Director and Director of Administration joined us as well. The purpose of our evening was to provide a festive meal, and simply get to know one another.



Marcus Loganbill welcomed the group and opened with prayer. Vicki Howard provided icebreaker activities at each table where we had an even mix of guests and hosts. 12 members of Hope and Vicki's parents, Al and Nadine Peters joined the men from Jeremiah. Al crafted some special wooden tokens for each of the guests. The



gentlemen had a great time and enjoyed the meal, prepared by volunteers from Hope. Guests left with a gift bag prepared by Vicki.

The Hope WMOC support committee members are Marcus Loganbill, Travis Cox, Jason Jantz, Chris Bellar, Connie Luty, and Vicki Howard. A

very special thank you to Connie and Vicki who planned and organized the entire event. Thank you to other members of Hope who helped prepare food.

The committee is grateful for the support that has been received for this relatively new ministry. Three members of Hope, Marcus, Lowell, and Jason are currently serving as mentors to men from Jeremiah. Two more, Chris and Travis, will soon be joining them.

We continue to look for volunteer opportunities in which we can work side by side with Working Men of Christ. Other ways in which you can serve are: praying for spiritual growth for each person served by WMOC; donating needed items at each house; donating vehicles; attending or leading Bible studies; inviting men to events, meals, and church activities.

If you have any questions about Working Men of Christ or if you are interested in serving on our committee, please visit with anyone on the committee.



STORAGE SPACE

Our church building doesn't have a lot of extra storage space. Over the years, the library and the back office have been used as such spaces and can get pretty filled up and cluttery. We would like to keep those spaces clear, especially the library. That room is an all-purpose space used for meetings, small groups, as well as library users. If you need a space for temporary storage, please check with the church office for a location. Our shed can be used for longer term storage as well as specified areas downstairs.

Adult Sunday School in February

February 6 & 13 – Responding to Christian Nationalism, led by Dave Stevens.

February 20 – Joseph & Rachel Givens

February 27 – Information on the MCUSA special assembly (Kansas City on Memorial Day weekend) to retire the Membership Guidelines OR Welcome Statement process led by Michelle Jantz.



Dear White Peacemakers at Hope Mennonite,

Last month, the Thursday evening women's book study group completed the book, DEAR WHITE PEACEMAKERS, by Osheta Moore. This is the fourth book the group has studied on dismantling racism. After the murder of George Floyd, we began studying how, as Christians, we are called to respond. These studies have been transformational for the twelve to fourteen women attending. As more scales have fallen from our eyes, our awareness of racial disparity has increased, allowing us to see what truly matters as followers of the Prince of Peace.

A life-changing perspective that Osheta presented is that as an anti-racism peacemaker, we need to claim our Belovedness in God and see the Belovedness in others. This completely changes the foundation of anti-racism work from shame-based to belovedness-centered.

We realize this is not easy work and we have a lot to learn. But we must begin where we are. For far too long, white apathy has dulled our senses. By supporting each other and leaning on the Holy Spirit, we are drawing courage to speak up in our everyday, ordinary interactions. Our attempts might not be perfect, but we must begin by acknowledging the White supremacy that has invaded every aspect of Western life. As Osheta says, "We are partnering with Jesus to do the work of the cross- bringing an end to enmity and restoring relationship." We seek to grow in our ability "to lament and say, 'I'm sorry' and to listen deeply and to learn from people of color."

At the conclusion of DEAR WHITE PEACEMAKERS, the group wrote letters of gratitude to Osheta. As a window into the group's experience, here are excerpts from a few of those letters. —Brenda Glanzer Lilliston, facilitator of the Thursday evening Women's book study group.

- "Dear Osheta. I appreciated your theme throughout the book about the Belovedness of all people and your help on how to become peacemakers. Your stories helped me understand the realities of racism. Your encouragement for us white people to step out of our comfort and privilege and to sacrifice some of our benefits because of our white skin and to actively resist the system of white supremacy when we don't have to be walking in the way of Jesus." ~Margaret Wiebe
- "Dear Osheta. Thanks for both your grace and grit. I appreciate the interweaving of Jesus's teachings with challenging racism in a third way.

As a white woman, I am learning to take the responsibility of speaking up to my white brothers and sisters about systematic racism: how it came to be, to honestly acknowledge it, and to help find that third way out of it." ~Wendy Wiens

- "Dear Osheta. I wish my words could truly express what an impact you've had on my spiritual growth. You captured the essence of what it means to follow Jesus! Your humility helps me put into perspective that we all are beloved of God, and the importance of seeing everyone as beloved. You revive my desire to also mimic the person of Jesus Christ in all my relationships and encounters!" ~Joan Stambaugh
- "Dear Osheta. Thank you for being real! So many times, I want my lofty thoughts to overshadow the real emotions. Thank you for being honest about fear, anger and joy." ~Dianne Birkey
- "Dear Osheta. Thank you for helping me recognize my belovedness and the belovedness of others. Blessings to you. I'll be praying for you and I'll get going." ~Michelle Jantz
- "Dear Osheta. Your grace and grit are transformational. Many things touched me personally: your stories, vulnerabilities, wisdom, passion, straight-forwardness, compassion, and insights. Instead of approaching anti-racism work with shame and guilt, I'm recognizing my belovedness and the belovedness of all." ~Lee Schmucker
- "Dear Osheta. Thank you for sharing of yourself in your book. I immersed myself in your book and always felt loved and valued after each chapter, which made me bolder to share with others what racial reconciliation could look like." ~Barb Voth



The Lord's Prayer

Leader: "The Lord's Prayer is Jesus' own creative and kingdom-focused practice that he gave us so we can grow in our kingdom allegiance. By praying the Lord's Prayer regularly, we reinforce the values of the kingdom of God in our hearts so that we can live out our Christian vocation as kingdom ambassadors in whatever country and context we're in." Let us pray:

All: ***Our Father in heaven.***

1: "The Lord's Prayer famously begins with "Our Father," not "My Father." It's a reminder that we share a common experience and, as Christians, a common Father. The work of anti-racism isn't self-help; it's the work of bringing the human family back together."

(Pause for silent reflection and prayer.)

All: ***May your name be honored.***

2: "We want the way that we oppose racism to reflect the non-violent love of God revealed in Jesus...Anti-racism peacemaking honors God the way Jesus did: by challenging oppressive systems, graciously loving sinners, and calling disciples to leave their self-interest behind and follow him to the cross."

(Pause for silent reflection and prayer.)

All: ***May your kingdom come, may your will be done as in heaven, so on earth.***

3: "Lord, let my 'say so' be aligned with your 'say so.' May I look for ways to live out the culture of the kingdom here and now."

(Pause for silent reflection and prayer.)

All: ***Give us today the bread we need now.***

4: "Trusting God for our daily bread here can mean that each day we're open to whatever invitation to dismantle racism God places before us. It'll look and taste different, but it'll be that day's bread, and that's really good news."

(Pause for silent reflection and prayer.)

All: ***And forgive us the things we owe, as we too have forgiven what was owed to us.***

5: "Forgiveness is one of the cornerstones of true peacemaking. This is a hard one, but it is the bedrock of our kingdom ethic."

(Pause for silent reflection and prayer.)

All: ***Don't bring us into the great trial, but rescue us from evil.***

6: "It seems to me that I've faced my greatest trial when I've stood up and said, "I'll resist white supremacy and call it out wherever I see it," We need to change the way we think about this line –

to shift from asking God, "Oh, please don't hurt us" to asking God, "Please be with us through opposition." We cannot overcome the enemy on our own, so Lord, protect us, be with us and fight alongside of us when the enemy comes against us – especially in this holy work."

(Pause for silent reflection and prayer.)

Leader: **AMEN**

From: Dear White Peacemakers: Dismantling Racism with Grit and Grace by Osheta Moore, pages 310-315.



Worship Reminders:

Worship Leader

Feb 6-Natalie
Feb 13-Youth
Feb 20-Lori M.
Feb 27-Amy

Scripture Reader

Feb 6-Joanna
Feb 13-Youth
Feb 20-Lee
Feb 27-Donna B.

Pianist

Feb 6-Cynthia
Feb 13-Laurie
Feb 20-Ruthie
Feb 27-Vicki

Song Leader

Feb 6-Jared
Feb 13-Lowell
Feb 20-Kendrick
Feb 27-Galen

Tech

Feb 6-Randy P
Feb 13-Galen
Feb 20-Randy P
Feb 27-Randy P

Zoom Facilitator

Feb 6-Lee
Feb 13-Marvin
Feb 20-Michelle J.
Feb 27-Brenda

Worship Prep

Feb 6-Cynthia
Feb 13-Heidi
Feb 20-Joanna
Feb 27-Connie

SS helper

February-Clinton & Katie
Superintendent-
TBD

Coffee

Feb 6-Marcus & Cynthia
Feb 13-Galen & Cindy
Feb 20-Mike & Kim
Feb 27-Scott & Connie

