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# HOPE HEADLINES

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## Randy's Ramblings

When I was working as a Navy Chaplain, I became aware of the many similarities between various denominations and faith traditions. Those similarities became strikingly clear while working alongside Roman Catholic, Southern Baptist, Muslim, Jewish, and Buddhist chaplains. I also found value in deep conversations about our differences, finding those subtle nuances that helped me understand more clearly what it meant to be United Methodist. I often found myself celebrating our diversity while also valuing my own unique perspective. As Paul suggests, we each bring our own perspective to God's work, becoming the body of Christ as we work together (Rom. 12:4-5).

Maybe it was that background that was behind one of the first questions I found myself asking when I started working at Hope Mennonite. What are the differences between Methodists and Mennonites? And how can I celebrate those differences while highlighting our common call to serve Christ?

The similarities between Methodists and Mennonites are so obvious that in many of my initial conversations, people couldn't identify any notable differences. There is clearly overlap in our common understanding of the scripture as the foundation of our spirituality. There is the overlap of common hymnody and the use of music in worship (although, I confess some of the songs I knew before arriving here are sung differently at Hope than how I learned them). Methodists and Mennonites also share a common passion for social justice.

And maybe it's important to keep my focus on what we have in common, so I can continue to walk alongside you in your time of transition from one pastor to another.

But I have to confess, the process of selecting a pastor fascinates me, mostly because it is one of the obvious differences I see between Mennonites and Methodists. In United Methodist churches, there is no "interim" period. One pastor leaves and another starts. We almost literally hand over the keys to the office from one pastor to the next. United Methodist pastors are assigned by the bishop, who ensures every church has a pastor and every pastor has a church to serve. I'm not sure Methodist pastors change any more often than Mennonite pastors (even though Methodists have a reputation for moving frequently). What is different is how the pastors are identified.

I've known about some of those differences, mostly through conversations with Navy Chaplains who come from different backgrounds. And in listening to them, I realized I prefer the United Methodist system of assigning pastors better, even when I recognize what is better about the "call" system.

That difference is what I'm hoping to witness. Maybe I'll see something I didn't know, and maybe it will help me understand more clearly both what makes us different and what makes each better and how we are still alike!

No matter what I learn, I know we are on a common journey "as we strive to model a community of faith offering justice, peace, love, and compassion in the name of Christ" (to quote from The Hope Mennonite Church Statement of Welcome).



**Witness & Outreach  
present...**

This commission is taking numerous Sunday Schools to highlight some of the various organizations that we support financially. To date, we have had presenters from International Rescue Committee (IRC) and Community Peacemaker’s Team (CPT). Here is what is coming up.

**March 12: Hope's "mystery ministries"** - We will be highlighting ministries carried out by individuals but not funded by W & O. Speakers include: **Lowell and Dianne** (ICT Street Ministries, IRC, school reading program, etc.) **Karin Koch** - her work with MDS and the cabinet-making in Goessel; **Kaci Wilson** Hats by Hawk; **Ana Mendonca-Zarling** - Kairos Prison Ministry; **Mike Voth** (and maybe Connie Luty) - volunteering at Camp Mennoscah. Other possibilities will be **Travis Cox** - sharing about his work with Oxford House. Do you have an organization for which you volunteer on a regular basis? Are you involved with a ministry that would be worth highlighting on the 12th? Please see Marcus Loganbill and we will include you!! This year the Witness and Outreach budget includes a line item to assist anyone in church with expenses you may have for your ministries in our community and around the world.

**March 19:** Medical Mission Trip to Dominican Republic - **Jared Regehr, Dianne and Lowell Birkey**

**March 26: Family Promise**

**April 2:** (undecided) - discussion about the future of Hope's prison ministry and assisting returning citizens OR introduction to D.A.R.T. - Direct Action Research Training. DART is one of the largest faith-based community organizing networks in the country. At DART, we believe that fighting for racial and economic justice is fundamental to our identity as people of faith, and we know that successfully fighting for justice

requires having power in the public arena. We could also use this Sunday to discuss our W & O ministries as a church body, receiving input from the congregation as to our future endeavors.



**Checking writing**

Over the years, we have received checks made out to Hope, Hope Church, Hope Caring Fund, etc. Our church bank is getting very particular, so here are some tips to prevent your check from not being accepted. Please write out our full name Hope Mennonite (Church can be added but is not necessary), and if it is for something other than the offering/general fund, please put that information in the memo line and not in the 'pay to the order of' line. Thanks.



**Western District Conference Hello from Western District Women in Mission!**

We are inviting women from your church to have a table at the 2023 Women in Mission Celebration at Faith Mennonite Church in Newton on Saturday, April 1 from 10 am – 1 p.m. The event is sponsored by Western District Women in Mission as a means to share ideas and mission opportunities with other women and churches. Perhaps your church has a formalized women’s group or women who are doing other types of ministries and activities in your church and community such as book/Bible studies, vacation Bible school or other activities for children in your church or community, craft groups, etc. Whatever women are doing in your church to further Christ’s kingdom, come and share it so others can learn, be inspired, and maybe even start something similar in their churches. If you would be interested in having a table or would like more information, e-mail [westerndistrictwomen@gmail.com](mailto:westerndistrictwomen@gmail.com). Reserve your table by March 1. Thanks!



## Discipling Your Congregation to Understand the Importance of the Church

By Jonathan Hayashi

“I don’t need to be in a church.

I’ve got my family and my Jesus.”

According to the 2022 State of Theology report, 66% of Americans say worshiping alone or with one’s family is a valid replacement for regularly attending church. If Christians have Jesus, why do they need to pursue other relationships that add commitments to their already busy schedules?

Christians respond to the gospel through repentance of sin and faith in Jesus. But is that it? What’s the problem with **replacing the local church with a solo Christianity**? Here are four questions to ask to help your church understand the importance of the local body of believers.

**1. What is the church?** In the book of Ephesians, the apostle Paul says that “God’s multi-faceted wisdom may now be made known through the church to the rulers and authorities in the heavens” (Ephesians 3:10, CSB). Jesus established the apostles (Ephesians 2:10) to be the foundation of the church and built it with prophets, teachers, pastors, and ordained men (1 Timothy 3:1-7).

People say they want friendship and community, but if you mention accountability or commitment, they run the other way. Why? Often, there are two reasons: an unhealthy need for privacy and hidden sin.

They might say, “We are all part of the body of Christ. We don’t need to commit to the church to be a Christian.” But by distancing yourself from the church, you are disconnecting yourself from an accountable relationship with church members.

It is impossible to read the New Testament and come away with the idea that Christianity is a “just-me-and-Jesus” sort of religion. Salvation connects us to God and His people. A private

commitment is an impossibility. Our individualistic mindset has tremendously and negatively affected how we understand the church and its importance in Western civilization.

**2. What is the purpose of the church?** The local church is the people of God functioning as an autonomous local congregation of baptized believers associated by covenant in the faith and fellowship of the gospel of Jesus Christ. The church—each congregation and each member—is responsible and accountable to Christ as Lord to carry out the Great Commission and celebrate the gospel of Jesus across the world. God redeemed the church to display His glory and to declare the gospel for the purpose of making mature disciples. “Go, therefore, and make disciples” (Matthew 28:19, CSB). If people put aside the church, they are forfeiting God’s design for helping them grow spiritually.

**3. Why gather as a church?** The author of Hebrews addresses the need for churches to gather on a regular basis. “And let us consider one another in order to provoke love and good works, not neglecting to gather together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging each other, and all the more as you see the day approaching” (Hebrews 10:24-25, CSB).

We need community more than we think. To truly experience the fullness of abiding in Jesus, we need to be around each other to experience Christ as the head and His church as the body (Ephesians 4:15). We are meant to experience communion with the Savior alongside Christ’s bride—the local church. Therefore, the idea of bouncing from church to church doesn’t work. The gathering of the saints is essential to the faith, to the good of your own soul, to the mission of Christ, and to the health of the local congregation.

**4. What is the benefit of being at church?** A mark of true conversion is an overflowing abundance of love we experience vertically with God and horizontally with people (Matthew 22:37-40). You

might be saying, “Well, what about those who have loved Jesus for 30 years but don’t like the church and therefore don’t attend?” Of the 114 times the church is mentioned in the New Testament, at least 90 refer to specific local gatherings of believers who have banded together for fellowship and mission. People committed to the local church pray more frequently, give more generously, study the Bible more consistently, and serve more faithfully.

There is no such thing as solo Christianity. The biblical recognition of the system God has put in place is always evident in local churches. The life and authority of the local church shape the lives of its members. We see in Scripture that God forms us in profound ways when we gather to worship. We may not feel it now, but the formation is usually occurring through the ordinary means of gathering together—singing together, hearing the Word of God together, and breaking bread in communion.

The local church is not an option. It’s God’s primary way for believers to grow in love for Him and fellow believers. But tragically, so many believers bypass it. In the New Testament, to be a Christian meant to be saved into the church, baptized into the church, and made part of a covenant community together. We don’t see free-agent Christians roaming around the New Testament.

So, what’s the importance of belonging to a local church? It gives purpose to live for, people to live with, principles to live by, profession to live out, and power to live on.

\*\*\* *Jonathan has a BA in Pastoral Ministry, an MA in Congregational Leadership, and a DEdMin of Biblical Counseling. Article (edited) reprinted with permission from LlfewayResearch.com*

Full article can be found at  
<https://christianleaderupdate.com/2023/01/27/discipling-your-congregation-to-understand-the-importance-of-the-church/>



## March Reminders...

### Worship

*March 5*

Worship Leader-Natalie  
Scripture-David S.  
Pianist-Vicki  
Song Leader-Galen  
Tech-Scott  
Zoom Host-Brenda

*March 12*

Worship Leader-Natalie  
Scripture-Connie  
Pianist-Amy  
Song Leader-Lowell  
Tech-Mike V.  
Zoom-Lee

*March 19*

Worship Leader-Connie  
Scripture-Joanna  
Pianist-Cynthia  
Song Leader-Trae  
Tech-Randy P.  
Zoom-Brenda

*March 26*

Worship Leader-Connie  
Scripture-Vicki  
Pianist-Laurie  
Song Leader-Galen  
Tech-Michelle J.  
Zoom-Michelle J.

*(Rest of reminders are on the back of the calendar, online its part of the newsletter)*

## **Greeters**

March 5- Mike & Val  
March 12-Jim & Barb  
March 19-Chris & Amy  
March 26-Greg & Dawn

## **Worship Prep**

March 5-Ruthie  
March 12-Joanna  
March 19-Heidi  
March 26-Connie

## **Nursery**

March 5-Eldon & Annette  
March 12-Alison, Kloie, Hailey  
March 19-Justin & Tiffany  
March 26-Shelby & Tyler

## **Preschool Helpers**

March 5-Cindy  
March 12-Alison  
March 19-Jared  
March 26-Renetta

## **Sunday school Superintendent**

March 5-TBD  
March 12-TBD  
March 19-TBD  
March 26-TBD

## **Coffee**

March 5-Travis & Charity  
March 12-Greg & Dawn  
March 19-Eldon & Annette  
March 26-Marcus & Cynthia

**Head Usher**-Randy P.

