
HOPE HEADLINES

A PUBLICATION OF HOPE MENNONITE CHURCH

Volume 38 Number 5

May 2023



Randy's Ramblings

My "star word" from Epiphany this year is Awe. I've found myself paying attention to the ways God shows up and speaks when I am least expecting it. I've found myself stopping to notice when there are moments of beauty or inspiration. In short, I'm trying to stop and experience the awe in things that may seem rather mundane if I don't stop and notice.

And in doing so, I've found God speaking to me in places I least expect it! Even a fleeting memory that came back to me.

It was several years ago, so the details are a little fuzzy. I was in a room full of United Methodist clergy. We were singing a hymn I barely knew. There was no screen to project the words, and not enough hymnals to go around. So I was sort of humming along when I heard a phrase I didn't recognize.

I know we speak about Jesus as the Prince of Peace, but the phrase in the hymn called him the Prince of Love. I can't tell you what else happened at that gathering. I know when I got home, I pulled out my hymnal to find the song. I wanted to see the context and the specifics of the line I had heard. I don't remember what hymn it was, these several years later. I did find the line in what must be the same hymn, though. It turns out "the Prince of Love" was actually "the prints of love," referring to the nail prints in the hands of Jesus. "He lifts his hands above; he shows his prints of love. "It was a moment of awe when I realized he is the Prince of Love, revealed to us in the prints of love.

All that came to mind when I was practicing with the choir at the church we attend in El Dorado. We were preparing for Palm Sunday and Maundy Thursday and Easter. We looked at several pieces together, discarding some and working on others. And in the midst of it all, I heard the words again. Jesus is the Prince of Love. It was a fleeting event, in a song we didn't sing, but the words I heard made me remember the connection I had made years ago. There was a sense of Awe as I made the same connections again.

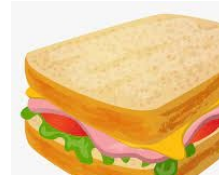
Our grandchildren left their own prints of love on our windows when they came to visit at Easter. It would be

easy to simply wash them off so we can see through more clearly. But maybe the Prince of Love is longing to be seen again in those prints of love.

And so today, I am giving thanks for the Prince of Love, who continues to reveal himself to me, to you, to us.

Preparing for Worship

We are very aware of the importance of Sunday morning worship at Hope. Many are involved in preparing meaningful and cohesive worship – the Worship Commission, the Music Committee, the pastor and all of the worship participants including worship leaders, scripture readers, song leaders, pianists and instrumentalists, and more. We are called to enter and prepare for worship at the ringing of the chimes, followed by the prelude which is intended as a time of centering and not simply background music. You are invited to enter a time of silence and preparation, ending your conversation when the chimes ring, which respects the pianist and those around you.

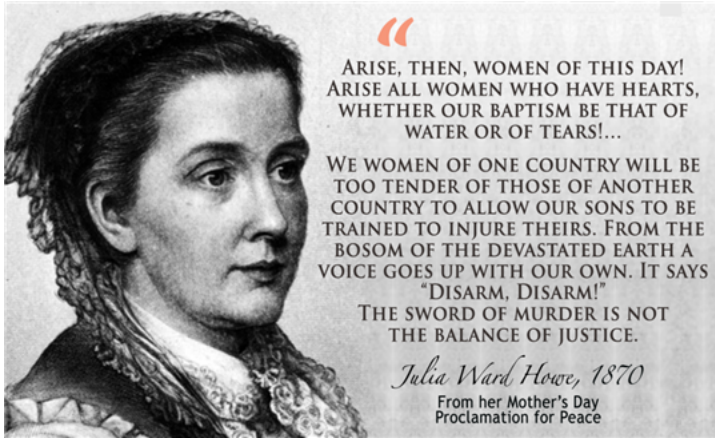


SANDWICH SATURDAY UPDATE

The coordinators for Sandwich Saturday have changed. Mother Christian Gilson and Nicki Soice, from St. John's Episcopal are taking over for Joan Beldsoe, Scott & Shirley Orr and Walter Girton, who coordinated the program for three years. Beginning April 15, the distribution of sack lunches will be moved back to the area under the portico at St. John's back doors. You will be able to pull your cars right to the area and serve from there. This will provide an element of protection from the weather and eliminate the need to carry boxes and water through the courtyard from the back to the front of the church. Due to the drop in the number of weekly guests, our total will be dropped to 100-110 sack lunches in order to reduce the number of leftover lunches. That will also lower the number of cookies we need from 25 to 21 dozen.

The June issue of the newsletter will go out May 26.
Articles are due by May 24.

History of Mother's Day as a Day of Peace; prayers and action needed



“Too few Americans are aware that early advocates of Mother’s Day in the United States originally envisioned it as a day of peace, to honor and support mothers who lost sons and husbands to the carnage of the Civil War,” shares the Fellowship of Reconciliation with their call for a National Day of Prayer and contemplation on this year’s Mother’s Day. The Fellowship of Reconciliation (FOR) is a global interfaith movement founded in 1914 to support the rights of conscience in resistance to war and military conscription. (<https://forusa.org/>)



Thank you to all who helped with our Hope work day on Saturday, April 22! We accomplished many tasks including: reseeding and sodding the Memorial Garden turf; trimming trees and removing downed limbs; cleaning out leaves and debris from stairwells and air conditioning units; improving drainage from the building; washing windows, and cleaning out the shed.

You don’t have to wait for another workday to volunteer to assist with projects inside or outside the church. Perhaps your family or small group would like to volunteer to paint a room, clean out gutters, add a railing beside the steps from the Memorial Garden, or make other improvements. See Scott Luty or Marcus Loganbill for suggestions if you are interested.

As is the case in our homes, things accumulate and there comes a time to purge. In Hope’s case, much of our accumulation occurs in the shed. We realize that one person’s trash is perhaps another person’s treasure and we have multiple individuals or groups storing things in

the shed; we don’t want to throw away something that is of value to anyone.

To maximize our storage space, we would like to get rid of: a small utility trailer, a hose reel (which needs a little repair), a rototiller (also in need of repair), PVC pipe. Most items are on the east side of the shed for you to look at. In addition, we have pavers, river rock, sand, 4 X 4 posts, (etc) – see Marcus and he can show you where these are. If you feel guilty taking any of these items, donations to the church ministry of your choice are always welcome. We’ll wait until the end of May, and then sell or give these items away.



5 Things The Church Needs to Stop Doing (That Are Not In the Bible) By Carey Nieuwhof

The Church has more than its share of critics these days. Sometimes the criticism is unwarranted. People project their issues onto a congregation or onto *the* Church, which is never healthy. And, of course, the Church will *inevitably* run into criticism.

What we’re doing is counter-cultural and will never be met with universal applause. The Gospel, even when powerfully shared, resulted in the deaths of John the Baptist, the Apostle Paul, Jesus, and the prophets, just to name a few. While it seems strange to say it, even love, when seen fully and magnificently, gets rejected.

But other times we absolutely deserve the criticism that comes our way. Often these days, it seems, we’re not ridiculed or persecuted because we’re fighting nobly. Nope, sometimes we just shoot ourselves in the foot. Here are 5 things that churches do that are not in the Bible that would help the church reach more people if we could just stop doing them.

Note: *This article was updated and republished on March 11, 2023.*

1. Being So Weird Online

Of course, the internet wasn’t around when the Bible was being written.

However, that doesn’t mean the Bible doesn’t have any advice on how Christians should behave in public. And social media, in particular, is a new “public venue.”

Too many Christians come across online as:

- **Toxic** (Hello angry ranters, trolls, and haters), or
- **Cynical** (Yes, we know you’re disappointed with everyone all the time and no one gets it as right as you), or

- **Syrupy** (So sweet we can't stand the taste and are not really sure you live in the real world)

Why do so many Christians think their social media feed is a place to show the world their weirdness? It gives the impression that if you're going to follow Jesus, you also need to become socially awkward. I know people might say, "No, I'm just being authentic." But being authentic does not mean being weird. (I shared my personal criteria for what I share online in the name of authenticity in this post). **Too many Christians come across as toxic or out-of-touch. Being authentic does not mean being weird.**

I think a general rule of thumb is that if you can't imagine saying it in real life to a person, you shouldn't say it online. If you go to post something and you think, "Well, that would be braggy if I said that to someone in person," that's a healthy check. It means you'd be bragging. So don't post it. Similarly, if you think, "Well, people would just walk out of the room if I said that in real life," then maybe don't say it. If you're always angry, cynical, or all you do is complain online and you think, "Well, I wouldn't want to be friends with someone like that in real life," then that's a clue that maybe you shouldn't say it (or be like that). And if you think, "Well, then I'll have nothing to post," then you've likely put your finger on a deeper issue. Christians, let's just stop being so weird online, okay?

2. Commenting On Politics

Part of the weirdness is political. The Jesus we meet in Scripture inhabited a real place in a real time. Between the governing Roman authorities, the religious institutions, and the zealot revolutionaries, Jesus deftly navigated a lot of fraught political situations steeped in tradition, power, and culture. However, Jesus also refused to become a pawn in the political power plays of his day. He escaped easy categorization and challenged everyone's partisan beliefs. God is not a Republican or a Democrat, or (in the case of my home country, Canada), a Conservative, Liberal, or New Democrat. Nor is God an Independent. God is God.

When your church becomes a mouthpiece for a political party, you cease to be the Church.

Your job is to share the Gospel, not to change the government. As I shared in more detail here, Jesus and Paul spend surprisingly little time trying to influence the government. Jesus completely rejected the idea of becoming the government when people asked him to become their political leader.

I know some will say, "Well, God has opinions about things happening today." I'm sure He does. But when

authentic Christians sincerely hold different views on divisive topics, we should be very careful about speaking for God. **When God happens to have all the same opinions you do, you're probably not even worshipping God anymore. You might be worshipping yourself.**

3. Handling Conflict So Poorly

The Church should be the best in the world at handling conflict. We were taught by Jesus exactly how to do it (and a bulk of Paul's letters to the early church explicitly deal with their poor conflict management skills).

Yet we often sidestep. We gossip. We talk *about* other people rather than *to* people. We avoid conflict. Or we run into it like a bulldozer claiming we're all about truth. If we handled conflict humbly, gently, introspectively, and bravely, then we'd be so much better. If we approached conflict with a more healthy perspective, our churches would be so much healthier (and attractive to outsiders). And, perhaps best of all, a healthy church is a church that can help other people get healthier. **To handle conflict better, don't talk about other people. Talk to them.**

4. Ranking Sin Selectively

Christians have become fairly good at focusing on the moral failings of others while ignoring their own. We pretend that the worst sin you can commit is sexual. And—don't get me wrong—sexual sin has serious implications. But so does gossip. And divisiveness. And quarreling—sins Christians routinely ignore. Mostly because we commit them. I'd suggest that just as many congregations and reputations have been ruined by gossip, divisiveness, and quarreling as have been stained by sexual sin. But you'd never know it given the way we talk about sin. I'm all for surrendering our sexuality to Christ. But I'm also all for submitting our propensity to gossip, our divisiveness, and our quarreling to Jesus and dealing with *that* seriously. *Imagine* what the church might look like if that happened. And we haven't even touched gluttony or envy yet, all things with which Christians routinely self-medicate their pain. Maybe if Christians humbly confessed *their* sins first, the world would be more likely to come to terms with their sins. So, here's an idea. **Instead of pretending someone else's sin is worse than your sin, confess your sin. And then deal with it.** You'll be in such a better place if you do that. And so will they. You might actually be able to help them through their own sin struggles.

5. Judging Outsiders

This is a pet peeve of mine.

As I [outlined here](#), we in the modern church have largely ignored Paul's injunction to stop judging non-Christians.

Even Jesus said he didn't come into the world to judge it, but to save it. I completely get the urge to judge our neighbors and even the world. Things bother me too. But I have to refrain. Our faith in Christ demands it. Before ministry, I was a lawyer. In my first year of law, I remember having a crisis because I couldn't imagine representing a client. I believed I might be guilty. I stayed after class one day to talk to my criminal law professor about it. He assured me of a few things. First, if your client tells you he's guilty, you can't ethically enter a non-guilty plea. That made me feel better. But then he told me that almost every client says they're not guilty. I got nervous again. "Well, what if you think he's guilty, but he says he's not? Doesn't that put you in a horrible bind?" I'll never forget his answer. "You're confusing your role, Carey. You're not the judge. You're his lawyer. Your job is —ethically, morally, and legally—to give him the best day he can possibly have in court. The judge will decide whether he's guilty or not." I felt like the weight of the world was lifted off my shoulders. So...Christians, the world has a judge. And it's not you. He's fairer than you. More just than you. More perfect than you. And far more accurate. In the meantime, do your best to help reconcile your brothers and sister in the world to their heavenly father through Christ. [That's your job](#). Take some comfort in that. And for all these reasons [and more](#), stop judging.

Carey Nieuwhof is a best-selling leadership author, speaker, podcaster, former attorney, and church planter. He hosts one of today's most influential leadership podcasts, and his online content is accessed by leaders over 1.5 million times a month. He speaks to leaders around the world about leadership, change, and personal growth.



May Reminders...

Worship May 7
Working Men of Christ
Worship-Lori M.
Scripture-Randy P.
Pianist-Ruthie
Song-Lowell
Tech-Scott

May 14 Pastor Randy

Worship-Lowell
Scripture-Barb
Pianist-Vicki
Song-Galen
Tech-Mike V.

May 21-Pastor Randy

Worship-TBA
Scripture-Wendy
Pianist-Amy ?
Song-Trae
Tech-Randy P.

May 28 Pastor Randy

Worship-TBA
Scripture-Marcus
Pianist-Cynthia
Song-Piano
Tech-Michelle J.

Sanctuary Prep

May 7- Connie
May 14-Lori M.
May 21-Connie
May 28-Lori M.

Nursery

May 7-Greg & Leah
May 14-Alison, Kloie, Hailey
May 21-Justin & Tiffany
May 28-Donovan & Laurie

SS Helper

May 7-Cindy
May 14-Renetta
May 21-Jared
May 28- No SS

Superintendent

May 7-Laurie
May 14-Laurie
May 21-Delaine
May 28- NO SS

Coffee

May 7-Chris B.
May 14-Scott & Connie
May 21-Greg & Dawn
May 28-NO Coffee-holiday

Mowers

May 7-Jim B.
May 14-Scott
May 21-Jerold
May 28-Randy P.