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# HOPE HEADLINES

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I received a serendipitous gift while scrolling through Facebook several weeks ago: a poem by Mary Oliver entitled “When I am Among the Trees.”

When I am among the trees,  
especially the willows and the honey locust,  
equally the beech, the oaks and the pines,  
they give off such hints of gladness.  
I would almost say that they save me, and daily.

I am so distant from the hope of myself,  
in which I have goodness, and discernment,  
and never hurry through the world  
but walk slowly, and bow often.

Around me the trees stir in their leaves  
and call out, “Stay awhile.”

The light flows from their branches.

And they call again, “It’s simple,” they say,  
“and you too have come  
into the world to do this, to go easy, to be filled  
with light, and to shine.”

What a sermon unto itself for our Season of Creation worship series! And such a gift to come across so soon after preaching sermons that mentioned the question of “What is saving your life?” and trees within a week. How serendipitous!

When I came across this poem and felt all those connections light up, I was reminded of Julia Cameron’s bestselling book *The Artist’s Way: A Spiritual Path to Higher Creativity*. Her book includes a section about synchronicity in the chapter “Recovering a Sense of Power” (week 3 of 12).

She writes, “If there is a responsive creative force that does hear us and act on our behalf, then we may really

be able to do some things. The jig, in short, is up: God knows that the sky’s the limits. . . . If we do, in fact, have to deal with a force beyond ourselves that involves itself in our lives, then we may have to move into action on those previously impossible dreams.”

It’s clear that this congregation is feeling that “responsive creative force” and is “[moving] into action on those previously impossible dreams.” Hallelujah! Hope Mennonite Church is awash in creativity and imagination! I know it’s not endless, but it *is* abundant. These capacities have allowed us to experiment in worship with bird song, other outdoor sounds, images of nature, new hymns and new ideas. What a blessing to be joining you in this “outdoor” adventure during September and October!

I see the church exercising creativity and imagination in its community engagement, too. Can we find a van for a newly-housed family? Sure! Can we host a family whose weekend overnight plans fell through? OK! Can we join a newly-established community effort for social justice? Yes, we can! Can we assemble school kits for Mennonite Central Committee partners around the world? Of course! And hallelujah!

The church’s “no” is also very useful and also an exercise in creativity and imagination. The search committee has said “no” to those candidates who don’t seem like a good fit for the congregation. Vision Council has said “no” to issues that the church has not affirmed as priorities at this time. Your previous interim pastor said “no” to continuing to serve in that role longer than was life-giving for him. Thanks be to God for “no” as well as “yes”!

The creativity and imagination of this congregation will be exercised as you decide how to use monitors to expand the accessibility and hospitality of our worship services to those worshipping remotely *and* in person. I trust that God’s abundant creativity will fuel our imaginations during this discernment process, and as we move forward together.

Bessel Van der Kolk describes the flow of the Spirit this way in his book *The Body Keeps the Score: Brain, Mind, and Body in the Healing of Trauma*: “Imagination gives us the opportunity to envision new possibilities—it is an essential launchpad for making our hopes come true.



## A SERVICE PROJECT OPPORTUNITY

Are you looking for a service project as an individual, for family and friends or your church small group? Then look no further! Every month there is an opportunity right here at Hope – Sandwich Saturday. The first Saturday of each month, we are in charge of making 80 sack lunches and distributing them to those in need of food. The food items are purchased for you and all you have to do is put together the lunches and take them to St. John’s Episcopal Church in downtown Wichita. There is a sign-up on the bulletin board and we are looking for a group in both November and December. If you have never participated, there are people willing to come and help on your first time. AND – there is always the opportunity to bake cookies for our 14-dozen monthly quota.



### Helping Your Immune System

Cold and Flu Season is approaching again. A very simple, no cost step in helping your immune system in a few words is: SKIP THE SUGAR. Sugar depresses the immune system so your ability to fight disease is lessened. One teaspoon of sugar disables your immune system (lessens the ability of the white blood cells to destroy bacteria and/or viruses) for 4-5 hours. A 12 oz. can of soda (which contains at least 10 teaspoons of sugar) may disable the immune system for 24 hours. Besides immobilizing the white blood cells, excessive sugar is linked to inflammation, irritability and brain fog, fatigue, liver dysfunction, and of course, possibly future diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and cancer.

### The Sweet Life

Sugar isn’t inherently bad. It is necessary for fuel for our bodies. Americans tend to consume large amounts of added sugar and high fructose corn syrup in drinks, desserts, candy, and processed food. Sugar has no nutritional value and no fiber.

Research studies on artificial sweeteners have been controversial since the 1950’s but most agree they have some concerning side effects. They may seem like a good idea for weight loss and blood sugar control but can actually cause taste buds to become addicted to overly sweet foods, thereby actually causing weight, metabolic syndrome, and Type II diabetes, contributing to the obesity epidemic. Other concerning research links them to cancer, migraines, dementia, gut inflammation, and vascular disorders.

The four most concerning are aspartame (Equal), sucralose (Splenda), saccharin, and acesulfame K. Sugar alcohols like xylitol, erythritol, sorbitol, and others ending in “itol” can cause GI disorders. Remember they are toxic to dogs! Read your labels not only on food but also toothpaste, chewable and gummy vitamins, liquid medications, and chewing gum.

Allulose, stevia, and monk fruit are plant-based sweeteners and are considered good alternatives. Natural sweeteners like coconut and date sugar, Yacon syrup, raw honey, pure maple syrup, molasses, brown rice syrup, and fruit purees actually contain anti-oxidants, vitamins, minerals, and some fiber, but do have calories and can affect blood sugar levels.

Life is better with a little sweetness, so choose wisely!



### MDS FIRE, HAZARD & DISASTER MITIGATION - On October 8-12, 2024, Mennonite Disaster Service

and Rocky Mountain Mennonite Camp will continue their critical fire mitigation partnership in the work to

- Forest thinning
- Removing hazard trees
- Removing logs
- Chipping slash

A desire for 10 or more volunteers are needed each day to accomplish the tasks at hand. Volunteers for foodservice are also encouraged and welcomed to help in support of the week’s efforts. Please visit the volunteer page at [www.rmmc.org](http://www.rmmc.org) and select "[MDS FIRE, HAZARD & DISASTER MITIGATION](#)" or go directly to "[VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES & SIGN-UP](#)" to register for the week or for the days you are able to come. For additional information, please feel free to contact Paul Unruh (316-772-6308), Marc Yoder (719-942-3276), Brad Shelley (720-459-2929) or camp with any questions



**Listening Sessions** for Justice Together will continue in October. Thanks to the people who helped us get a strong start during Sunday School on September 22! This is our way of having “a say” in Justice Together’s focus for the coming year. Please watch for more Listening Session opportunities coming up in October!

During September, Hope’s Justice Together Team focused on **updating the congregation about our affiliate’s progress on the mental health and homelessness initiatives** presented and agreed to by officials at May’s Nehemiah Rally. The information can be found on the Witness and Outreach Bulletin Board.

The **mental health initiative has been successful** in increasing the number of Integrated Care Teams to answer emergency calls, hiring support staff to help individuals navigate transportation and visits to medical and service providers, increasing ComCare’s Psychiatric Care to 24/7 instead just Monday thru Friday. These proposals will be placed on “monitor status” for the next year.

The **homelessness initiatives have proven more challenging**. A The Multi-Agency Center (MAC) and a low barrier ID program are complicated and involve many moving parts. So these proposals will continue to be a top priority.

This year’s Hope JT Leadership Team is Brenda Glanzer Lilliston, Grace Parker Sutter and Wendy Wiens.

**Thanks for your continued support of justice work in Wichita.**

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### October Reminders...

#### Memorial Garden

Oct 1-5-Heidi; Oct 6-19-Marcus

#### Worship

October 6  
Worship-TBA  
Scripture-Greg S-U  
Pianist-Amy  
Song-Galen  
Tech-Scott  
Zoom-Brenda

October 13  
Worship-TBA  
Scripture-Kendal  
Pianist-Ruthie  
Song-Trae  
Tech-Mike V.  
Zoom-Lee

October 20  
Worship-TBA  
Scripture-Jared  
Pianist-Laurie  
Song-Lowell

October 27  
**Church Retreat**

#### Sanctuary Prep

October 6-Joanna  
October 13-Connie  
October 20-Lori M.  
October 27-Retreat

#### Nursery

October 6-Greg & Leah  
October 13-Donovan & Lori  
October 20-Clinton & Katie  
October 27-Retreat

#### Coffee

October 6-Bob & Delaine  
October 13-Eldon & Annette  
October 20-Greg & Dawn  
October 27-Retreat

#### Mower

October 6-Scott  
October 13-Randy P.  
October 20-Jerold  
October 27-Randy G.