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# HOPE HEADLINES



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Bob Stolze (June 30, 1950-February 24, 2026) went back and forth between calling me Pastor-ita and Dr. Ruth.

I finally convinced him that Dr. Ruth might make people (mostly me) blush, especially because of THE DR. RUTH, as in the talk show host and sex therapist, Dr. Ruth Westheimer.

Bob stuck with Pastor-ita as his official address, adding an occasional, “What’s up, Doc?”

Just last week, I told him if the “What’s up, Doc” stuck, I was going to stick a carrot in his mouth. He smiled a big smile. Mostly he was pleased that I knew who Bugs Bunny was. He loved giving me a hard time about my lack of pop-cultural references. This is only fair, having spent my childhood craw-dad fishing instead of watching tv or reading. In November of 2025, Bob was bemused by the fact that I didn’t know who Uncle Scrooge was. By the following Monday, he showed up to the church with the entire Uncle Scrooge cartoon collection. He would ask me every Sunday how far I’d gotten.

Back to Bugs Bunny and “What’s up, doc?” As soon as Bob found out that I was enrolled in a Doctoral program, he took great interest and had lots of questions. As per usual, he was fond of adding playful comments or “jabs,” but always with a twinkle in his eyes. I knew he meant well because he had already gifted me with other books that were “right on” in terms of my theological and leadership interests. I felt listened to by him, even when he did most of the talking. Even from the hospital bed recently, Bob wanted to know what I was reading and thinking about. “Tell me more about this doctoral business,” he asked. My answer often put him to sleep, which was just what the doctor ordered.

I know that others of you have wondered about this “doctoral business.” I supposed I have been hesitant to talk about it because it’s been on pause. I keep telling my seminary professors and mentors that I’m experiencing so much joy being a pastor at Hope that I don’t have time (or interest) in doing my homework. Professors have, for the most part, encouraged me to take my sweet time and enjoy this beginning stretch at Hope. They often remind

me that I have six years total to complete this program. And at the rate I’m going, it’s going to take that long.

I started this Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary Doctoral program in Church Leadership in January of 2025. Actually, I was accepted in the 2023 DMin program, but I deferred due to some sudden health concerns. So, this has been in the works for a while. “Why? What motivates you?” These are questions Chris Bellar asked as a member of the pastoral search committee. My answer is the same now as it was a year ago. I told the search committee that I was just out of college when I went to seminary. Now, after 20 years of pastoral ministry experience, I have so much more I want to learn (and a few things I want to unlearn). I have so much more life experience to mine. Plus, our world has changed so much in these 20 years—so many cultural shifts, changing tools and realities.

What I didn’t tell them was this: there was a stint 3-4 years ago when I considered doing something other than congregational ministry. And while there might be similar junctures ahead, I am convinced more than ever that I’m in the right spot vocationally. I want to keep becoming the most faithful and effective pastor/leader I can be at the congregational level. Being Pastor-ita Ruth is who I want to be. I believe I heard someone on the Hope search committee say something like this in response, “we’ll make a great learning lab.” I already know that to be true. That being said, I don’t want anyone to feel like I’m seeing you as homework or a test subject. Also, please know this: As soon I hit the un-pause button in this program, I aim to share what I’m studying and learning. I’d love to see our life together at Hope as a great learning lab in adventurous faith, spiritual growth, and flourishing. In other words, we are in this together as co-learners, co-followers of Jesus’ way of flourishing in this world. I’m heartbroken that Bob Stolze, our own Uncle Scrooge, won’t be a learning lab partner. Then again, I learned a great deal from him in this short time, and for that, I’ll forever be thankful.

Sincerely,  
*Soon-to-be Doctor Pastor-ita Ruth*



Have you noticed the aloe plants on the communion table? And did you wonder why?

As the Worship Commission discussed some of the salvation stories of Lent, we chose to highlight the salvation. One could also connect salve with salvage or repair.

This coming week, the Deacons and Pastor Ruth will extract some aloe from these plant friends. The aloe will be placed in bowls and offered during worship on Sunday, March 8. This aloe anointing moment will be our own prayer for salvage and repair in our lives and world, whether that be the result of conflict, illness, or pain of any kind. May it connect us more deeply to the God of our salvation, made known in Jesus.

### Personal note from Pastor Ruth

Recently Jesse and I joined a family member who is suffering from a sudden, incurable illness. I brought my anointing jar with me, and with his permission, we joined in a time of anointing. He and his partner held each other as I traced our beloved's forehead with oil. We did it mostly in silence and with our tears becoming one with the oil. We prayed that God would salvage and repair what could be repaired. And we gave thanks for the power of love that we know is sustaining us in sickness and in health. If you want to read about another, even more personal story of anointing, type this into your url: <https://anabaptistworld.org/beautiful-not-barren/>



### A FEW SAVE THE DATES!

**March 7**-Leadership retreat  
(time/place tbd)

**Week of March 8-14**-Family Promise  
Hosting

**Sunday, March 29**-Palm Sunday

**Thursday, April 2**-Maundy Thursday evening gathering

**Sunday, April 5**-Easter

**Monday, April 27, 6-8 pm**-Justice Together Nehemiah  
Assembly



Remember when your Mama told you to eat your vegetables? One of the best nutrient-packed, fiber-filled veggie is broccoli. It contains a sulfur compound, sulforaphane. It boosts immunity to inhibit cancer cell growth, neutralizes harmful toxins, decreases inflammation, helps maintain glucose balance, supports

gut health, decreases cholesterol, and helps maintain youthful skin. Enjoy it raw or lightly steamed or as broccoli sprouts. Rotate other cruciferous veggies into your diet also for similar benefits.



### Launch of the Radical Hospitality Strategic Priority

Vision Council is pleased to share that we are commissioning our next strategic priority: **Radical**

**Hospitality.** This focus grows from our calling to embody Christ's welcome in deeper, more intentional ways—within our congregation, in our neighborhood, and throughout all the spaces where we gather and serve. In the coming months, the Vision Council will form a dedicated work group to guide this effort. This group will be tasked with:

- **Defining what Radical Hospitality means for Hope Mennonite Church**, grounded in our values and context.
- **Identifying opportunities and practices** that can help bring this vision to life in our worship, ministries, relationships, and community presence.
- **Recommending ways to integrate Radical Hospitality into the ongoing culture of our church**, so it becomes a natural expression of who we are and how we live out our faith.

We look forward to engaging with the congregation as this priority takes shape. Please watch for updates and invitations to share your ideas and participate in the journey. Together, we hope to cultivate a spirit of welcome that reflects God's love in tangible and transformative ways.



Christmas often comes with gift exchanges, both the expected and unexpected varieties. One such unexpected gift began its journey to Hope Mennonite by mail in late December, arriving in our church mailbox in early 2026. It was a check for just over \$20,000 from Alden Warkentin's family, in honor of Alden's long and loving membership at Hope. This was an unrestricted gift, which means it is our privilege and responsibility to allocate it for a project of our collective choosing.

Hope's Vision Council will begin stewarding this gift during an upcoming leadership retreat (March 7). They will issue the Warkentin family an official thank-you from

Hope and do some storytelling about Alden (November 30, 1930- September 4, 2025) and Barbara (August 19, 1932 – June 10, 2013). Let us all pray that this gift will further shine a light on God's love that Alden and Barbara experienced and participated in at Hope.

~Michelle Jantz and Ruth Harder, for Hope Vision Council



## New books added to the library

### Children's books:

- A Church for All by Gayle Pitman
- Mended: a story of hope (MDS)

by Hillary Daecher

- People, Pride and Promise: the story of the Dockum Sit-In by Prisca Barnes

### Other books:

- Finding Ourselves in God's story by Michele Hershberger
- First Nations Version: Psalms and Proverbs
- Get a Hold of Your Self by Troy Watson
- God Looks Like Jesus by Gregory Boyd
- Hope Beyond Our Sorrows by April Yamasaki
- Making It Plain by Drew Hart
- Migrant God by Isaac Villegas
- Sacred Parenthood by Aizaiah Yong
- Strange Worship by Drew Strait
- Unhappy Holidays by Sheraton-Leigh Gerber



## Aloha Hope Mennonite Church!

Thank you for prayers and support for my trip to Maui with Mennonite Disaster Service from Sunday January 11

returning January 25, 2026. While in Maui, we met people with purpose, visited historic places, and built camaraderie among friends. Including kitchen cooks, administrative support, crew leaders, and volunteers we had 25 over the course of two weeks.

The people we served are hard working, many working long hours daily to pay for the mortgage on a house that no longer exists. The Yadao family is a husband and wife with a set of parents and an adult child living with them. They both work for Maui Coffee and generously brought us a large bag of coffee from there. It was good coffee and our group enjoyed it! This family stopped by their future home, monitoring progress and eagerly anticipating the hope that permanent housing offers. Their spirits are resilient as they share smiles and

laughter. This home received blocking, wind straps, and an asphalt shingled roof. Hopefully, the roof holds as I helped for two days of shingling.

The Asuncion family invited us to a house blessing on the mountainside in Lahaina one breezy Wednesday evening. A Methodist church they attended had burned in the August 8, 2023 wildfire. This family was a member of the local Latinx community, many of whom do not own their homes. It was a humbling honor and privilege to participate in this prayerful anticipation of a new home. This family is a pillar of their local community.

Another family of one, a single woman with the last name of Ho'opai will live, breathe, and heal. This home site views the ocean from the back porch and a mountain top from the front door. Her husband and only child, a daughter, have passed. So, this would have normally been a two bedroom home. However, the request was to make one larger bedroom so as not to be reminded of others who could still be there. Glad to know MDS accommodated. The concrete slab had been poured. The second week our crew led by Logan Muff of Minnesota began framing. Logan was a first time crew leader with MDS at age 20 and did a super job of team building, asking questions as needed, and accepting input from his volunteers. We also had Dennis from Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, Karl, Aiden, and Dallas from Rosedale Bible College where they learn construction trades.

In week one, I spent time with Galen Walter of Eden Mennonite Church in Moundridge building trusses. Our crew included Mike Schmidt of Faith Mennonite in Newton, KS, Mark Stucky, Shalom in Newton, Wayne Schrag of Eden. We were also joined by Tim Swartley of Newton, KS, Roland of Manitoba. The truss building was a highlight. I'd never done this work. It was a bid deal because there is only one truss company on the island of Maui. They were backed up to a 20 week delivery. Normal would be 3 to 4 weeks. So, Galen Waltner says, that won't work! We have people coming! So, Galen worked with a local engineer to design trusses for building onsite. This caught community attention as well as a US house representative for Hawaii, Jill Tokuda. Jill came by our MDS sight to observe truss making and Larry Loganbill handed her a nailer to help nail a gusset plate.

Lahaina will never be the same. However, the community is holding strong. The local YMCA will host a new salt water float therapy to help calm the nervous system so healing therapeutic work can occur. Many of us can only begin to imagine the trauma from losing

everything in a devastating fire including our home with everything inside and our neighbors' homes, and so many within our community. A reported 102 people died. There is hope in the return of birds to the area. Something I would not have considered.

Anyone considering helping with Mennonite Disaster service, I would encourage it. Please visit their website at [MDS.org](http://MDS.org). In addition to disaster sites, a cabinet shop in Goessel, KS hosts many volunteers a week Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday. Cleo Koop manages the cabinet shop. Cleo is Hope's own Jeremy Koop's dad.

We did get to play while there. I went a day early to swim in the ocean and take a surfing lesson. I didn't get good, but made a splash in the ocean. We snorkeled some evenings, went whale watching on a catamaran and saw many whales, went to the local aquarium, and hiked The Needle of the Lao Valley State Monument. During the week, hard work ensued, followed by God's healing and welcomed sleep. It was a good trip and I'm glad to be home.

*Mahalo! (Thank you) Jason Jantz*

organizations that have come together to launch Sedgwick County's first-of-its-kind multifaith justice organization. Hope Mennonite has joined this important initiative to seek justice in our community.

A vital component of doing Justice Together is gathering each year for the **Nehemiah Assembly**. This year, we will gather on **Monday, April 27, at the Wichita State University Eugene Hughes Metropolitan Complex** to use the power of a large group of people to ask our elected leaders to implement well-researched solutions to identified justice issues. When our collective voices are gathered into one loud voice, we become too big to be ignored, and change will happen!

***We hope everyone at Hope will join us for the most important night for justice in Sedgwick County! Your presence will make a difference!!***

*If you have any questions, please get in touch with a member of Hope Mennonite's Justice Together coordinating team: Brenda Glanzer Lilliston, Wendy Wiens, or Grace Parker Sutter.*



## 2026 Nehemiah Assembly

Mon. April 27<sup>th</sup> // 6pm - 8p

Wichita State University Eugene Hughes Metropolitan  
5015 E. 29<sup>th</sup> St, Wichita



The 2026 Nehemiah Assembly will unite over 1,500 people from across Sedgwick County to call on local official community-driven solutions to gun violence, affordable homelessness. Answering God's call to do justice, our co

### Witness and Outreach Spotlight

**Justice Together** is a network of more than 35 faith



### Medical mission thoughts--

It is always a challenge to write about an experience that involves sights, sounds, smells, interactions, conversations, another culture, needs, joys, ups, downs, hard work, long hours, feelings of fulfillment, emotional and spiritual renewal - just to name a few. 😊

Medical Ministry International (MMI.org) is an international organization that has medical projects in about 20 different countries around the world.

The Dominican Republic has its own MMI full time national team and hosts about 10-12 groups a year. They also carry out several medical projects on their own during the year. Our project has both a surgical component and medical clinic component.

Why, you ask, would you continue to go on these medical mission trips each year? Well, it is not because of the project fees and flight expenses that we incur. It is not because of the long hours of work (although rewarding). It is not because of the 85-degree weather with no air conditioning and dorm style sleeping using mosquito nets. It is not because of the cold showers. It is not about the numbers (although those are important for project planning, accountability, and recruiting donors to the larger organization). We have those numbers if you would like to see them.

But why- you ask again. In a quick response, it is because of the call to be the face of Jesus as we use our

gifts alongside the Dominican staff and minister to the physical, emotional, and spiritual needs of those who come to us for care. It is also a ministry to volunteers that come as it is a time of emotional and spiritual “re-set”. To work with a group of volunteers that WANT to be there, to all have a common goal- being the face of Jesus to others. It is renewing relationships with returning volunteers and with Dominican staff that we work with year after year. It is the relationships built with patients. It is seeing God at work and looking for and expecting miracles and the unexpected.

If you are interested in hearing more details about our time, or interested in participating in a project like this, come find us. ~ Lowell and Dianne Birkey



## Worship Accessibility

**Worship.** What associations do you have with the word worship? **Same with Accessibility**—where does your mind or feelings go when you see/hear/reflect on that word? And now, what about these words side by side? **Worship accessibility or Accessible worship?**

We at Hope, together with support from Anabaptist Disabilities Network (ADN), will be spending the months and years ahead being curious about worship accessibility. We are among 18 churches across the country selected to be an ADN learning cohort. This is a grant-funded initiative that will include a \$10,000 gift to Hope over a five-year period.

The big question that ADN and Hope will explore is this: **What does accessible worship look like for all ages and abilities, and how will we know when we have arrived there?** Notice that this question is not focused on sanctuary or building accessibility. Yes, sanctuary accessibility is important and so is experiential accessibility. We all have needs and preferences that go way behind the physical and that are ingrained deep within us whether through nature or nature.

Think about the hymn we sang recently in worship, Voices Together #414: *Jesus Shall Reign*. “Let every creature...bring each its **peculiar praise** to sing.” Or think about the hymn Pastor Ruth referenced recently #513, *When Hands Reach Out*. Stanza 1) When hands reach out and fingers trace the beauty of a loved one’s face, we thank you, God, that love relies on gifts of grace not seen with eyes; Stanza 2) When fingers spell and signs express our prayer and praise and thankfulness, we thank you, God, that hands can sing; you bless the silent songs we bring; Stanza 3) When broken bodies will not mend, we thank you, God, for Christ our friend. In him,

our healing can begin: he welcomes all the wounded in; 4) And when the ways we learn and grow are not the ways that others know, we thank you, God, that we have learned your love's a gift, and never earned; Stanza 5) Your Spirit gives us differing ways to serve you well and offer praise. When all are joined as one, we'll be your able, strong community.

Talk about worship accessibility!

Our first step in being collectively curious about worship accessibility is this: Please start thinking about the following questions.

- When you think of worship, what engages you most deeply – words, music, visuals, movement, silence, other? In other words, how would you describe your “peculiar praise?”
- Imagine a child, what do you hope each might experience in worship at Hope? What about a teenage? Adult? Elder? What about for yourself?
- What might be some barriers that keep others from fully engaging in worship (any age)?
- What are some barriers that keep you from fully engaging in worship, with your peculiar praise?
- What hopes or concerns come up when you think about making worship more multi-sensory, accessible and intergenerational?
- What traditions or values are most important for us to carry forward even as we try various, perhaps new, approaches?

In the coming weeks, we will issue an electronic/paper survey asking everyone to write or type out your responses to these questions. This information will be gathered and shared with ADN for their ongoing work and learning in the wider church. In addition, we hope this will be beneficial for our ongoing learning at Hope. Stay tuned for other ways we will gather and share learnings on this topic of worship accessibility. We welcome everyone's participation.

~Submitted by Natalie Regehr, ADN/Hope project manager and Pastor Ruth



## March Reminders...



### Worship

#### *March 1*

Worship L-Mike V.

Scripture-Chris B.

Pianist-Laurie

Song L.-Steve P.

Prep-Russ G.

Tech-Michelle

Host-Brenda

#### *March 8*

Worship L-Kendal

Scripture-Jake

Pianist-Vicki

Song L-Trae

Prep-Ruthie

Tech-Mike V.

Host-Lee S

#### *March 15*

Worship L-Connie

Scripture-Steve P.

Pianist-Amy

Song L-Galen

Prep-Joanna

Tech-Michelle

Host-Warkentine's

#### *March 22*

Worship L-Connie

Scripture-Jerold

Pianist-Brad

Song L-Lowell

Prep-Connie

Tech-Grant

Host-Barb

#### *March 29*

Worship L-Kendal

Scripture-Jared

Pianist-Ruthie

Song L-Adam

Prep-Russ G.

Tech-Galen

Host-Renetta

### Front Door Greeters

March 1-Heidi; Natalie H.

March 8-Jared & Natalie R.

March 15-Donovan & Laurie

March 22-Clinton & Katie

March 29-TBD

### Sanctuary Greeters

March 1-Jim & Barb

March 8-Jerold & Donna H.

March 15-Lee & Marvin

March 22-Joanna; Carol P.

March 29-Mike & Val

### Nursery

March 1-Taylor & Kevin

March 8-Clinton & Katie

March 15-Tyler & Shelby

March 22-Jared & Natalie R.

March 29-TBD

### Coffee

March 1-Marcus & Cynthia

March 8-Chris B.

March 15-Scott & Connie

March 22-Tiffany

March 29-Cindy

HAPPY  
March