

HOPE HEADLINES



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Pastor as journalist

Once I realized that I would likely never be recruited by the Harlem Globetrotters, I dreamt of becoming a photojournalist, preferably with National Geographic. So far, this dream hasn't come true. Same with the Globetrotters. And that is ok, because I love this role as pastor.

My love for documenting life with photos and storytelling began early. I still remember the excitement I felt in middle school when we were assigned to create and "publish" a pretend magazine and book. This project of combining words and images, poetry and statistics, humor, and more serious exploration into a variety of topics felt good and natural.

In college, I took several photography classes, which meant I spent half my time learning how to develop film in a dark room. I spent the other half watching films—the basketball kind—with my teammates. I also joined the college newspaper staff, managing the sports section.

Then, my first full-time paid job at a church in Chicago was Communications Coordinator. That was the first foray into congregational journalism, and I've been hooked ever since.

This led me to start a weekly blog at Rainbow Mennonite called Over and Around the Rainbow. In many ways, it became my photojournalism outlet, as I reflected to the congregation what I was hearing and seeing day after day. At times, I even called it my collection of love letters to the congregation over a 12-year period.

This concept of pastoral journalism continued to take shape after reading an article titled "Hope and Ethnography," by Dori Grinenko Baker. This, mind you, was long before I had any inkling that I might be called one day to a church named Hope Mennonite. In this article, Baker asks church leaders to think about how we might best pay attention to hope—emancipatory hope in action. My ah-ha moment was when she said that listening deeply, while artistically documenting stories within congregational life was one way of paying attention to hope.

She calls this pastoral ethnography. Ethnographers, she said, are trained to immerse themselves in contexts long enough to hear and feel the rhythms of a particular place and people. Mature ethnographers will listen deeply

and pay close attention, not simply as unbiased, detached observers, but from the perspective of love, care, and empathy.

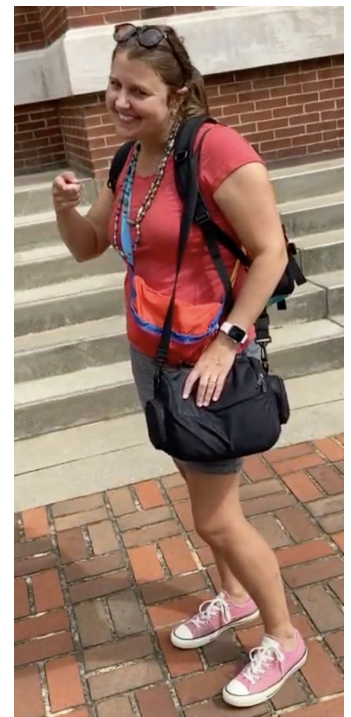
"Ethnography," writes Baker, with its detailed snapshots of real human communities, suggests a way forward for pastors...Ethnographers take close-up looks at different pockets of church life, from worship, to education, to car washes, and bake sales...They look closely at the art hanging on the walls and ask question upon question of members at all levels of leadership." She goes on to say this, which might go well on top of any job description for pastors: "Paying attention is a spiritual discipline that not only centers one's life but opens the way to entirely unanticipated dimensions of experience." Finally, Baker says that developing a pastoral ethnographic disposition can help pastors apply a "wizened optimism" to particular zones of influence.

I often tell people that I am more optimistic, more loving toward myself and surroundings, when I have a camera and notebook in hand. That's in large part because I'm searching for emancipatory hope made manifest.

I also try not to be obnoxious with camera/notebook in hand. I work hard to ask permission before I begin documenting. If I cross that line, please put this pastor back in line!

In closing, I'll say this: Pastors often wear many hats; one of those hats, for me, is the hat of pastoral journalism or ethnography. Granted, I have not heard any fellow pastor or seminary leader talk about this particular "hat." We might be treading some new or underdeveloped ground, in other words. At the end of day, I hope you will join me in prayer that I will keep developing a pastoral disposition of "wizened optimism."

-Pastor Ruth





Care and Nurture News

Care and Nurture has several events coming up for your calendar and enthusiastic participation!

1. Wednesday, **October 14**, 6:00pm

The Annual Chili Cook-Off has been expanded to The Best Fall Soup Competition. Let your imagination run wild or prepare your favorite time-tested recipe to share, whether that is chili, potato soup, hearty vegetable soup or anything else to warm the body and soul. Prizes will be awarded for various categories. Peppernuts baking will follow. Please sign up.

2. **October 24 and 25** is the annual Church Retreat to Camp Mennoscah. The overnight option has returned with the completion of the Retreat Center. There are paper registration forms on the table between the mailboxes as well as an online option. Please register and turn in payment.

3. Wednesday, **November 11**, 6:00 pm

Pizza Night with peppernut baking. Many hands are needed to also prep the fellowship hall and sanctuary, and other food prep in anticipation of the Craft Bazaar the following Saturday, November 14.



The 2026-2027 Justice Together (JT) cycle has begun. Thank you for the 25+ people who attended the recent Listening Session and for those who signed up to be network members. Our Team Leaders are pictured here: Ethan Henry, JT staff member, Ruth Harder, Heather Voran, Doug Voran, Grace Parker Sutter, Pam Carter and Wendy Wiens who is our rep to JT Together Board.



Special shout out to Brenda Glanzer Lilliston for her years of dedication as a JT Team Leader! Thank you for entrusting the "baton" to this next group of faithful team leaders at Hope.



Small Groups at Hope Mennonite

From Pastor Ruth

I'm going out on a limb (thinking about all things trees these days) here. I've been told by a variety of people that small group ministry leadership is under the scope of Pastor. Not sure how best to do this; I certainly don't want anyone or any small group to feel like you are under my microscope! Still, I invite conversation in the coming weeks.

Here's some of what I am noticing and wondering about.

1. History: A small group task force met in 2012 and created an in-depth proposal regarding small groups and Hope's mission. Copies of this proposal and subsequent reports are available upon request. Or ask Brad Anderson, Lori Miller, or Kendal Warkentine who served on this 2012 task force! I appreciate their conclusion: "We believe small group ministries will strengthen our lives as disciples by 1) trusting in the Holy Spirit to form and sustain our groups; 2) practicing hospitality; and 3) nurturing friendship."

2. Present day: The number of small groups presently existing at Hope is hard to determine. That's because men's breakfast could be considered a small group, Women's Bible Study, and the formation of small groups within those small groups! All of these groups are important to our formation as Jesus' disciples. In addition to these aforementioned groups, there are five additional small groups at Hope.

3. Over the next two weeks: This is the time of year for people to indicate their interest in joining one of these five existing small groups, changing small groups for the sake of getting to know different folks, or starting a new small group. This is also a good time for all existing groups to do some self-reflection regarding purpose, frequency of meetings, and group dynamics.

As we reflect together and individually, I welcome you to come to me with concerns or celebrations regarding small group formation. Please contact me within the next two weeks, whether you want to discuss an existing group or indicate interest in joining and or starting one. Do that in the way most comfortable—email, phone, in person, fax, letter, airplane, drone delivery, pigeon carrier, sidewalk chalk, via an agent, typewriter, etc. 😊 And if you don't have anything to share, that's perfectly fine, too.



From the Givens...our mission partners in Calais

"There are many people who say they're Christians who really aren't," the young man says to me from the passenger seat of the van I'm driving. He laughs and flicks the ash from his cigarette out the window. "A friend once told me, 'It's better to be an atheist who does good things than a Christian who does bad things.'"

My family returned to Calais after a summer in the USA visiting churches and spending time with family, and I'm now spending my morning with this man. As we're no longer working at the Maria Skobtsova House and my seminary studies don't start until January, I'm working on ways to create new connections with the organizations in Calais that serve the migrant community.

I sent a message to the coordinator of the organization Calais Food Collective (CFC) and asked if they could use any help in the coming days. They told me they have a small team right now, so they could really use my help as a driver visiting the informal living sites in Calais and taking orders. CFC collects orders for food from the different camps and delivers it in the afternoon.

This morning I'm driving around to various sites with one of the coordinators, Phillippe*. At each site we stop, park, and walk into the woods, looking for signs that people are living there. It's a beautiful day, with clear skies (a rarity in Calais), and spending time outside is glorious. We clamber over rocks, trash, and an informal bridge over a stream, made from a shopping cart and a wooden pallet.

One thing that strikes me as we visit the various camps is the number of women and children. Usually, women and children are a rarity among the migrant community. I point this out to Phillippe, and he says, "There are a lot of families right now."

At one camp, Phillippe is speaking with a group of adults sitting around a fire under a tarp they've put up for shade. A little girl approaches me from behind and tugs my sleeve. "Do you have any cakes?" she asks, in perfect English. I ask Phillippe, and he says that he's not sure, but we'll look when we get back to the warehouse.

I notice a little boy standing next to me. I shake his hand and ask his name before asking how old he is. He's nine and runs off to play with his friends. A few moments later I hear someone calling my name. "Joseph," the little boy calls as he runs back toward me, "Do you have any chips?" "Yes, we do!" Phillippe replies, "We'll bring them when we come back this afternoon." This morning moves me.

It's been two months since I've been in Calais, and the sight of these children and their mothers pokes my heart, bringing back a flood of grief that I remember so well from my four years at MSH.

I'm a Christian, too. Phillippe knows. We talk about faith as we drive between the camps. "Any criticism you can make of the horrific wrongs Christians have committed is probably valid," I tell him, "Part of what I want to do is to show a different side of the faith I call my own." I remember a passage from the book of James, where James tells us, "Faith without works is dead." Phillippe told me, "It's better to be an atheist who does good things than a Christian who does bad things."

James and Phillippe agree. What good is our faith if we don't demonstrate the love of God to those around us? What good is a faith that doesn't seek the Kingdom? James himself brings the answer. Such a faith is dead. May we, through our faith, choose to love not just in word but in action. May our love bring food to the hungry.

If we claim to follow Jesus, can we walk in his footsteps, even when it leads us to inconvenience?

This is something I've been considering a lot as we look to the future of our work in Calais. Would you join me in considering how you can walk in the footsteps of Jesus to love those on the margins?

~~Joseph Givens



Happy Foods

What you eat isn't just fuel for your body. Food choices can directly change your brain chemistry. Flavonoids, a class of antioxidants and anti-inflammatories, found in colorful fruits and veggies, influence release of neurotransmitters like dopamine, one of our "feel good" chemical messengers. The foods highest in flavonoids are berries, citrus, apples, dark grapes, broccoli, and dark leafy greens. Strive for a daily target of 3 servings of flavonoid-rich foods, spread throughout the day. Diversity matters, so eat a range of colorful foods to give your brain multiple types of support. The more variety of colorful plant foods you eat, the more pathways in your brain are supported, improving mood, strengthening focus and stabilizing emotions. These compounds also affect your gut to calm inflammation and improve micro-biome. You can read more about this connection in books like Your Gut Is Your Second Brain by Orlando Wright.

~~Annette Chlumsky

Upcoming Worship Gatherings

October 4	World Communion Sunday
November 1	Remembrance Sunday
November 29	First Sunday of Advent
December 20	Children's Christmas worship during Sunday School
December 21	6:30 pm Longest Night service
December 24	Christmas Eve service



SPECIAL INVITATION

Mennonite Church of the Servant, Wichita, would like to invite Hope members to join them in their fall book study by Zoom. We will be discussing Sara Wenger Shenk's book, *Tongue-Tied: Learning the Lost Art of Talking About Faith* on the four Wednesday evenings in October at 7 pm.

Tongue-Tied explores an important problem facing contemporary Christians: many Christians have become uncomfortable or unable to talk openly and naturally about their faith. Shenk asks why Christians can easily discuss politics, sports, and everyday life but often become "tongue-tied" when the subject turns to God. *Tongue-Tied* calls Christians to recover the language of faith without turning to judgmental or formulaic evangelism. Shenk believes that Christians need to speak about God honestly, humbly, and courageously--and that their words should be supported by lives characterized by love, justice, reconciliation, and love.

You can order Shenk's book at Herald Press (heraldpress.com), Amazon (amazon.com) or through your local bookstore. If interested, please email the church and we will send you the Zoom link: mcswichita@gmail.com

CROP Walk coming soon!



Ellie is ready for Crop Walk on Sunday, October 4. Are you? There is still time to join the fun. Join the Hope team: <https://events.crophungerwalk.org/chw/team/hope-mennonite-church> Sign up on the bulletin board for the pre-walk lunch at Sedgwick County Park prior to the walk.



October Reminders...

Worship Leadership

Worship Leader
October 4-Brad
October 11-Jim V.
October 18-Brad
October 25-Church Retreat

Scripture	Pianist
October 4-TBD	Oct 4-Amy
October 11-TBD	Oct 11-Brad
October 18-TBD	Oct 18-Laurie
October 25-Church Retreat	Oct 25-Vicki retreat
Song Leader	Worship Prep
October 4-Magdalena	Oct 4-Connie
October 11-Galen	Oct 11-Russ G.
October 18-Trae	Oct 18-Ruthie
October 25-Retreat	Oct 25-Retreat
Tech	Sound Tech
October 4-Scott	Oct 4-Jesse
October 11-Mike V.	Oct 11-Rod
October 18-Grant	Oct 18-Leon
October 25-Retreat	Oct 25-Retreat
Host	Greeters
October 4-Brenda L.	Oct 4-Chris & Amy
October 11-Lee	Oct 11-Jim & Barb
October 18-Warkentines	Oct 18-Justin & Tiffany
October 25-Retreat	Oct 25-Retreat
Sanctuary Greeters	Nursery
October 4-Greg & Leah	Oct 4- Jared & Natalie
October 11- Steve H; Russ G	Oct 11-Shelby & Tyler
October 18- Donovan & Laurie	Oct 18-Clinton & Katie
October 25-Retreat	Oct 25-Retreat
Coffee	Memorial Garden
October 4-Kim & Mike	Oct 1-10-Ruthie
October 11-Jerold	Oct 11-17-Joanna
October 18-Tiffany	
October 25-Retreat	
Mowers	S.S. Superintendant
October 4-Eldon & Clinton	All of October-Margaret
October 11-Scott	
October 18-Randy G.	
October 25-Jerold	