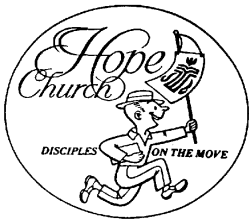


HOPE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
TINTON FALLS, NEW JERSEY



NOTES OF HOPE



A monthly publication to keep us informed.

January 2012

Edited by
Erica Andresen

Our Mission Statement

We believe that God has gathered this congregation and staff at this time and place in order to:

Introduce people to the enduring love of Jesus found in the Gospel of Jesus Christ

Invite them to become part of the family of God

Instruct them in the scriptures, God's word to us

Involve them in the ministry of the church, according to their gifts

Inspire them to go into the world, making disciples of others

Reading the Psalms

The core of my personal spiritual practice for over 30 years has been regular reading/praying through the Psalms. Since I was in seminary, I have read through the entire Book of Psalms at least monthly. (For a while I was trying to do this weekly, but that was a stretch.) Most of the time I used the 30-day, morning and evening, schedule from the Episcopal *Book of Common Prayer*. (There are other patterns available as well.) More recently I have switched to a slightly different Eastern Orthodox pattern. In any case, the purpose is a regular diet of these ancient biblical prayers as a foundational spiritual practice.

The Book of Psalms, also called the Psalter, is the hymnal of the Second Temple in Jerusalem. These prayers were used and probably memorized by Jesus. They arguably stretch back at least to the time of King David, who is supposed to have composed many of them.

The Psalter has been the basis of Christian prayer since the beginnings of the church. Psalters have been found in Christian burial sites going back to around the second century. Early monastics would pray and chant through the entire Psalter regularly, sometimes even daily. Even today, people in religious communities continue the practice of regular, comprehensive Psalter use. In the Reformation, Calvin in particular wanted to reground the worship and prayer of the church in the Psalms. In his church in Geneva Psalms were the only texts sung in worship. (That was true in Presbyterian churches into the 19th century.) The Psalms were retranslated into metrical poems more easily attached to singable hymn tunes. Some of these we still use today.

Unfortunately, the Psalms fell out of favor over the last couple of centuries, at least in Presbyterian churches. When I was growing up the 1955 *Hymnal* had several printed as responsive readings in the back, and only a few given for singing.

Fortunately, this is being corrected. The current *Hymnal* has a whole section of Psalms (of varying degrees of singability). And the *Book of Common Worship*, especially in the Daily Prayer section, gives a lot of attention to the Psalms. (Though why they did not include a complete Psalter is a mystery to me, and a frustration.) If it is up to me, we will be singing Psalms more regularly

and with different kinds of musical settings. Psalms are the bedrock of Christian worship.

In my own practice, I usually end up reading both evening and morning Psalms in the morning, since carving out prayer time in the evening is often a problem. Sometimes I read the evening Psalms right before bed. However, even if I miss a day I make it up. Which means I have read through the Psalms several hundred times. I use the schedule below, plus the ones in the Daily Lectionary, plus a table of daily Psalms.

I find that this has had two important effects. In the first place, it shapes my language of prayer. Phrases and terminology from the Psalms have come to permeate the way I address God. This is part of the purpose of the Psalter: these words are given by God as the way God wants to be spoken to.

Secondly, I continue to be amazed at how frequently I read some words that strike me as completely new, even though I have certainly encountered them numerous times before. Sometimes they just speak to me with particular power and force, addressing whatever I am dealing with, or should be dealing with, at a specific time.

So, more than anything, the Psalms are a means of listening for God's voice in our life. And at the same time, the Psalms shape the character of our own voice and spirituality.

Now, the Psalms are not all easy. Most Christians know Psalm 23 and 100, which my mother helped me memorize when I was a child. And there are many spectacular and affirming Psalms, expressing praise, thanksgiving, and joy. But there are also many Psalms of lament and even dark, bitter rage, like 137 (especially the ending). There are Psalms of despair, like 88. There is the great Psalm of confession, 51. And Psalms appointed for particular times of the day. Some are numbing in their repetitiveness (Psalm 119, the longest). Calvin called the Psalter a compendium of human emotion. All the emotions are covered, even the ones we would rather not admit to. (Some editions of the Psalter edit out the "naughty bits," a practice that I find diminishes and domesticates the Psalms.) The Psalms tell us that God is big enough to accept and even identify with even the most twisted and frustrated parts of us.

The Psalms have carried countless Christians and Jews through untold difficulties and horrors, reminding us that God is always with us. There is no part of us that is separate from God's love and redemption (Romans 8:38-39). There is no part of us that God does not take on and save in Jesus. There are many different versions of the Psalter available. Obviously, every Bible will have one. But there are numerous other translations and paraphrases out there. I don't stick to any particular version myself, though the NRSV is my baseline Bible generally. Use whatever Psalter you like. (Though there are some paraphrases that wander rather far from the original. This is fine as long as they don't water-down the meaning so thoroughly as to contradict it.)

Here are the schedules I use for reading the Psalms regularly and comprehensively. The first table comes from the Orthodox tradition and is quite versatile. I have formatted it to be read in a 30 day cycle, morning and evening. Or you can stretch it out to a 2 month cycle by reading only one portion (called a *stasis*) a day. (Three *stases* make a *kathisma*; that's what the Roman numerals refer to. If you read three of these a day you can do the whole thing in a week. I tried it. It's not easy.)

The second table is selected Psalms for days of the week. You can use both or either. Or come up with your own plan! The point is getting these prayers into your heart.

Paul+

Continued on next pg

	Morning	Evening
1 <i>i</i>	1-3	4-6
2 <i>ii</i>	7, 8	9-11
3	12-14	15, 16
4 <i>iii</i>	18	19-21
5 <i>iv</i>	22-24	25-27
6	28-30	31, 32
7 <i>v</i>	33, 34	35, 36
8 <i>vi</i>	37	38-40
9	41-43	44-46
10 <i>vii</i>	47-49	50, 51
11 <i>viii</i>	52-55	56-58
12	59-61	62-64
13 <i>ix</i>	65-67	68
14 <i>x</i>	69, 70	71, 72
15	73, 74	75-77
16 <i>xi</i>	78	79-81
17 <i>xii</i>	82-85	86-88
18	89	90, 91
19 <i>xiii</i>	92-94	95-97
20 <i>xiv</i>	98-101	102, 103
21	104	105
22 <i>xv</i>	106	107
23 <i>xvi</i>	108, 109	110-112
24	113-115	116-118
25 <i>xvii</i>	119:1-72	119:73-131
26 <i>xviii</i>	119:132-176	120-124
27	125-129	130-134
28 <i>xix</i>	135-137	138-140
29 <i>xx</i>	141-143	144-145
30	146, 147	148-150

	Always	Sunday	Mon-day	Tues-day	Wednes-day	Thurs-day	Friday	Satur-day
General	23, 51, 100							
Morning	103	143, 150,	3, 145	5, 146	38, 147:1-11	63, 147:12-20	90, 148	101, 149
Midday	---	86	17	25	54	55	84	85
Evening	104, 141, 130, 117							
Mid-night	4, 31, 91, 134							

Reach Out, You Will Touch Someone

I have been involved with Holiday Express since my retirement 4 years ago and help out in the warehouse and have the privilege of going to some shows in an 'elf' capacity. The shows are extremely popular with the volunteers so when I sign up, I try to get weekday daytime shows so that those who work can do the evening or weekend shows. Weekday shows are popular with the volunteers as well, so when I try to schedule, keeping my personal schedule in focus, I wind up with a new and different show schedule since shows quickly fill up.

This was the case this year when I volunteered for the Alpha School in Jackson – it was a new show for me. The population of the school is students with special needs who are ambulatory, so after pizza we were expecting a fun show with lots of dancing. My 'elf' duties were to serve pizza and drinks to the high school population and staff. As we pushed our refreshment cart class to class, my eyes caught a glimpse of one of the students. He reminded me so much of Mitchell, a child of a member of our church whose family had long since moved away, but with the fast-paced timing of pizza delivery all I got was a glance. I made a mental note to check out if I could find him when the whole school assembled for the show. When taking empty pizza boxes out to the recycling bin, I turned to see the auditorium doors open, the band in readiness to play, and the students beginning to excitedly enter the room. You could feel their enthusiasm but even more than that, you could feel LOVE from every person assembled in that room.

The fun began, dancing and singing, cheering, presentations of a generous gift donation to Holiday Express, smiles and pure joy were present, and, as I worked my way around, dancer to dancer, I spotted the young man that I had seen earlier. It was Mitchell!!! He was standing and holding his aide's hands and dancing. This young man is dealing with autism, and up until that point, I had never seen him active in a social situation. I went over and said 'hi' and explained the story to his aide and she reintroduced Mitchell to me. He and I had a few dances together, holding hands, using eye contact, and smiling. My heart was soaring with happiness and I made a mental note to tell his Mom this wonderful story. Working my way through the room I noticed all the windows were now open and the thought that popped into mind was 'the LOVE in this room is overflowing right out of the windows to the folks in Jackson'.

Trying to find Mitchell's Mom's contact information was not easy because, as I said, she has long ago moved away but I found an old church directory that had it. I sent an email with a complete description of how wonderful the school was and how happy I was to see Mitchell and how well he was doing. Mom sent me an email in return, which I got her permission to quote. She responded:

"Nancy-

I am sooo glad you looked me up!! Oh this has made my day!!! "Thank you" is not sufficient enough for me to say to you for sending me this message as it truly has touched my heart!!

First let me say Thank you for the personal compliment- he is just a fabulous kiddo and I truly adore him and find such joy in raising him!

Second-You also made my day as Mitchell only started at Alpha in October of this year and although what I believe I was feeling about the program and staff, is exactly what you described!! As a member of my church family I believe your judgment of "intentions of others" and knowing what your gut is saying by what you see and experience- is "right on" to what we want for our Mitchell! So with this- you have reaffirmed that we have made an appropriate selection for him!
THANKS!!

We will be out of town for Christmas but are hoping to visit Hope Church again before the holiday or just after we get back as we miss everyone terribly and have yet to find a new church home!! Thanks again and I did hear from a few people from Alpha (including Mitchell who was all smiles that day)-about how much the Kiddos AND staff TRULY enjoyed the Holiday Express -what an awesome thing you all are doing!!! and....so glad Mitchell showed you his dancing shoes. "

I'm not sure if it was my mental note to contact Mitchell's Mom or if it was a gentle suggestion made by the Spirit of LOVE, but I am so happy I acted on it. Holiday Express brought joy to Mitchell that day and my telling his Mom the story of the day did the same for her.

Nancy Massa

Galatians 5:6, "...the only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love."
Heavenly Father, thank you for the opportunity to touch other's lives with love. Help us to take the time to reach out to others and share the love that you give us. Thank you for illustrating that the more love you give the more you have to give. Please continue to guide us in the way you would have us live our lives, dear Lord. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen

January birthdays

4 John Lisle
6 Ethan Rivera
9 Stan Cain
12 Chris Van Bavel
12 Gianna Lignos
14 Lisa Lignos
14 Kelly Colao
24 John Waldron IV
26 Landonia Leadbeater
26 Carl Miller
29 Bill Heller
30 Dave Harris
30 Emile Cotton
31 Kim Van Pelt