



FEBRUARY 2013

discover... connections  
faith  
purpose  
belonging  
family  
discover...



## Hope Presbyterian Church

1189 Hope Rd. Tinton Falls, NJ 07724

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## Message from the Pastor

### The Christ-Driven Church

#### **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

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*"Maybe we should be evaluating churches by their faithfulness, rather than their success by secular standards"*

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*Many people are hungry not for bread only, but they are hungry for ... love. Many people are not only naked for want of a piece of cloth, but they are naked for human dignity ... Homelessness is not only not having a home made of bricks, but homelessness is being rejected, unwanted, unloved, uncared for. People have forgotten what the human touch is, what it is to smile, for somebody to smile at them, somebody to recognize them, somebody to wish them well.*

- Mother Teresa

It is perhaps the most famous quote from Mother Teresa that we are called to be faithful, not successful. Maybe we should be evaluating churches by their faithfulness, rather than their success by secular standards, which may be reduced to the 3-b's: "butts, bucks, and buildings". What would happen if we evaluated the mission of our churches by looking primarily if not solely at their faithfulness and obedience to Jesus Christ?

In Luke 7:22, Jesus validates his own ministry. "Go and tell John what you have seen and heard: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, the poor have good news brought to them." There are many passages where the qualities of Jesus' ministry are listed. They all have similar things: healing, liberation, justice, inclusion, acceptance, forgiveness, feeding, non-violence, peace, and generosity figure prominently.

In evaluating a church's mission, should we not use criteria like those Jesus used? What would this mean? Invoking Luke 7:22 as an example, it would mean asking the following kinds of questions:

1) Do the blind receive their sight here?

Jesus is not establishing a chain of optometry clinics. Certainly he literally restored the sight of blind people; and such healings do occur in the church even today. However, our understanding of "blindness" can't end there. Jesus did not limit blindness to the literal ocular dysfunction. There are other more common forms of blindness. Jesus recognized this when he castigated some of

his opponents for their "blindness" (Matthew 15:14; 23:16-26; John 9:39-41). He meant a lack of moral and spiritual perception creating violence and injustice. If we cannot see clearly we make a mess. Like driving in a thick fog or wielding an axe while blindfolded. How are we helping people "see" in the sense of their becoming aware of the truth about God, creation, and people?

Specifically, is our educational ministry helping people see better, farther, and from a higher perspective? Are we opening minds to new vistas, new awareness, new connections and relationships? Are we gaining appreciation of what is out there in terms of the breadth of Christian knowledge, practice, and experience? Are we even welcoming links with those of other faiths? Are we learning to see God's saving Presence in all things, the whole creation?

#### 2) Do the lame walk?

Again the literal is only one way to think of this. One may be "lame" in other ways than the orthopedic. We may also include here the inability to move, grow, develop, or interact with others on an equal, confident footing. Even more broadly we could see this as referring us to the powerless, marginalized, constricted people in society. These are specifically the people Jesus tended to associate with.

How, in our ministry, are we giving power to the powerless? How are we enabling people to change and grow? How are we promoting spiritual movement and progress? Do we give people the tools to move beyond fear and crippling negativity? Do we help them out of their emotional paralyses, their addictions, their stifling and destructive relationships?

#### 3) Are lepers cleansed?

We are not off the hook because few of us have ever even seen someone suffering from Hansen's Disease, or similar skin ailments. This reference calls on us to welcome others who are outcast, excluded, or social pariahs. The church needs to make a point of including people with other unacceptable diseases or conditions rendering them cut off from their families or communities.

How well do we minister to unpopular people, like: undocumented immigrants, convicts and other prisoners, the HIV-positive, the poor, minorities, members of "suspect" groups, etc.? How welcoming and inclusive are we towards people not like us?

#### 4) Do the deaf hear?

Learning to listen is an important quality. Beyond the literally auditory, even those of us who can hear might be challenged as listeners.

How well do we relate to the concerns of others? Can we put ourselves in the shoes even of people with whom we disagree or who hate us? Can we understand the fear, pain, and anger of others? Where are we providing forums for sharing, interaction, conversation, and exchange? How are we welcoming and seeking to understand others? Are we listening to the cries of the poor and oppressed? Do we hear the cry of the abused Earth?

#### 5) Are the dead raised?

We know that it is not necessary to physically die in order to experience the power of death. Death's influence pervades our whole existence. It is the source of our fear and of many of the diseases and disorders listed above. It creates the myth of scarcity upon which our political economy is partially based. Empire feeds on our fear of death. In our ministry, do we leave people shackled in the power and fear of death? Or do we give assistance in helping folks work through the stages of grief? Do we practice resurrection by planning for a beautiful future? Do we reject the sour fruits of a culture that fears and flees death: hoarding, killing, stealing, etc.?

More pointedly, do we reject and work against the culture of violence and death? Are we learning to live non-violently (Matthew 5:38-48)?

#### 6) Do we bring good news to the poor?

Here is one we can all take quite literally. Of course, good news must really be good, not just the warmed-over, spiritualized propaganda of the reigning economic orthodoxy. Good news has to do with Jesus Christ... not just what he said, but what he actively did to lift up and liberate people. For

one thing, I am becoming aware of how important feeding figured in Jesus' ministry. How are we feeding hungry people? How are we clothing the naked, giving drink to the thirsty, visiting the sick and imprisoned (Matthew 25:31-46)?

Jesus preached Jubilee (Luke 4:19). Jubilee was a radical resetting of the economy in which all debts were cancelled, the land itself was given a rest, and property was returned to an original just distribution (Leviticus 25). We recognize that poverty is often the product of policies designed to concentrate and entrench economic and political power in the hands of a few. What are we who follow Jesus doing to correct this injustice? How are we providing for people victimized by a system that breeds inequality?

7) Are we going back into the world and telling others what we experience?

Jesus instructs his evaluators to "go and tell John what you have seen and heard." The work of the church in following Jesus is not a secret. Rather, it is to be shared with the whole world (Matthew 5:13-16; 28:18-20). One of the reasons why Presbyterians are so allergic to evangelism might be that we have so little to testify to. How well can our churches answer questions 1 through 6? Can we invite people to our church without embarrassment about how poorly we are following Jesus and how consumed and paralyzed we are with trivialities? Can we introduce our neighbors to blind people who have received their sight, lame people who now walk, cleansed lepers, deaf people who now hear, raised corpses, and poor people who have received the good news?

Paul+

**Sunday, May 19, 7:00 P.M.**

**Hope Church Music Department Presents  
Contemporary Christian Music  
of the Jersey Shore**

- Choral & Instrumental Music
  - Solo & Small Ensemble
- Contemporary Praise Band Music
  - Handbell Choir

Local composers include: Carl Fritsche, Fred Morris, Nancy Scharfe, Charles Clark, Tim Broege, Steven Russell.



We need your help! There are several open positions in the hand bell choir. If you've ever wanted to give handbell ringing a try, now would be a great time! Please contact Carl Fritsche, [cfritsche@hotmail.com](mailto:cfritsche@hotmail.com), or 732-542-1789.

## UPCOMING SEDER

**When:** Thursday, March 28, 2013

**What time:** 6PM

**Where:** downstairs at church, John Calvin Room

*SAVE THE DATE!* We brought back this event last year after a year hiatus, and those who attended experienced a very meaningful, special evening. It's a white tablecloth, candlelight, and wine sort of evening, and children are definitely invited. Everyone brings their own beverage (wine is traditional, but of course grape juice can substitute), and the meal is provided by volunteers who prepare the food ahead of time at home. It is a traditional seder meal consisting of a green salad, green beans, carrots, noodle kugle, chicken and - for those who like it - lamb (and of course matzoh, haroset, horseradish, etc). There will be a sign-up sheet in the narthex on the desk starting on Ash Wednesday, and for a few weeks thereafter, and of course we will give you more info as we get closer to the event. Plan to join us for a very spiritual journey back to the Judeo-Christian roots that Jesus celebrated during His Last Supper!

### EVENING WORSHIP EVENTS FOR THIS YEAR

The Prayer Ministry of the Congregational Life Commission of Session has set the dates for our upcoming taize prayer and healing services.

**Taize** prayer will take place every first Tuesday of every month at 7:30PM in the Sanctuary. These dates are: **2/5, 3/5, 4/2, 5/7, 6/4, 7/2, 8/6, 9/3, 10/1, 11/5, and 12/3.** Taize worship is ecumenical. This style of worship originated in France, and consists of Scripture, singing, silence, and is very contemplative and peaceful in nature. Of course the public is invited, and there will be opportunity for private prayer if desired.

Our **Healing** Prayer Services will take place in months that have 5 Tuesdays, on those 5<sup>th</sup> Tuesdays, at 7PM in the Sanctuary. Historically, our healing prayer services have been well-attended, and of course are also open to the public. The dates for these services are: **4/30, 7/30, 10/29, and 12/31.**

"Draw near to Jesus, and He will draw near to you." Join us as we seek to sit at the feet of the Master - in prayer, praise and adoration.



**Glove, Hat and Scarf Drive** has started, and will run through March. All items are to be new and will be donated to the Salvation Army to be distributed to local needy families next winter. These items are on sale now. Time to get those bargains! Place all items in the large pail in the Narthex. Please see Sue Hume with any questions.

## The Latest From the Deacons

Submitted by Nancy Massa

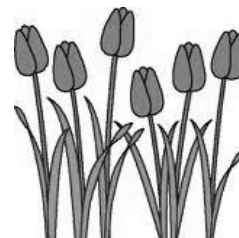
The Deacons wish to thank the wonderful, giving congregation of Hope for providing not one, but **two** \$25. gift cards for either Shop Rite, Walmart or Target, to each of our 10 Hope Helping Families, for both Thanksgiving and Christmas of '12. Some of the families are part of our congregation and some are part of our outreach to the community. With your help, extra food or necessities, or gifts for the holidays, could have been purchased by the recipients. Many thanks to all.

Worship Committee spearheaded a family Advent program on December 8th, One Starry Night, and the Deacons participated as station heads, set-up/take-down helpers, and characters in costume. What a fantastic cooperative project this was, a momentous afternoon to start Advent.

We continue to encourage the congregation to sign up for Coffee Hour for one Sunday. Deacons supply the coffee, milk and juice, but we need your help with the edibles. It does not have to be a fancy spread of homemade foods - store bought is fine. This is such a fine time to have fellowship. There is a sign-up sheet on the metal cabinet behind the copy machine, right next to Care Bear, who collects for help with supplies.

We have been busy, arranging for ways to help Hope Church financially, as well. One of our Deacons arranged for our participation in the give-back program from Mulligan's Restaurant and the Silverball Arcade in Asbury. For each dinner or admission ticket purchased, Hope Presbyterian received a percentage donated to the church. Thank you, Tammy, for doing all the arranging and promoting.

Our current fundraiser, which is our major one for the year, is **Flower Power** and we are encouraging everyone to participate and get friends and family to participate as well. Please see the article in this issue of the newsletter for more info!



### "Flower Power is here"

So simple so easy to not only brighten up your garden but to Help Hope by purchasing **high quality bulbs for spring planting**. If you have email, you probably have already received a link to **Flower Power**. Please forward the **Flower Power** link to everyone on your email list--remember 50% of all sales go to Hope Church. You'll be helping Hope help others and continue our stewardship to our Church and the community.

If you don't have email, see Fred Bauch for ordering information. 732-542-3733

Here is the link, but if you type it in make sure you see the Hope Church logo before you order! It has taken some people to the Flower Power main page instead of the Hope Church page.

[http://www.flowerpowerfundraising.com/campaign?campaign\\_id=13382](http://www.flowerpowerfundraising.com/campaign?campaign_id=13382)

Check the homestead out and see where you can perk up the place with some colorful flowers. You can also let your friends and neighbors know so you can have something nice to look at from your house! Spread the word, get the green thumb charged up and let's get started.

Any questions email Fred Bauch at [fjbklb@verizon.net](mailto:fjbklb@verizon.net) or call him 732-542-3733.

### HUNGER FOR HEALING

On Wednesday evening, February 20<sup>th</sup>, at 7PM downstairs at the church, we will begin a 12-week series study for Lent (and a couple of weeks beyond!). Most of us are familiar with the 12-step program to conquer addictions and progress to wholeness. What you may not be as familiar with is this study, using the 12-step program as its basis, but relating it to spiritual growth. The author, Keith Miller, begins each section of the workbook with one of the Twelve Steps, followed by a quote that touches on the theme, a suggested reading, and then explains how each step relates to spirituality (using a video tape, followed by discussion time). This series is built on solid Biblical principles, and promotes introspection, reflection, and actions that teach healthy interactions with God and others. Join us as we seek to draw closer to the God Who made us and loves us beyond belief, and wants us to attain all He has intended for us.

## Upcoming Events

- The first Saturday of each month is the Men's Breakfast in the John Calvin Room. **Feb 2, 8:00AM**
- Taize/prayer meeting in the Sanctuary **Feb 5, 7:30PM**
- Ash Wednesday service **Feb 13, 7:00PM**
- Hunger for Healing Lenten Study Series starts **Feb 20, 7:00PM**
- Palm Sunday **Mar 24**
- Seder in the John Calvin Room **Mar 28, 6:00PM**
- Resurrection Vigil **Mar 30, 8:00 PM**, starting in the prayer garden
- Easter Sunday **Mar 31**
- Healing Service in the Sanctuary **Apr 30, 7:00PM**
- Spring Music Concert **May 19 7:00PM**

	<b>February</b>
5	Gail McDonald
12	Marilyn Hicken
9	Olivia Emmons
16	Frank Trafford
19	Erica Andresen
27	Paul Rack
27	Bob Patterson
27	Judy McGuire

## Birthdays

	<b>March</b>
5	Carol-Jeanne Shaw
5	Isabella Evans
7	Nikki Auclair
8	Adam Hayek Jr.
10	Elisabeth Buckley
12	Jim Scheidt
12	Lisa Caffyn
19	Phyllis Trask
27	Rebecca Zaccagnino
30	Joe Massa
30	Rob Weiss