



Hope Presbyterian Church
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Message from the Pastor

An Introduction to Christian Faith

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

"Our trust in Jesus Christ extends throughout this mortal life even unto our death. Nothing can ever separate us from God's love in Jesus Christ."

We have elected some new ruling elders in our congregation. As part of their orientation, I offer occasional reflections on the Constitution of the PCUSA. It is not systematic, but my idiosyncratic take on it. I start with the first thesis of the Theological Declaration of Barmen.

It goes like this:

Jesus Christ, as he is attested for us in Holy Scripture, is the one Word of God which we have to hear and which we have to trust and obey in life and in death.

We reject the false doctrine, as though the church could and would have to acknowledge as a source of its proclamation, apart from and besides this one Word of God, still other events and powers, figures and truths, as God's revelation.

Context: the Theological Declaration of Barmen was written mainly by theologian Karl Barth in Germany in 1934. The year before, the government of Germany had just been taken over by Adolf Hitler and the Nazi Party. They did what every government did in a system where the church is "established," that is, where the church is supported by the government: they appointed church leadership. After nearly a year and a half of Nazi rule, as Germany sank into dictatorship, a minority of Protestants called a special Confessional Synod. (A majority remained strongly in favor of Hitler's program.) The document they produced was intended to declare the independence of the church from the State. Barth was soon thereafter deported back to his native Switzerland.

1. In the first place, the Declaration assumes that there is no division between Jesus and Christ. While it was probably not an issue at the Synod, there has been for a couple of centuries within the scholarly community a hypothesis that there is a "historical Jesus" who is somehow distinct from the "Christ of faith." This invented distinction has allowed scholars to theorize about the availability of some version of Jesus that is distinct from the Christ we are given in the Scriptures. In reality, "Jesus" and "Christ" are identical and inseparable, as the Declaration implies. Jesus is always and only the Messiah of the Jews, the Savior and Redeemer promised in the Hebrew Scriptures, the Incarnate Son of God, who rose from the dead. Christ is always and only the Human One, born of Mary, who was executed by the Romans "for blasphemy and sedition" (Brief Statement of Faith, 10.2). Christ is not a layer of misinterpretation imposed by the later church, as some hold; in the Scriptures Jesus clearly understands himself to be the Messiah. To separate them is to do violence to the text and concoct two different and imaginary figures, a project that must serve some end other than witnessing to God's love.

2. The only Jesus Christ we have is the one “attested for us in Holy Scripture.” There is no other or new Jesus Christ that someone has identified through any other means: mystical, theological, scientific, or artistic. There will always be non-Scriptural presentations of Jesus Christ, such as in fiction, on film, and in art. Some have even claimed to have received direct communication from or about Jesus Christ. These representations are valid for disciples only in so far as they reflect, depict, and shed light on the Jesus Christ we know in Scripture. It is the height of arrogance, hubris, presumption, and cynicism for anyone to imagine that they have a truer picture of Jesus than the one we receive in the gospels, which are based on accounts of people who knew him personally. The fact that the gospel portrayals are diverse and even sometimes contradictory, which is to be expected when relying on people’s memories and stories, only verifies their authenticity. The church affirmed four different gospels for a reason: that is what we have and no synthesized, cleaned-up, and systematized version would be true.

3. Jesus Christ is himself the Word of God (John 1:1-18). So while the Scriptures attest to him, he first attests to the Scriptures. The Scriptures get their authority from him. “The one sufficient revelation of God is Jesus Christ, the Word of God incarnate, to whom the Holy Spirit bears unique and authoritative witness through the Holy Scriptures, which are received and obeyed as the word of God written” (Confession of 1967, 9.27). The Scriptures are the word of God because and when they witness to the Word of God, Jesus Christ. They are never accurately understood when they are heard to say something in contradiction to Jesus Christ. This is important for us to remember. There are many passages of Scripture which may be read as justifying violence, genocide, war, or murder. But if the Scriptures appear to be telling us something that is contrary to God’s supreme act of love in sending the Word into the world, that is, if the Scripture seem to lead us to do things Jesus doesn’t do and actually rejects, then it is we who are misreading them. Thus there is also no contradiction between the God of the Old Testament and the God of the New.

4. Our response to the Word of God, Jesus Christ, is to hear, trust, and obey. It is not to hear only, and then do as we please. It is not even to “believe,” if by that we mean merely to have an intellectual opinion about him. It is to demonstrate our whole-hearted trust in him by our obedience to his commandments, as individuals and as a community.

5. Our trust in Jesus Christ extends throughout this mortal life even unto our death. Nothing can ever separate us from God’s love in Jesus Christ.

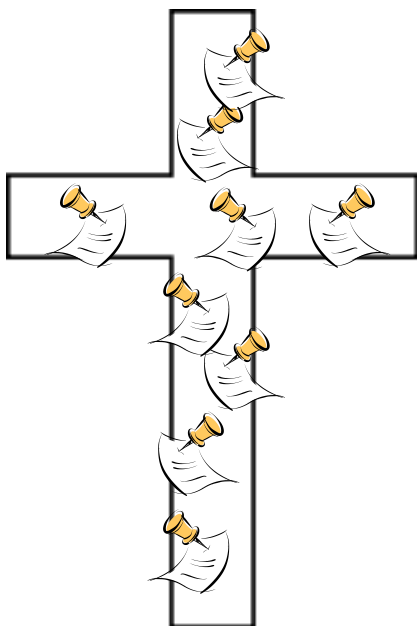
6. Think about what some “other events and powers, figures and truths,” may be. What, aside from or in addition to Jesus Christ, might some acknowledge as “a source of the church’s proclamation”? In other words, what forces and influences, other than Jesus Christ, do we find within the church today that somehow manage to be considered when we are making decisions? These are the other “powers” (Romans 8:38; Ephesians 6:12; Colossians 1:16) that demand our allegiance, loyalty, and obedience. Among these are nation, race, class, culture, political ideology, tradition, personality, economic system, philosophy, and religious institutions. If we are acknowledging any of these, even in a subordinate or marginal way, as factors influencing the character of our trust in and obedience to the Lord Jesus Christ, we are not loving God with our whole being or our neighbors as ourselves.

This first affirmation of the Theological Declaration of Barmen is a gateway to the rest of the Book of Confessions, and to Christian faith generally. If we could remember and apply it daily, both in listening to Jesus Christ when we encounter the Scriptures, and in obeying only him as we live our lives, we would all be better off.

--Paul+

HUNGER FOR HEALING

On Wednesday evenings through Lent at 7PM downstairs at the church, we are holding a study series. 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.



1 Peter 3:18

For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive by the Spirit,

GIVING OUR SINS TO GOD

Lent is a time of reflection upon what Christ did for us. He gave His life for our sins. Since He died for us, we are no longer enslaved by our sins. That does not mean that we shouldn't be giving our sins to Him in the form of repentance or confession. Even though He died for us, we still sin. He knows this.

On **March 17**, we will be giving all of you the opportunity to turn over (confess) your sins in a private, yet public way. Sounds like a contradiction of terms, doesn't it? Well, here is our plan.

The banner that hangs from the cross in the sanctuary states "Once for all forever". You will be given a piece of paper to write one of your sins on and it will be pinned by you onto that banner. The confession will be public in that you are confessing that you, as the rest of us, are aware that you are a sinner. It will be private in that the writing will be facing the banner [cross] so that only you and Christ will know what it says.

We will start with a pray to open our hearts and minds to the knowledge that we don't always do what is right in God's eyes. We will then bring the papers forward and pin them to the banner [cross]. This action will be followed by private and public prayers of repentance.

The prayer team will be available after the service for more private prayers.

This will help us to realize just what a gift Christ's death is to us. He loved us so much that He took our sins upon Himself and died for us.



**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 Scharf, Charles Clark, Tim Broege, Steven Russell.

SEDER

**Thursday, March 28, 2013 6:00PM 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 kugel, 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!



TACKLE



HUNGER



Sunday School Tackles Hunger

Once again Sunday School kids came out in force with pots and pans to tackle hunger as Hope participated in "The Souper Bowl of Caring" on Feb. 3. The congregation put us in the end zone with extra points by donating \$268.04 to fight hunger in our local communities. Monmouth-Ocean Food Bank is the recipient of this year's donation. As we all know, after Superstorm Sandy the need is greater than ever.

The generosity of the congregation in supporting this effort (we collected \$50 more than last year), shows our young collectors what teamwork can do, and how powerful we can be when doing God's work.



Glove, Hat and Scarf Drive

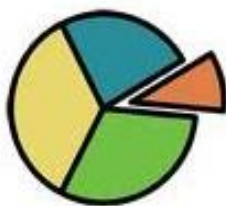
Winter is a brutal time for the poor and homeless men, women and children living in our community. You can provide warmth and comfort by donating hats, gloves, and scarves. All items are to be new and will be donated to the Salvation Army to be distributed to local needy families next winter. These items are on sale now. Time to get those bargains! Place all items in the large pail in the Narthex. Collection continues to the end of March. Please see Sue Hume with any questions.

WHAT IS PER CAPITA (reprinted from pcusa.org)

Per capita is an opportunity for all communicant members of the Presbyterian Church through the [councils] to participate equally, responsibly, and interdependently by sharing the cost of coordination and evaluation of mission; and of performing ecclesiastical, legislative, and judicial functions that identify a Reformed Church, while at the same time strengthening the sense of community among all Presbyterians.

Thus, per capita is a fundamental way in which the nearly 11,000 congregations and councils of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) are connected in covenantal relationship and faithfully participate in the work of the wider church.

With its beginnings over 275 years ago, per capita continues to promote the mission of the triune God and the connectional and covenantal nature of the PC (USA) by helping the church live into its calling as a community of faith, hope, love and witness.

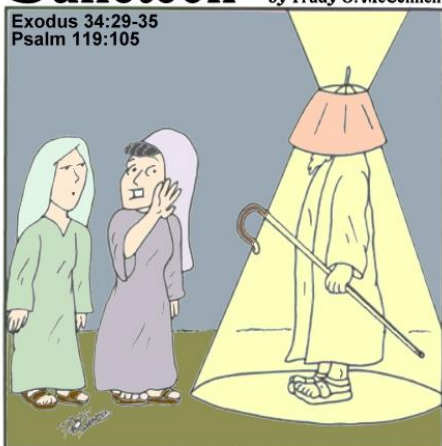


Per capita for 2013 for each member of Hope Presbyterian Church is **\$35.00** per member. This amount is due with or without your help. If you can pay your Per capita it would be a help to the church. Blue Per Capita envelopes are in the pews. Thank you for your support.

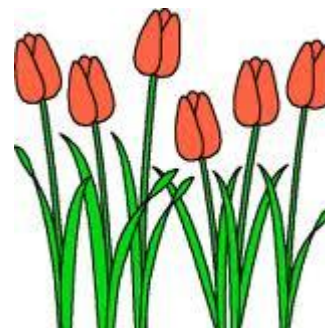
Bulletoon

by Trudy O. McConnell

Exodus 34:29-35
Psalm 119:105



"We finally found a useful way to handle Moses' 'shining face' situation..."



"Flower Power is here"

The deadline for ordering flowers from Flower Power is April 26th so start planning your garden and place that order.

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

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 fjklb@verizon.net or call him 732-542-3733.

If you don't have a garden you may want to try a few pots on the patio, or deck. Use your imagination and let's make this a real successful fundraiser for Hope and our community.

Upcoming Events

- Hunger for Healing Lenten Study Series
Wednesdays, 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**
- Taize/prayer meeting in the Sanctuary **April 2, 7:30PM**
- The first Saturday of each month is the Men's Breakfast in the John Calvin Room. **April 6,8:00AM**
- Healing Service in the Sanctuary **Apr 30, 7:00PM**
- Spring Music Concert **May 19 7:00PM**



March 24



Resurrection Vigil
March 30, 8:00PM



Easter Sunday

March 31

	March
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



	April
2	Jolie Evens
3	Chris Scheidt
3	Barbara Patterson
5	Nancy Massa
6	Dee Miller
7	Margaret Light
8	Joan Trafford
12	Dorothy Lafaire
17	Natashia Brown
19	Eddie Baffige
21	Samantha Evans
26	Melissa Emmons
27	Billy McCabe