



The Monthly Heartbeat

The Hope in Christ Church Newsletter

Volume 23 JANUARY 2016 Issue ONE

Embrace

Preparing for Corporate Worship

By Pastor Scott

The Boy Scouts had an informal motto when I was young: Be Prepared! Those two simple words have stuck with me for countless years and have informed my outdoor adventures. They have ensured that I have had plenty of food and clothes when bad situations settled in and they have kept me at ease, knowing that I am ready for whatever happens. Sure being prepared has cost me time and money (I generally don't mind, it's fun owning outdoor gadgets, like avalanche beacons and water purifiers). But I would rather know I have what I need so I can really enjoy the outdoors to the fullest, than to always be taking the leftovers and worrying.

The same truth applies to preparing for the Corporate Worship Service. Being prepared can yield great dividends by putting our heart in a good place, and by having thought through the Scripture texts beforehand. So, you may be wondering, "How does one prepare for corporate worship?" I have been thinking about that a lot the past few months, realizing that before I was a pastor, I never prepared. I just showed up and took whatever came and stuck in my heart. Looking back, it reminds me a lot of a climbing friend of mine who never had a coat, or water or food and he always suffered and bummed off others in order to make it through the day. His experience was poor and everyone else's was hampered as well. But it doesn't have to be that way.

Since starting to pastor, I have found that the texts selected and the songs sung are mulling around in my head for days and sometimes weeks before they are ever encountered in the public worship service and you know what, I learn so much more from God by being prepared. That is

one of the reasons why we publish the sermon texts each month in the Heartbeat. As a worship team, we believe that by reading through the texts and thinking on them yourself, you will be able to glean so much more from the Sunday service. In addition, we have also asked the church secretary to post the order of worship before she goes home on Friday evenings. This will allow you to reflect on the songs as well.

One of our worship planners' families sing praise songs on the way to church each Sunday morning as a way of engaging the family in preparing their hearts. Another family fasts each Sunday morning so that their heart is open to the spiritual words of life that God will deliver. Others commit to praying together on Sunday mornings as a way to seek the presence of God in community. These are just a few of the ways that one can prepare their heart for worship in the great assembly. I hope you will try some new things to prepare your heart this year. We look forward to seeing how God uses them to shape and fashion you more into the likeness of His Son.





With Thanks and Appreciation for You! From Interfaith

As we celebrate the wonder of the holidays, we also are celebrating a busy year full of gratitude for each of you, our supporters. Whether you are a volunteer with one of our programs, a faithful donor to Interfaith, or someone with a powerful commitment to helping our homeless and struggling neighbors, we thank you. Our work in the community is your work, too --- we are able to do much because of the belief you share with us that every life has value, and that we can make a difference in people's lives.

We have many reasons to be thankful. Here are just a few of them from the last months.

This year, we added the **CAST program**, serving sandwiches and hot drinks, respect and acceptance to hungry people four nights a week in downtown Bellingham. One of our longest volunteers at CAST recently retired, after 11 years of serving sandwiches each month. That's likely over 6600 sandwiches! Thank you (and all CAST volunteers) for your amazing commitment!



Our two **Severe Weather Shelters** opened two nights during Thanksgiving week. When our coffee maker finally gave out, an angel came to our office with funding for not only a new one, but also enough to buy plenty of coffee for our guests on cold nights.

Volunteers delivered **Thanksgiving turkeys** and fixings to families in our 11 housing units.

Member congregations, businesses, individuals and service groups adopted **93 homeless families** for Christmas. These families came from Interfaith housing, the Opportunity Council and the Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Services programs. The families are able to enjoy the season of giving from a community that cares about each of them.

Your generous gifts fuel our programs and make change possible for families in need. Thank you for remembering Interfaith in your holiday giving. And, if you're a member of Thrivent Financial, eligible to direct Choice Dollars, you can direct those to Interfaith Coalition.



Our best wishes to you and your family for a warm, meaningful and hope-filled holiday!

(360) 734-3983 info@interfaith-coalition.org

Deacon's Digest

By Ali Laninga

Happy New Year and blessings to all of you as we enter this New Year. We thank God for His blessings and provisions this past year. As we embark on a new year, we trust that God will continue to be faithful in guiding us at Hope In Christ Church so that we can be a blessing in our community.

The Deacons would like to thank you all for your generosity in providing needed items for the five men at the Light House Mission. Every tag was taken, returned on time and beautifully and carefully wrapped! We can be assured that those receiving these gifts will be very grateful and blessed by your generosity.

In January we will again be having a sock drive for Envision Ministry. Be on the look-out for further information regarding the sock drive.

Giving in October 2015

<u>Date</u>	<u>Oct</u>	<u>Year-to-</u>
Designated Fund Offerings:	\$ 647	\$ 16,173
General Fund Offerings	\$13,794	\$189,553
Rent / Utilities Income	<u>150</u>	<u>24,947</u>
Total Undesignated Income	13,944	214,500
General Fund Expenses	<u>(15,382)</u>	<u>(189,255)</u>
Income Over(Under) Expenses	<u>\$ (1,437)</u>	<u>\$ 25,245</u>
Total 2015 budget, including ministry quotas		\$ 221,645
Year-to-Date Budget for 11 months		\$ 203,175
Total Undesignated Income		<u>214,500</u>
Income Over (Under) Budget		<u>\$ 11,325</u>

Loan Balances:

Classis: \$ 22,500
 CRC: \$ -0- paid off August 2015

Giving in November 2015

<u>Date</u>	<u>Nov</u>	<u>Year-to-</u>
Designated Fund Offerings:	\$ 2,776	\$ 18,949
General Fund Offerings	\$14,675	\$204,228
Rent / Utilities Income	<u>2,142</u>	<u>27,089</u>
Total Undesignated Income	16,817	231,317
General Fund Expenses	<u>(15,959)</u>	<u>(205,214)</u>
Income Over(Under) Expenses	<u>\$ 858</u>	<u>\$ 26,103</u>
Total 2015 budget, including ministry quotas		\$ 221,645
Year-to-Date Budget for 12 months		\$ 221,645
Total Undesignated Income		<u>231,317</u>
Income Over (Under) Budget		<u>\$ 9,672</u>

Loan Balances:

Classis: \$ 22,500
 CRC: \$ -0- paid off August 2015

Dear Partners in the Gospel of Grace, December 21, 2015

From John and Jean VanHemert

To you all, warm greetings. We pray that you will have the best Christmas ever.

How we appreciate you all as we remember you in this special time of the Reason for the Season. Christ was born, stepping down from Heaven's Glory to "no room in the inn." to this sinful world to reach the lonely, the least and lost. What a Savior to rescue us!

Please check out our report and pictures about some of the loneliest and forgotten people on the seven seas. Please remember them and their far distant families

Please pray for my dear wife, who on top of her back's slow recovery, has a week of a stomach virus and can hardly get up. Praise God that He performs His strength through our weakness.

We would love to hear from you. Email or telephone: Jean 206-778-1523; John 561-351-1239.

Sincerely in our Lord, Always,
 Jean and John Van Hemert

The Bear's overcoat:
 A Sunday school teacher asked her class why a bear could not take off its warm overcoat in the summer. Silence. And then a boy said, "Maybe only God knows where the zipper is."

Vitality Pathway Coach, Rev. Don Robinson's Bio:

Don is the Director of Congregational Vitality for the Pacific NW Conference of the Evangelical Congregational Church. Don grew up in La Conner and graduated from Western Washington University with a degree in human services. And he went on to earn a Masters of Divinity degree from North Park Theological Seminary in Chicago. He is an ordained minister of the Evangelical Covenant Church and has served churches in Greeley, Colorado, and Sammamish, Washington. Don and his wife of 38 years, Judy, live on the family farm in La Conner and have three married children and three grandchildren.

Friendship Christmas Program

By Tanya Obbink

"Let's go to BELLINGHAM and see this thing that has happened". This may be the line most remembered from this year's Friendship Christmas Program! Another highlight was hearing the choir sing "Trust and Obey". They sounded great! Each year the students are super excited to present the Christmas story for those who come. This year's program was called "Stories of the Savior." Using a readers script, Bible passage, actors, songs, and a little blend of humor, it presented the gospel message starting with Adam and Eve and humanities fall into sin. It continued on highlighting various people in the Bible, each one pointing to Jesus, until we came to his birth and finally the interaction with



Simeon and Anna at the temple. Our sanctuary was full of people listening to and seeing God's story unfold as told by the Friendship students. I pray

that the hearts of all who attended were blessed because they chose spend the evening hearing God's good news and supporting our Friendship students.



Harvest Tea is A Success

A delightful afternoon was enjoyed at our first Harvest Tea, sponsored by the Hospitality Team, on Saturday, November 21. It was an afternoon set aside just for enjoyment, just for the ladies, and just for fun. Fancy hats, jewels, pearls, gloves, and other dress-up attire was worn by ladies of all ages as we enjoyed each others company. We sipped tea poured from family heirloom tea pots, drank tea and cider from fancy china cups, enjoyed a variety of finger sandwiches, sampled an assortment of delicious cookies, and of course – chocolate. Special attention was also paid to those who were gluten-free.



In order to get to know more about each other, there was a question placed at each setting, and everyone at each table shared their answer to questions such as: what was the worst snowstorm you were ever in and did you ever break a bone in your body, etc. An especially enjoyable time was the laughter and conversations from girls of all ages – we shared memories and stories from childhood, long ago to the present.

It was a wonderful afternoon, and we look forward to the next time we can have a spot of tea together.

Thank you to Ruth Stadt, Denise Doezema, Elaine Snapper, Evelyn Kooistra and Terry Vander Woude for all their hard work putting together the Harvest Tea and for making all the goodies.



Preaching Series:

- 1/3 Healthy Church Series—What is a healthy church?
- 1/10 Centrality of God's Word (2Tim. 3:10-17)
- 1/17 Heartfelt Worship (Psalm 33, 103)
- 1/24 Life Transforming Walk with Jesus (Rom. 12:1-2)
- 1/31 Guest Pastor

Greeters Schedule

Outside Doors

- 1/3 Del and Pat Bosman
- 1/10 Jay and Avis Kaemingk
- 1/17 Mike and Jenn Boer
- 1/24 Lou and Evelyn Kooistra
- 1/31 David and Ida Richards, Jr. Johnson

Nursery Schedule

- 1/3 Avis Kaemingk, Esther VandenBos
- 1/10 Lorraine Brouwer, Ida Richards
- 1/17 Barb Zylstra, Jolene Skovron
- 1/24 Denise Doezema, Tanya Obbink
- 1/31 Jenn Boer, Ruth Stadt

Coffee/Snack Schedule

- 1/3 Joanne Schultz, Jolene Skovron
- 1/10 Karen Smith, Elaine Snapper
- 1/17 Megan Speyer, Christine Speyer
- 1/24 Ruth Stadt, Donna Van Beek
- 1/31 Terry Vander Woude, Tena Vanderpol

Hospitality Team requests that you bring your snacks the week PRIOR to your scheduled Sunday or drop off your snacks prior to your scheduled Sunday morning or bring them that morning by 9am. This will help them organize the cookies prior to the beginning of the service.

Offering Schedule

- 1/3 Kingdom Advancement Fund
- 1/10 Kingdom Advancement Fund
- 1/17 Outreach Fund
- 1/24 Kingdom Advancement Fund
- 1/31 Benevolent Fund

Ushering Schedule

- 1/3 Len Vander Woude, Bud Brouwer
- 1/10 Helen Bowman, Don Knutson
- 1/17 Bud Brouwer, Lou Kooistra
- 1/24 Dale and Deloris Perry
- 1/31 Joe Pruitt, Bud Brouwer

Children & Worship Schedule

- 1/3 Ida Richards and Amber Obbink
- 1/10 Dan Obbink and Kylie Thramer
- 1/17 Bekah Roberts and Megan Speyer
- 1/24 Rosa McAlister and Ali Laninga
- 1/31 Diane Button and Evelyn Kooistra

Sunday School Schedule

- 1/3 Terry VW, Melissa K., Darlys R.
- 1/10 Terry VW, Melissa K., Darlys R.
- 1/17 Jolene Skovron, Melissa K., Darlys R.
- 1/24 Ida Richards, Diane Button, Mike Boer

Prayer Room

- 1/3 Christine Speyer
- 1/10 Lorraine Brouwer
- 1/17 Lanny Speyer
- 1/24 Denise Doezema
- 1/31 Don Vanderpol

If you would like to help in any of the above Sunday duties or to be removed from the list, please contact the church office (360-733-6177).

January 2016

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
					1 	2
3 9:30 Service 11:00 Sunday School 6:30 TAG Service	4 6:30pm GEMS	5	6 10 Women's Study Grp 10am Men's coffee group 7pm Elders 7pm Deacons	7 6:30am Men's Grp 7pm Men's Study Group 7pm Praise Practice	8	9
10 9:30 Service 11am Sunday School 4:30 Pastor Scott's Grp 7pm Laninga	11 7pm Friendship	12	13 10 Women's Study Grp 10am Men's coffee group 7pm Council	14 6:30am Men's Grp 7pm Men's Study Group 7pm Praise Practice	15 5:30 Potluck 7-9pm Vitality Workshop	16 9-noon Vitality Workshop
17 9:30 Service 11am Sunday School and time of prayer	18 6:30pm GEMS	19	20 10am Women's Study Grp 10am Men's coffee group	21 6:30am Men's Grp 7pm Men's Study Group 7pm Praise Team Practice	22	23
24 9:30 Service 11am Sunday School 4:30 Pastor Scott's Grp 7pm Laninga	25 7pm Friendship	26 7pm Women's Study Group	27 10am Women's Study Grp 10am Men's coffee Group	28 6:30am Men's Grp 7pm Men's Study Grp 7pm Praise Practice	29	30
31 9:30 Service 11am Sunday School Noon church potluck						

“Stakeholder” by Herman Laninga

Definition. A person, group or organization that has interest or concern in an organization. Stakeholders can affect or be affected by the organization's actions, objectives and policies.

Each person attending Hope In Christ Church on a regular basis, **member and non-member alike**, are the stakeholders of our church.

The purpose of this article is to inform and persuade! First: To inform you about a church-wide workshop scheduled for Friday evening, January 15 and concluding Saturday morning, Jan. 16. Secondly: To persuade you (all those 12 years and older) to attend this event.

The event is the Vitality Workshop that our Council (Elders & Deacons) shared about during our November 22nd Congregational Meeting. **It is an event that will help our Congregation set goals and direction for our ministry over the next several years and thus you, as a “stakeholder,” will be “affected by the organization’s actions, objectives and policies.”**

But what is this Vitality Program you may ask? Some of you may be skeptical and rightly so. Haven't we participated in a number of “programs” over the last several years designed to help us be culturally relevant and thus attracting new members to explore the Good News we possess.

And yet it is obvious that rather than increasing, our membership continues to decline. It is small comfort that this decline is shared nation-wide by most main-line denominations. It appears that successfully attracting and keeping visitors, **with some precious exceptions**, is an elusive goal at best. **As a result, our Deacons have informed the Council that the size/upkeep of our present campus, with the many buildings we own, may not be sustainable in the long run.**

You will recall that as I was concluding my term as President of Elders/Council almost two years ago, a large group of our membership signed a letter that listed a number of concerns regarding our ministry, both actions/inactions by Council and Pastor Scott, and requested a meeting with the Elders to discuss them. The Elders met with the group and then called a second meeting to which the entire congregation was invited to share with all of you what the issues were by presenting the items, both orally and in written form. In the meantime, Dave Richards had been installed as the new President of Elders/Council and he reported that he called each person who had signed the letter to learn personally what their concerns were so he would have a better understanding of the issues and thus attempt to lead the Council in making changes as necessary.

Immediately, the Council, particularly the Elders who are responsible for worship and ministry direction, began wrestling in prayer asking God for direction. This led to exploring various programs for improving church vitality through worship and outreach. Our denomination (CRCNA) as well as the RCA, a sister denomination, offer programs. Our Council explored those options and found that similar to programs we explored in the past (Willow Creek Church, Saddleback Church), it meant sending a delegation (team) to a workshop and then returning with the goal of “selling” the congregation on the concepts that were learned. I know from various conversations with a wide demographic of members that this was not always well received. In fact, some adamantly opposed these efforts. **Some older members will recall that one of the reasons we experienced a “split” in our church several years back lay in part due to the different visions for worship/outreach held by those who attended off-site workshops and those who did not.**

Another outcome of the Elder's continuing search to find God's direction for our ministry led to the interaction we had with Grace Church. In 2014, Grace Church sent out letters to a number of area churches asking if any were interested in selling their property as their current facility no longer accommodated their growing body. The Elders, via Pastor Scott, responded and met with their Pastor, Dax Swanson. Pastor Dax indicated that sharing our campus, rather than buying it, was also of interest. Pastor Dax was invited to preach and conduct a Q&A. These events unfolded, as you will recall, quite rapidly. At the special Congregational meeting, Elders unanimously promoted the benefits of exploring this offer. A vote was taken and it was overwhelming in favor. As we now know, the leadership of Grace Church had a much different view of what the offer was about than we did. Basically they wanted to commit to merging our congregation with theirs at the outset. Our Council was unable to make that commitment so early in the process and that ended the exploration of this idea.

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I've heard from a number of you that, in hindsight, you feel we acted too hastily on an offer that had left many questions unanswered. **Be that as it may, it still remains true that our church is at a crossroads regarding our viability on this particular campus.** Realizing this, our Elders have continued to seek God's guidance regarding this matter and learned of a new program for congregational renewal that our denomination has approved called "Vitality."

Let's start off by explaining how we learned about it. When Elders Dave Richards, Mark Ruiter and Pastor Scott attended the March Classis meeting (a quarterly meeting of CRC churches from Olympia north to the Canadian border) **they heard a presentation about the Vitality Program that several RCA and CRC churches had either engaged in or were about to (including Anacortes and Oak Harbor CRCs).** This program was developed by the Evangelical Covenant Church of America to address the very concerns we have about falling membership and churches remaining viable. Furthermore, it is a program they are offering to other like-minded denominations. They also learned that the presenter, Pastor Don Robinson, a member of the Mount Vernon Covenant Church, serves as the area workshop leader. The presentation, the fact that it's supported by our denomination and our on-going ministry challenges, led the Elders to agree to engage in this program.

Some of you may remember back in the day of Pastor Bob Koornneef that we shared Christmas services with the Bellingham Covenant and Birchwood Presbyterian churches. Each church took a turn hosting the service followed by a time of fellowship. We learned that Covenant churches had a very similar background to the CRC both in worship/theology and origin. We learned that the key difference between the Evangelical Covenant Denomination and ours was a Swedish heritage versus a Dutch one.

I bring this to your attention simply to allay fears/concerns that might arise from the fact that a Pastor from a different denomination will lead the retreat. Rest-assured, we will be in good hands.

In conclusion let me quote from materials we have received the workshop purpose statement:

The purpose of Veritas [the first step in a potential series of Vitality steps] is to promote healthy missional churches. By healthy, we mean pursuing Christ. By missional we mean pursuing Christ's priorities in the world. Veritas gets the conversation going with a common language. It creates awareness, acceptance and a desire to move forward.

Veritas means, truth. I have attempted to spell out in rather blunt, truthful terms, the situation we find ourselves in. The workshop's accompanying workbook will ask each of us to speak in truth to one another as we together seek God's will/direction for our ministry. Please mark your calendars to attend!

Workshop Schedule:

Friday, January 15: Dinner (5:30 – 6:30) Clean-up (6:30 – 7:00) Session 1 (7:00 – 9:00)

Saturday, Jan. 16: Light Breakfast (8:30) Session 2 (9:00 -12:00)

Questions: Contact the workshop coordinators: Scott Emory, Faye Hop or Herm Laninga
Or, contact your district Elder