

The Monthly Heartbeat

The Hope in Christ Church Newsletter

April 2018 Issue

What Can We Do When Our Devotional Times With God Aren't Working?

By Pastor Scott

All of us can remember times when our hunger for the Word of God was at a high. Every time we opened the Word of God we saw something new and relevant to our life. Our minds were poised to drink it all in and treasure it. We remember times when God seemed so real, that talking to Him was easy, and prayer was like having a daily conversation with a dear friend.

But what about when devotional times are hard, or dry or they seem like work? We often don't talk about these times because we are embarrassed or ashamed of them. "Good Christians don't have a hard time relating to God," or so we think. "The faithful don't struggle in prayer," or so the lie has been told enough that we begin to believe it. But the simple fact of the matter is that all of us go through easy and hard times in every relationship which we have. Marital bliss isn't always blissful. Friendships aren't always smooth sailing and our walk with God isn't always easy going and fruitful.

So, what are we to do when our devotional times with God aren't working? What are we to do when reading the Word doesn't seem to be enlivening our soul? What are we to do when praying seems routine and rote? Here are a few suggestions:

1 Don't believe the lie that you are the one far from God. Satan often discourages God's people with the idea that if you are feeling far from God that it is your fault. You moved away, God didn't. After examining your life for any known sin and finding that

you are walking in faith and repentance, declare aloud that you will not believe these lies of Satan. God promises never to leave or forsake his people.

2 Don't give up, change it up. It is easy to think that if our time with God isn't bearing fruit, then there's no reason to keep trying. This betrays an idol in our life that productivity is more important than consistency. Every relationship goes through changes and as changes occur, we must respond to them in new ways. So, change up your prayer or devotional life. Do you always read the gospels? Then read a psalm. Do you always read the Bible? Then read a biography of a Christian saint. Do you always read biographies? Then read a systematic theology. Do you always read theologies? Then read some Christian fiction. God has a myriad of ways to teach his people and certainly the Bible should be the staple upon which we feed, but there are times when reading something outside the Bible can help to renew and refuel our devotional life. Personally, I have found that reading C.S. Lewis' *Space Trilogy* has given me new insights and awestruck wonder at the magnificence of heaven and salvation and the battle for the human soul. These insights have given me a new hunger to approach the Living Word.

3 If your prayer life is struggling, try a new way of praying. I am not one who journals, but when I feel like my prayers are bouncing off an impenetrable ceiling, I do one of two things. Either I start writing my prayers out in a little journal I keep for just such times (I pity the archaeologist who finds it someday and evaluates the soundness of my mind based on it) or I move from silent prayer in my mind to praying out loud. I turn on music and start crying out to God. I have heard of people who go walking and praying

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when they normally sit and pray. Others, who are normally spontaneous, pray from a list of concerns and vice versa. Shake it up. Make some changes for a while and then return back to the normal routine. As C.S. Lewis once said, “It is in the process of being worshipped that God communicates his presence to men.” Try a new process.

Finally, remember the truth that God is always working to conform our lives to the image of Christ. And since Christ had fellowship with his Father, so do we, even when we aren’t feeling it. The feelings may come and go, but the truth stands across the chasm and gap that our feelings are creating.

Deacons Digest: Tales from a (Once) Reluctant Deacon By Rockelle Ruitter

If I’m being completely honest, I can’t say that I received the letter last year asking if I would consider being a deacon with great joy. There were several reasons for this. They included: *I already feel pretty maxed out schedule-wise, I don’t think I can fit anymore in...I don’t want any more responsibility...I already serve on praise team and with GEMS, isn’t that enough? ...and the biggie - Me, a deacon? I don’t think that’s in my gifting.* I was especially confident of this last one. At the last spiritual gift seminar our church did several years ago, during the discussion on the gift of mercy, my husband, who is well-known to be an encourager, leaned over and whispered to me, “You don’t have that gift.” I attempted to hold in my snort of laughter, while Mark, I’m sure, sat smirking because he knows as well as I do, that I am unfortunately prone to being judgmental, impatient, and generally lacking in empathy. Not the picture of the ideal deacon, right?

I was definitely leaning toward graciously declining when Mark reminded me of what I told him a few years back when he was debating allowing his name to stand on the ballot for elder. I said something to the effect that God was sovereign, He was going to do what He was going to do, so why not let your name be thrown in the hat and let God choose? I should have known that would come back to bite me. And then, to make matters worse, Mark added, “Maybe God wants to develop some

things in you.” ****sigh**** “OK, fine, I’ll leave my name in,” said I, probably not in a super mature way.

Fast forward almost a year. I’ve found that the time commitment and responsibilities are not huge—two Wednesday evening meetings a month, plus the 30 minutes, give or take, to accomplish my task of writing an article for the Heartbeat or bulletin (other deacons have roles such as being responsible for organizing meeting agendas, recording minutes of our meetings, reporting on and managing finances, and special projects). Some deacons, who probably have that gift of mercy and more time available during the day, occasionally meet with people who have a need we might be able to fill. I have really enjoyed finding out how much benevolence work our church does through the deacons.

I will admit one part I really struggle with is keeping in contact with people in my district. I find conversing with people I don’t know well to be very, very difficult and, of course, it takes time, which I often feel is in short supply, so that is an area in which I need improvement.

The biggest change I have noticed is that God is developing fruits of the Spirit in me, most notably, patience. I realized with much surprise that I find myself remaining calm in situations that would have frustrated me immensely a year ago. I am responding with gentleness and kindness where I once would have been very irritated by the same scenario. God is certainly not done with me yet, but I’m seeing progress!

I don’t remember specifically, but if I didn’t outright ask God to not pick me to be a deacon when it came time to draw lots, I certainly thought about it. But when it comes right down to it, God is sovereign, and He’s going to do what He’s going to do. If I had said no to being a deacon, God would be developing these things by a different path. God, in His mercy, is doing it

If I had said no to being a deacon, God would be developing these things by a different path. God, in His mercy, is doing it in a way that I am enjoying and is giving me a bigger picture of who He is and the work of the Church. I’m grateful for the opportunity.



Family Promise Update

By Herm and Ali Laninga

Dear Hope in Christ Church Family,

A lot has happened since our last update. Here are some highlights:

- Loraine, Ali and Herm attended volunteer training sessions. This is the same training all our volunteers will receive (excellent!).
- Family Promise was awarded a \$138,000 grant from the Murdock Foundation.
- Renovation of the Family Promise Day Center has been completed at 4065 Deemer Rd. (on the campus of 1st Christian Church, Bakerview). It is beautiful.
- A case manager has been hired to work with the families that will be coming to the Family Promise Day Center.
- The first Family Promise hosting will be at Assumption Church on April 2nd.
- A 15-passenger van has been purchased along with a trailer that holds 16 beds which will be moved from church to church each week.

On March 15th there was a celebration for the completion and the opening of the FP Day Center. The Center was dedicated with a prayer and a blessing for all who will serve and be served there.

As we attended the volunteer training at Christ the Servant, we were much encouraged. Approximately 50 people were in attendance, mostly from the host church but also by others like ourselves representing other host and supporting churches. The presentation was well organized and thorough, a reflection of everything we've seen so far from Family Promise!

We learned a few more facts about families, poverty and homelessness:

- After being out of the work force for a while, it takes an average of 25 weeks to land a new job.
- What hourly wage allows you to afford a fair-market rental for a family of four? \$20.30/hr.
- If you need food stamps to supplement your food budget, you'll be joining 44 million other Americans.
- In 23 states, the cost of child care for a preschooler is higher than the cost of public college tuition.
- Children experiencing homelessness are sick 4 times more than other kids.

Currently Hope in Christ is scheduled to serve in October. We continue to wait patiently to hear which congregation we will serve alongside. If you have questions about how you can be involved in Family Promise contact anyone of us: Lorraine Brouwer and Ali and Herm Laninga.

Find more online about Family Promise on Facebook or their website: <https://www.interfaith-coalition.org/programs/family-promise>

Northwest Hispanic Ministry Report for March 2018

By Joe Strong

His face was so lit up I thought the sun was shining inside the house. Adriel had just finished working his first week in years. He got a job working the green-chain in a lumber mill that was 10 hours a day, 4 days a week in Ferndale. Adriel, 28 years old, has spent so much time incarcerated that this was something completely new. When I met Adriel in the Whatcom County Jail, he asked me to help him get into our Bridges of Hope house. Adriel grew up in Kodiak, Alaska where his Mexican mother worked in the salmon canneries along with a large community of Hispanic workers. He graduated from high school and then from the University. Since age 12, Adriel has been drinking. He told me that he thought everybody drank in high school so that didn't bother him. In college, everybody drank so he continued. Then he got married and had two children. This is where his drinking caused greater problems. His wife divorced him. When I first met Adriel, despair described him. Last year, Adriel was released from jail and he called me Saturday evening for help. I told him that I would pick him up the next morning to take him to church. He never showed up. He had started drinking that same evening and blacked out. The next thing he knew he was back in jail. There he spent another 5 months. Our Bridges of Hope house has offered Adriel a safe place to begin life over again. He has Jesus in his life, attends AA meetings and lives in a clean and sober environment. He has become more responsible. He told me, that he had been believing so many lies. Last Saturday, he was in his shorts and ready to go hiking. He is a changed person. Now he was all smiles. He kept saying to me, thank you, thank you for taking me into this Bridges of Hope house.

"Pastor Joe, would you please visit my nephew in the jail when you visit on Monday?" Pastor Jose, could you come over and help me communicate with my husband? Pastor Joe, would you go with me when I go to my lawyer? I need your input. Pastor, this is my plea deal with the prosecutor, what do you think? Pastor Jose, would you allow me to give a message one Sunday? Pastor Jose, could you give me a ride to SeaMar? Pastor, would you help me fill out this form?

Every Friday, I visit two men in the Skagit County Jail. These two young men memorize large passages of Scripture each week. My job is to equip the saints for ministry. Thank you for supporting Northwest Hispanic Ministry.

Becoming a Healthy Missional Church, Spiritual Marker #8: Sacrificial and Generous Living and Giving

By Herm Laninga

As we continue our journey on the path to becoming a Healthy Missional Church, we find a road sign with nothing but a big \$. We jolt awake! We may have been dozing a bit, even congratulating ourselves on the progress we're making on the journey. After all, only two more markers remain. The end is in sight! Do we have to bring up MONEY? I know, I know, different attitudes about the use of money contribute to many social ills: divorce, homelessness, envy, jealousy, crime, bribery, the list goes on and on. But really, MONEY!

No, it's more than money. It's the whole realm that surrounds it: possessions, power, influence, time commitment. It drives our North American society and Christians are not exempt. And did you know the Bible addresses the topic? And not just here and there. *Money/possessions* is the most mentioned topic (approx. 2300+ times) in the Bible with *love* (approx. 300+ times) coming in second. Just google it if you don't believe me.

So what? Try re-reading Romans 12:1-8. Here the Apostle Paul urges us,

...in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God – this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is – his good, pleasing and perfect will.

He then goes on to enumerate various gifts bestowed on members of the congregation to bless each other and the community they live in. In that list is this one;

...if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously.

But where to start? Consider the following. The Bible says it this way in Mt 6:24:

No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money.

And in I Timothy 6:10 we read,

For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.

Poet Robert Allen Zimmerman (aka Bob Dylan) put it this way, "Gotta Serve Somebody." In his song he suggests that every material choice we make has an impact for good or for bad, we serve somebody, "it may be the devil or it may be the Lord."

In each case, it's not the money/possessions that are bad, but how we use them. Is it ultimately in service to God or not? A simple test is to ask yourself, "if I choose to make this purchase/investment/commitment, will I still be able to give of my money or time to God and his kingdom?" In other words, when we make lifestyle choices are we including our service to God in the equation?

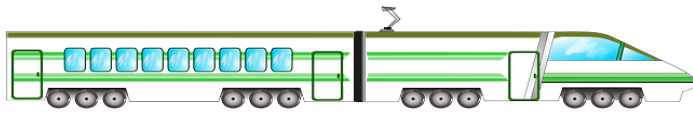
And what's the result when we do?

"Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this," says the Lord Almighty, "and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it." Malachi 3:10b.

Let me end by mentioning a practical application. It is our decision as a congregation to support Family Promise. Here's a real opportunity to bless our community by addressing, in a concrete way, the otherwise overwhelming blight of homelessness. This will require commitments of time, money and other material resources as we work to transition families from living on the streets to living in a home.

Family Promise

Can we
count on
you?



The Rest of the Story: Doug Konn

By Elaine Snapper

As Paul Harvey would say, this is the rest of the story. Last month, we celebrated Doug Konn's retirement, and I think some people were surprised that we were celebrating his retirement when he only worked twelve years at Amtrak. This will enlighten you that not only did he work for Amtrak, but he worked for a lot of other familiar companies. I thought it might be fun to get to know more about Doug and also about Winnie, who have been attending our church the past several months.

Let's start at the beginning, however. Doug grew up on a small farm in New Effington, South Dakota, population 250. Their family milked about thirty cows, and Doug assisted with chores in the barn. He graduated from New Effington High School and attended Northern State University in Aberdeen, majoring in education. An opportunity came for him to start his teaching career when one of the other teachers left for maternity leave in January, and he taught math for the rest of the year. That was enough to cure Doug of his desire to teach. He hated that, and after that he stuck with computers, which are easier to work with. He headed back to school for computer science in Moorehead, Minnesota, which was across the river from Fargo, North Dakota.

His first computer job was in Denver with United Airlines, where he was employed for twelve years. He went on to North Carolina, where he was employed as a contractor with U.S. Air. Next, he moved to Vancouver, B.C. and worked as a contractor there. It was there he met Winnie. After that he was a contractor in North Phoenix for American Express. Then he moved to Virginia and worked for Amtrak in Washington D.C. for nineteen years, seven of which he was a contractor, and twelve as an employee. He worked more at the back-end of making reservations for Amtrak. (If you've ever tried to make train reservations and had to deal with Julie with the voice recognition, just know that was not his fault. I can personally attest to how frustrating that can be.) Julie was the front end, and his responsibility was the back.

Okay, let's focus on his meeting Winnie. While in Vancouver, B.C. with his job there as a contractor, he was looking for a place to rent. This was about 1997. Winnie was trying to rent out her condo, and the two met. However, shortly thereafter he was transferred to Phoenix, and he and Winnie had a long-distance relationship. He had no idea what happened. Even looking back on it, he still doesn't know what happened, but somehow God intervened, and it was like an arranged marriage. They got married in Vancouver in July 1999. He had transferred to Washington D.C. by then, and Winnie tried to immigrate, but couldn't do it. So after the wedding, she stayed in Vancouver for a while. She did visit at least once, but she had to go back to Vancouver. She finally came back the first of March with the paperwork, and they lived in Virginia for several years.

Doug was brought up in the Lutheran Church. It was through Brian Koning that they were invited to visit our church. Winnie had visited his office, and he invited her to church.

Among Doug's hobbies, walking comes in first, and he likes to walk two to two-and-a-half hours a day. He also loves to drive places, and a couple of weeks ago he drove to Oregon, California, Idaho, Arizona, New Mexico, Texas, Oklahoma and Colorado. Winnie chose to stay home on that last trip.



She tends to fall asleep during drives and doesn't appreciate the road trips as much as Doug does.

Doug was recently recruited to join the men of the church for coffee at Over Easy, and to join the Recker Cleaning Crew. He is enjoying meeting the guys, and he finds our church to be a friendly one.



Spring Clean Up!

Join your church family on Saturday, April 21st for breakfast and to help spruce up our campus. Bring your gardening gloves, a bucket, yard broom, hoe and/or rake as we plan to pull weeds, spread bark and trim up some plants. A hot breakfast will be served in the foyer from 8-9 am.

Building and Maintenance team hopes to have everything done by noon. Contact Doug Scholten if you have any questions or about donating plants.



Thank you!

From,
Providence Christian School NW

Thank you for donating the portable classroom to Providence Christian School!

Our apologies, we have been so busy trying to get things done at school and our business, plus put the building together that I haven't sent you a thank you letter. We appreciate your patience in working with us! Looking back, we had a building permit in hand but because the new owners wanted us to put it in a different location things took longer than what we would have liked. Thanks for not giving up on us!

As you know, the weather wasn't the greatest for the move but all went well. The building is in place. We found very little structural rot. We were so thankful that very little had to be done. We are looking forward to using the rooms for this next school year.

As you probably know, it was Scott Emory who told Natalie Finkbonner about the portable building. Who then in turn told me. That is how we heard about the building you were wanting to get rid of.

Again, we are so thankful. God bless you and your church!

Blessings,

Kathy Vander Pol

Providence Christian School NW
ferndalechristianschool.com
360-318-1347

Giving in February 2018

	<u>Feb</u>	<u>Year-to-Date</u>
Designated Fund Offerings:	\$ 2,445	\$ 8,885
General Fund Offerings	\$18,289	\$ 61,297
Rent / Utilities Income	450	5,747
Total Undesignated Income	18,739	67,044
General Fund Expenses	(18,286)	(54,293)
Income Over(Under) Expenses	<u>\$ 453</u>	<u>\$ 12,751</u>
Total 2018 budget, including ministry quotas		\$ 224,758
Year-to-Date Budget for 3 months		\$ 56,190
Total Undesignated Income		67,044
Income Over (Under) Budget		<u>\$ 10,854</u>

Loan Balances:

Classis: \$ 17,500

April Sermon Series

- 1 Why Believe in the Resurrection? *1 Peter 1:3-7*
- 8 Three Strikes and You're Out! *1 Kings 1-8*
(*The Story* Chapter 13)
- 15 God is Faithful to His Word *1 Kings 11, 14*
(*The Story* Chapter 14)
- 22 Amos and Civil Justice *Amos 2, 9*
(*The Story* Chapter 15)
- 29 Hezekiah and Isaiah
(*The Story* Chapter 16)

Items of Interest from March's Council Meeting

By Joe Pruitt

- 1) Special guests: Herm and Ali Laninga, update on Family Promise of Whatcom County. Discovered that St. Sophia will not be a host church that we support, but they're willing to let their church facilities be used. HCC will prayerfully consider a variety of options for anticipated participation with the Family Promise program.
- 2) Study: *Effective Leadership in the Church*, Ch. 3, open discussion. Council decided to rearrange council meeting format.
- 3) Building and Grounds Maintenance Report: Plans to trim and possibly remove a few trees. Campus cleanup work party Apr. 21. Breakfast 8am-9am. Announce during worship service and put in bulletin.
- 4) Transition of general fund treasurer: Motion approved to offer Jennifer Boer the position of general fund treasurer.
- 5) Motion approved for fellowship hall remodel. HCC piano has been sold.
- 6) Motion approved to move forward with purchasing mission statement picture with some slight modifications.



April 2018



Greeters Schedule

- 1 Faye & Jerry Hop
- 8 David & Ida Richards
- 15 Gloria & Darryl Groothuis
- 22 Karen Smith, Chris Pike
- 29 Herm & Ali Laninga

Cookie Schedule

- 1 Tanya Obbink, Jan Scholten
- 8 Avis Kaemingk, Ev Kooistra
- 15 Denise Doezema, Rockelle Ruiter
- 22 Ali Laninga, Marjie Herold
- 29 Lisa Oppenhuizen, Deloris Perry

Serving Assistants

- 1 Abee, Zeke, Maggie
- 8 AnaMaria, Clara, Micah
- 15 Chantel, Caleb, Amariah
- 22 Amber, Michal, Mattea
- 29 Kylie, Zeke, Brenna

Prayer Room

- 1 Don Vanderpol
- 8 Len Vander Woude
- 15 Chuck Dean
- 22 Lanny Speyer
- 29 Connie Knutson

Offering Schedule

- 1 Kingdom Advancement
- 8 Kingdom Advancement
- 15 Outreach
- 22 Kingdom Advancement
- 29 Benevolence

Ushering Schedule

- 1 Barb & Joe Zylstra
- 8 Lou Kooistra, Joe Pruitt
- 15 Len Vander Woude, Don Knutson
- 22 Deloris Perry, Elaine Snapper
- 29 Don Knutson, Helen Bowman

Children & Worship

- 1 None
- 8 Marjie Herold, Kylie
- 15 Diane Button, Mattea
- 22 Bekah Roberts, Ali Laninga
- 29 Dan Obbink, Amber

Sunday School Schedule

- 1 None
- 8 Brian Koning, Michael Boer
- 15 Brian Koning, Michael Boer
- 22 Brian Koning, Michael Boer
- 29 Darlys Recker, Diane Button

April 2018



Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1 9:30 Worship Easter	2 6:00 PM GEMS	3 6:00 PM Richards Bible Study	4 9:45 Women's Bible Study 7:00 PM Elders	5 6:30 AM Men's Group 7:00 PM Praise Team, Men's Bible Study	6	7
8 9:30 Worship 11:00 Sunday School 4:30 Roberts Small Group 4:30 Jesus Gathering	9 7:00 PM Friendship Class	10 6:30 PM Boer's Bible Study	11 9:45 Women's Bible Study 7:00 PM Council	12 6:30 AM Men's Group 7:00 PM Praise Team, Men's Bible Study	13	14
15 9:30 Worship 11:00 Sunday School	16 6:00 PM GEMS	17 6:00 PM Richards Bible Study	18 9:45 Women's Bible Study	19 6:30 AM Men's Group 7:00 PM Praise Team, Men's Bible Study	20	21 8 AM Spring Clean-up
22 9:30 Worship 11:00 Sunday School 4:30 Roberts Small Group	23 7:00 PM Friendship Class	24 6:30 PM Boer's Bible Study	25 9:45 Women's Bible Study 7:00PM Worship Planning Team	26 6:30 AM Men's Group 7:00 PM Praise Team, Men's Bible Study	27	28
29 9:30 Worship 11:00 Sunday School Potluck Lunch	30 6:00 PM GEMS	Happy Birthday ! 4 Dan Obbink 6 Roland Vanden Bos 15 Debra Reamer 19 Denise Doezema 20 Gloria Groothuis 22 Jerry Hop 25 Mark Ruiter 27 Scott Roberts				

