

HEARTBEAT

Hope in Christ Church Monthly Newsletter

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Is your god sovereign?

By Pastor Scott

Sovereign. That isn't a word we use very often. It is an adjective that is used to describe one who has 'supreme or ultimate power' according to the oxford online dictionary. To the Christian there is a powerfully freeing truth in the statement: The God of the Bible is Almighty and sovereign!

In this statement, the God revealed in the Bible is declared to have All-might, or all power. This means that nothing is beyond, our God's ability to perform. He isn't lacking any strength or resources needed to bring His plan to fruition, nor is there any other person, thing, virus, or substance that can thwart or hinder His plans and His purposes. He is sovereign, meaning that He alone rules from His heavenly throne over the creation that He has made.

This truth means that God's people need not fear anything. In fact, throughout the Bible the command "Fear Not" or 'do not fear' is repeated 90 times from Genesis to Revelation. God's people are not to fear because: He is with us (Num 14:9); He is our provider (Gen 50:21); He fights for us (Dt 3:22); and We are more valuable than many sparrows (Mt 10:31), to name just a few reasons.

One of results of God's sovereignty and a life that isn't fearful is the ability to live freely and fully in the present recognizing that God has a plan for each of our lives and that our death will not come prematurely. Job declares that man's 'days are determined and the number of his months is with you [God]' (Job14:5). Jesus tells us that we are incapable of adding even a single hour to our life (Mt 6:27) This is immensely freeing – just look at the life that the Apostle Paul lived as a result of knowing that God is Sovereign – He travelled over 10,000 miles, planted between 14-20 churches himself and countless others that sprang up from

his influence, wrote 13 canonical letters in the New Testament and all of this as he faced lashings, beatings, stoning, shipwreck, floating on the open ocean, jail, etc. (2Cor 11:24-31). The testimony of the other apostles is similarly telling – Peter and John were imprisoned and slated for execution when God released them from prison (Acts 4-5, 12). God's people never died a moment too soon. As they went about the Lord's business, He protected and preserved them until He was ready to call them home, as He did with Stephen (Acts 7) and James (Acts 12). No doubt the environment of their day included, in addition to all the listed dangers, health concerns from poor sanitation, viruses, illness, sickness and a variety of other things. And yet these brothers and sisters knew that The Lord God is sovereign and they need not fear going out into their world to do the work of the Lord.

But I wonder, "Is your god sovereign?" One of the things I am saddened by as I watch and listen to Christians talk is the way that they seem to have forgotten who the True God is. The current pandemic has caused believers to mistakenly believe that they have the power to control when they die and how they die. There is a belief that one's safety and security, even their longevity upon the earth, is directly related to staying hidden within their homes. There is the idea that if one stays inside and doesn't gather with the Body of Christ in person, then he or she will not be exposed and hence will live longer, cheating death. Such is not true. And what is sad is that many of these ideas are being foisted upon us by the media, or worse yet, by loved ones who themselves are not aware of who the True God is. The Lord alone knows your end from your beginning. He knit you together (Ps 139:13-14). He will preserve you until

the day when He determines to call you home and by the means He wishes to use to call you home – gruesome murder, viral infection, heart attack, peaceful passing or something else. God chooses this, not you nor I. If the Sovereign God wishes that you or I die from Covid-19, no matter how isolated you are, nor how diligent you are in the use of prophylaxis gear, your days will end by Covid-19.

Unfortunately, I believe that this pandemic has revealed that the god we often worship (and I purposefully use a lower case g) is not the God of Scripture. Our god is often too small and doesn't resemble the LORD Almighty, Creator of Heaven and Earth. So, let me ask this concluding question – What does your *behavior* reveal about the god you serve and worship?

Small Group Restart

By Ida Richards

It's been almost 8 months since the challenge of living in a pandemic started. We learned how to reduce the exposure for each other with wearing masks and allowing space between us. But in all of this, we have missed gathering together. In June, we began worshipping together again, while also streaming the service. While some of our family are unable to attend in person for a variety of reasons, we have about 65 attendees. And we're doing well!

So, the elders discussed helping restart our Small groups and activities. The youth have already begun! And Darlys is in the planning stages with her parents and Leaders in Training for hopefully starting in mid-December.

Are you a Small Group Leader, or would like to start one? As you think through your plan, you can check with your group members to assess their feelings about meeting. As long as the infection rate stays relatively stable, making plans is reasonable. The Lobby and the Sanctuary are available for groups but will need to be reserved. Just like on Sundays, masks will be worn, using distancing for seating, and refreshments are on hold for now. After each gathering, surface cleaning will need to be done in preparation for the next group.

If you choose to meet at home, you are able to in-

vite 5 guests. The same precautions are advised with masks, distancing, and eliminating refreshments.

If meeting in person doesn't feel right for your group yet, our church has a Zoom account you can use. Arrangements can be made for instructions on how to download and administer Zoom meetings, and also guidance for group members can be done for getting started on using Zoom. The benefits of Zoom are that you can 'meet' without leaving your home, no masks needed, and snowy roads won't be a problem!

Reserving the use of the Lobby and Sanctuary will be arranged through Lisa. Reservations for using the Zoom account will be arranged by Pastor Scott. If you have any questions, or would like to discuss any of the details, please call one of the Elders. If you would like to seek ideas of study materials or ideas, Pastor Scott would be glad to help. We, your elders, are here to support and encourage you.



'Phone a Friend' Program:

The Lynden Community/Senior Center is starting a new "phone a friend" program for the holidays. If you or someone in your church is experiencing increased loneliness or isolation or just going through a difficult time and would like a call from a new friend once a week in November and December, call director Jen Lautenbach at (360) 354-2921. You also can contact the center if you'd like to be a friend who calls others. The center also is providing hot, fresh meals on weekdays for pick-up or delivery for \$5 each.

HELP SENIORS WITH YARD CARE:

The Volunteer Center and Opportunity Council are looking for groups interested in helping Whatcom County seniors with yard care during the fall and winter. If you are interested in helping or being involved with any of the Volunteer Chore Program's opportunities, contact Genevieve Quigley at chore@whatcomvolunteer.org or (360) 734-5121, ext. 172. For more information and other postings, visit www.whatcomvolunteer.org.

What Kept Me Connected to Hope In Christ?

By Morgan Roberts

Studies have shown, over and over, young Christian youths are increasingly leaving the church. The reasons for this mass exodus vary and they are not always related to young adults abandoning their faith. Many of my friends at school would talk about how their home church didn't feel like a home. All their friends had left, they often felt like they didn't know anyone, and were not noticed when they were there. Many of them went all four years at school without anyone reaching out to them at all from the churches that they had grown up in.

As I have thought about my time at Moody and my return back to the beautiful North West, I am reminded of how incredibly grateful I am to have such a loving and encouraging church. Throughout my time at college, I received regular check ins from my elders and deacons as well as many others. You made me feel seen even when I was not worshiping with you in person and you made me feel loved when I was miles away. Even though I know I was horrible at responding, I always read every text, email, and letter that was sent to me. Frequently, I would share the notes with my friends and tell them all about my home church. As I have thought about what made my experience so different from that of many of my friends, I came up with a couple of reasons.

First, when I think about my "friends" at church they are not within a year or two of me. They range from 6-years-old all the way up to 80s and beyond. And that's amazing! I remember video calling my parents intentionally when they were in a small group so that I could talk to everyone because I missed them.

Second, I felt individually cared for by the leadership of HICC. Like I mentioned before, my elders and deacons reached out to me many times throughout my time at Moody. They were always willing to give their time and they reminded me that they were praying for me.

Third, people engaged with me when I came home. I

never had a Sunday where no one talked to me. In fact, it was usually the opposite! I would spend over an hour after church catching up with everyone.

Personally, it was so easy for me to come home because this is my home... my church... my family. I think that when young people feel connected to the church as a whole, and they know that people care for them when they are present and far away, it makes it easier for young people to want to come home. In a way, we all want to know that we are loved, and we desire to be pursued by those who say they love us. What does it communicate if we spend years at a place and feel like we are instantly forgotten when we leave? Does that communicate love? That's what made it so challenging for many students I talked to. They never felt truly loved or missed. The HICC family pursued me throughout my time at Moody and when I came home. I would like to pass that care along to the young people in our church. And I would encourage you to do the same. Form the relationships with the youth now that will last through their adult lives.

Our Creator's Handiwork

Submitted by Don Recker

"In each hand you have 29 bones, 17 muscles (plus 18 more that are in the forearm but control the hand), 2 main arteries, 3 major nerves (one of which, the ulnar nerve, is the one you feel in your elbow when you hit your 'funny bone') plus 45 other named nerves, and 123 named ligaments, all of which must coordinate their every action with precision and delicacy. Sir Charles Bell the great nineteenth century Scottish surgeon and anatomist, thought the hand the most perfect creation in the body - better even than the eye. He called his classic text *The Hand: its Mechanism and Vital Endowments as Evincing Design*, by which he meant that the hand was proof of divine creation."



Bill Bryson, *The Body*, p.168

Sunday Worship

By Clair Abee

Faithfulness in the little things to provide community and worship activities to those we love. When COVID-19 hit the church the elders embraced the federal and state guidelines to close our doors and encourage all members to mask, wash, and isolate. The worship team figured out how to create a video worship each week from their own homes. Elders and deacons and many others began to encourage each other with calls, cards and zoom prayer times. As it became obvious this virus issue was here for an extended time our elders began work to mitigate known issues in gathering and put in place a step by step process to come together. As rules regarding worship activities allowed, we opened the sanctuary with live-feed worship in June. In the background are the safety measures including disinfecting everything after each service, extra space between family units, no food service, limiting communion and program “touches”, and requiring masks be worn the entire service activity. Our church family has been so dedicated to the goal of safety first. Upon arrival we keep spacing and take everyone’s temperature, provide mask or hand sanitizer as needed and provide a warm welcome [no touches yet :))]. Beginning October the families with children began meeting for Sunday school in small pods during the week and gather for a monthly outdoor worship experience. Several of the small groups have begun to join together over zoom or in small groups. Gems hopes to begin meeting together in December with zoom meetings till then. Needless to say, we are feeling blessed at these opportunities to join together in love. When you are ready, please join in. If you need additional accommodations please contact your elder or Pastor Scott.



ADOPT A FAMILY FOR CHRISTMAS:

Share your Christmas joy with a homeless family by participating in the Adopt-a-Family program at New Way Ministries and Great Expectations. You’ll be given the ages and genders of the family and a wish list they’ve made. After you buy the gifts and bring them to New Way, the gifts will be put by their door on Christmas Eve. Imagine the smiles and joy you will bring this homeless family on Christmas morning. To adopt a family, call New Way at (360) 354-9930.

Getting to Know Our Church Family

By Elaine Snapper

This month I am featuring Aaron and Megan Speyer. Megan graduated with an Associate of Arts degree from Whatcom Community College and a Bachelor of Arts degree in Creative writing from Seattle University. She worked retail at various locations in the Bellis Fair Mall and at the outlets in Blaine. After college she worked for MacGregor Publishing Company in Mount Vernon. She quit to stay home as a full-time mom when she was pregnant with her second child, Thaddeus.

Aaron and Megan met at Hope in Christ Church (or Bellingham Christian Reformed Church, as it was named back then) at a “college and career” Bible study group for young adults in early 1998. They started dating in March and became engaged in October. They were married in May, 1999. They lived in two homes in Sudden Valley before moving into Bellingham in 2009. They have three children: sons, Isaac, 17, and Thaddeus, 15, as well as their daughter Miriam, 12.

Aaron graduated with an Associate of Arts degree from Northwest Nazarene College in Nampa, Idaho. He’s worked independently as an artist and landscaper. He was our church youth pastor for several years. He ran a work release crew for the County jail doing local landscaping and cleanup of public spaces. He’s been the chaplain of the Lighthouse Mission for 13 years, and he currently runs long-term recovery programs for men.

Megan grew up in our church. Her parents, (David and Ida Richards) joined the church before she was born. Aaron’s parents (Lanny and Christine Speyer) started attending after coming to the Lord later in life. Aaron and Megan were in different high schools, and she worked and often attended church with friends elsewhere, so that’s why they didn’t meet until later. Aaron came to Christ after a near-death experience while river rafting on a Boy Scout adventure. Megan’s faith had been a part of her since childhood, but she had several moments throughout her life where she reaffirmed it for herself.

Aaron volunteered as youth leader at our church and was employed as the youth pastor for several

years. He’s also been on the worship team and led Sunday School. Together they led a Bible study group before they had kids. Megan has also served as a deacon.

Both Aaron and Megan have been very thankful for the support of their church family throughout their years as parents. God gifted their family with some extra challenges in their family life with developmental delays and mental health issues, and their church family has been invaluable in prayer and so many other ways.

We’re so thankful that they are a part of our church family. They have added a lot to our church over the past several years and have been a real blessing.



FREE FOOD IN BLAINE, BIRCH BAY:

Food Connection, a program started because of the coronavirus pandemic, is continuing in Blaine and Birch Bay. Repackaged meals donated from local restaurants are being offered at Blaine United Church of Christ (360-392-8484) and the Bridge in Birch Bay (360-366- 8783). If you or someone you know is in need of meals or if you’d like to volunteer to help, please sign up in advance by calling or e-mailing info@blainecap.org.

SERVE COMMUNITY MEALS:

Community meals will be served every Tuesday evening at First Baptist Church in downtown Bellingham. During this time of crisis, those who need a meal will be offered grab-n-go bags of food (a hearty sandwich or wrap, fruit, and bottled water) each week in order to abide by the official health guidelines. If you or your (very small) group are healthy, and would like to help prepare Tuesday afternoons and/or serve those in need between 5 and 5:30 p.m., contact Jim Parker at (714) 785-5488 or jameswparker@hotmail.com.



Thanksgiving

Fall is here, the leaves are falling, it's getting colder. Thanksgiving is coming. A time where we give thanks for all that we have. As you reflect over the past year, what do you have to be thankful/grateful for?



Now we thank thee...



Giving in September 2020

	<u>Aug</u>	<u>Year-to-Date</u>
Designated Fund Offerings:	\$ 2,714	\$24,320
General Fund Offerings	\$32,013	\$200,795
Rent / Utilities Income	959	22,009
Interest Income - Undesignated	<u>22</u>	<u>223</u>
Total Undesignated Income	32,994	223,027
General Fund Expenses	<u>(17,169)</u>	<u>(178,272)</u>
Income Over(Under) Expenses	<u>\$ 15,825</u>	<u>44,755</u>
Total 2020 budget, including ministry quotas		\$273,588
Year-to-Date Budget for 10 months		\$227,990
Total Undesignated Income		<u>223,027</u>
Income Over (Under) Budget		<u>\$(4,963)</u>

Loan Balances:

Classis: \$ 10,000

Payroll Protection Program: \$ 26,700

Deacons Digest

By Elaine Snapper

The deacons met on Oct. 7, 2020. A lot of time was spent discussing our church budget for the next year. You should be receiving a copy of the budget soon, so please study it carefully before the congregational meeting.

It was noted that this month is Pastor Appreciation month.

For Christmas there will once again be a Christmas tree, and Ruth Stadt will be organizing that. She will also be organizing the coat collection drive for Interfaith. Coats can be brought to church in a bag to be distributed.



Happy
Birthday!



November

2 Nathan B	16 Grace R
3 Evelyn K	17 Karen S
5 Marilyn K	18 Clara S
8 Dave D	20 Deloris P
11 Christine S	21 Mike B
11 Zeke R	21 Amber O
13 Lou K	28 Elisha S
14 Mitch S	

November 2020

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1 <i>Daylight Savings Ends</i> 9:30am Worship Service Communion Offering: General	2	3 	4 11:30am Elders Mtg 7pm Deacons Mtg	5	6 	7
8 9:30am Worship Service Offering: General Fund	9	10	11 7pm Council Mtg	12	13	14
15 9:30am Worship Service Offering: Outreach Fund 11am Congregational Mtg	16	17	18	19 	20	21
22 9:30am Worship Service Offering: General Fund	23	24 	25	26 9:30am Thanksgiving Service Communion	27	28 
29 9:30am Worship Service Offering: Benevolence Fund	30					