



Hope In Christ Church  
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# Heartbeat

## Disasters

By Pastor Scott

Disasters are adversities of immense proportions that test the bonds of communities, the resilience of the human spirit and the generosity of the unaffected. In the last 2 weeks our county has experienced an unprecedented flood which has devastated homes and left many families without housing, without clothing and without a sense of security. Given the immense losses and the stress that many are undergoing, how should the members of Hope in Christ respond in this time?

Looking at the opening triad of ways that disasters affect communities will help us to find a way forward. We are going to be called upon to give our lives to people over the coming year in a way that we have likely never experienced. There will be families in our church, or people that are related to families in our church whom we will have the opportunity to either serve and love and give and work alongside or to ignore. If we give ourselves, we will find that the bonds of community will be strengthened and the testimony of the church will be broadened. We are going to be forced to ask the question which was directed to Jesus in Luke 10:29: Who is my neighbor? But will we ask that question in order to justify ourselves, or will we ask it in order to love and serve the needy? No longer will the needy be on the other side of the state, the country or the globe – now they are in our county, down our roads and in our community. Will the bond of community be strengthened or torn asunder?

As we are giving our lives, we will find that our paths will cross many who are hopeful, but also many who are downcast, broken and overwhelmed by the cost and devastation that they have sustained. In these moments, we, as Christ's followers, will be called upon to bind up the broken-hearted and to weep with those who weep. We must not give in

Continued on next page.

### Inside this issue

NW Hispanic Ministry .....	3
Why Do We Celebrate? .....	4
Prepare the Way.....	5
Dec Servants, Giving .....	6
Family Promise .....	7
Birthdays.....	8
Calendar.....	8

Continued from previous page.

to the temptation to say everything will be all right, but must be ready to wait with the mourning, but waiting in a way that lets them know they are not alone. This is the path to healing and resilience. Life is born out of death and loss; this is what the crucifixion teaches. But it was a suffering that was dependent upon the Lord. We will need to point people to the God who loves and is. We will be forced to reconcile Job with the normal ideas we have of who suffers. And in this renewed theology of suffering we will find the Lord is able to sustain the person. Prayer will be our greatest gift for the hurting, praying for them, but more importantly with them.

Finally, our hearts will be laid bare over the coming year with the constant needs that come our way. Will we be as generous in a month, or a quarter, or a year as we are prone to be in the immediate present need? Will we continue to make time to tear out and rebuild as the months pass by? Will we continue to make meals and feed the workers as the time passes? Will we continue to deny ourselves the 'extras' of life so that others in our community might once again have the basic necessities of life? I know that God will stretch us in the coming year as we participate in the life of the community. I know that God will grow us through this time. I know that God has more for us that we can ask or imagine at this point. Let us enter into the relief work with a long-haul mentality, serving, loving, walking with the suffering until our county is rebuilt And as we do it, let's talk of God's love to all whom we serve.

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## **Friendship Program**

Dec. 13<sup>th</sup>

7:00 p.m.

## **Christmas Eve**

Candlelight Service

Dec. 24<sup>th</sup>

7:00 p.m.



**I**n the last prayer letter, I told you about Angie, from Columbia, who had been living on the streets of Bellingham and was 7 months pregnant. We got her into a women's shelter and she has given birth to Victoria. Last Sunday, she stood in front of our church with her little baby on her hip and gave a tremendous testimony of how God had changed her life. She had grown up Catholic and had never heard of the rest of the story. It was really in the ladies group that meets on Monday night that Angie was introduced to Jesus. What a joy to hear this new believer and see her big smile. Afterward, everybody gave her hugs.

It was during a visit to an apartment where several of the Venezuelan members live that I first heard the testimony of Yorvelis, 22yrs old. She was baptized this year in August in Lake Padden, Bellingham however she couldn't bring herself to give her testimony that glorious day. She had come to the U.S. border in Texas and turned herself in to Homeland Security. She was placed in a prison in Arizona for 3 months until her hearing came up. As a young child she attended the Catholic Church with her mother. Then as a teenager, her mother started attending an Evangelical Church. When Yorvelis ended up in the U.S. prison, she was asked by an inmate if she was a Catholic or a Protestant. She didn't know. Well, are you an atheist? "No", she replied. In her prison cell there were 6 women, 5 from Venezuela and 1 from Cuba. It was this Cuban woman who took Yorvelis under her wing. This woman was sure of her faith in Jesus Christ and before anyone knew it, the Cuban woman had all 5 of her cellmates studying the Bible. It was in this prison that Yorvelis accepted Jesus as her Savior. The Cuban woman went on to lead a Bible study of over 60 women in that prison. Many of those women accepted Jesus as Savior. The power of one with Jesus.

I am so blessed to be the pastor of both Amor Viviente and Vida Nueva churches. I thank you for your prayers and financial support. God is doing great things. We continue to have 5 people who are in a preaching rotation in Lynden. Our Discipleship Course is excellent. Every Wednesday evening I lead the young people via zoom. Our churches are healthy and active. Continue to pray for us.

# **Northwest Hispanic Ministry Report for November 2021**

By Joe Strong

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# Why Do We Celebrate Christmas?

By Pastor Ethan

Why do we celebrate Christmas? The answer, of course, is rather straightforward; we celebrate Christmas because Christ came to die for us, came to redeem us from our sinful and fallen paths. Any toddler growing up in the Church could tell you that, as could their spiritual counterparts. It seems an insulting question to ask of free-minded, educated, and faithful adults.

But before judgement is passed upon the question, I would like to clarify why I ask it in the first place. The reason, too, is simple: Because belief informs practice. No one worth their salt can be goaded into doing something they cannot see some reason for, and likewise, no one doing something for a reason can be goaded into stopping. Yet we, for reasons that are never fully apparent, will continue in half-hearted, reluctant, and largely fabricated traditions merely because it is socially expected that we do so. So I ask again: why do we celebrate Christmas?

If we are participating in the Yuletide merely for the sake of societal expectation, I think we are wise to be so half-hearted and reluctant; the only thing more wise could perhaps be an abdication from the traditions in question, but I don't suppose many of will be keen to forego the egg nog this year. Jokes aside, it is entirely reasonable for us to resent decorating the house, putting up Christmas lights, setting the tree, and perhaps even the incessant exchanges of 'Merry Christmas' if we do so simply because we seek to appease our fellow man. He is not quite so powerful a motivator as he thinks, in the first place. But if we truly believed that what we were doing was commemorating the condescension of our Savior to the form of a fragile, infant boy, and if we truly supposed that His arrival in that form was the very thing all of history had been leading up to, would we not find ourselves grinning like fools, even as the crisp winter air gnaws at our fingers? Would we not find the excitement and pleasure of being saved, of being His, sufficient to carry us through the tedium of carrying out the many (and admittedly largely irrelevant) traditions? Would we not relish the gift buying, not for the engorgement of capitalism or the stimulation of the economy, but because it reflects the incomprehensible selflessness of our Lord's generosity? Perhaps more importantly, would we not joyously take this time out of our year to invite others into the celebration? I believe that, if we did, we might find that both those inside the church and outside the church would happily join, even if they disagreed, if only for the warmth of good company and food.

But I speak to those who are largely frustrated with or ambivalent to the celebration of Christmas; what of those who can no longer see Noel as something singularly worthy of happiness? What of those who have lost loved ones, those who have had tragedy strike their homes, or those who have had the joy of the season stolen by someone else's cruelty? What of those who cannot recall a year when the crunch of snow did not remind them of what they had lost? To those, I wish I could offer a comfort of my own that would ease your burdens, but I cannot. Some pains must be experienced in

order to be overcome. What I can do, however, is to remind you that Christ came for you, that He died for you, and that, even now, He intercedes for you. He has sent the Spirit to you, that the dark and troubled times of this world will not overtake your own spirit, so long as it rests in His. The pain may still be there in the morning, but so will He. We have been given what we need to endure, or else, we will be given all we need to endure. Endure, I say, for we are promised no stability and no glory on this earth; no certainty and no glory but Christ in us. For that IS all we need; a Saviour who has promised us that one day there will be a final end to that pain we feel in the morning, to our fears, to our sorrows, to our regrets. A Saviour that has promised that, one day, all will be made right.

Sometimes that reminder just serves to highlight the pain of the now, I know. But I ask you this; is it better to see that the world is out of sorts and hurt for it, but have a hope that it will be set right, or to endure that same hurt and have no hope at all?

For that is why we celebrate Christmas; because the Lord came and sacrificed Himself on our behalf that all would someday be made right, that we would have cause for hope. This season we remember the day that hope first came to us, the very first day we could say 'Immanuel' and mean it in every sense. And that, brothers and sisters, is an event worthy of celebration. Merry Christmas to you all!

## Prepare the Way

By Jerry Hop

The theme of the season of Advent is that of anticipation. We live into the experiences of God's Old Testament people and anticipate the hope he brings to us through the Messiah. We continue to anticipate his entrance into our lives and our world on a daily basis. And we anticipate the day at the conclusion of history when God enters our world through the second coming of Christ.

Pastor Scott's messages this advent season will be based on selected scripture passages from the book of Isaiah. The advent (candle) litanies this year are taken from Isaiah 40: 1-11, with the theme: *"Prepare the Way."*

The following is an outline of the weekly themes:

**WEEK 1 – COMFORT MY PEOPLE – Isaiah 40: 1-2**

**WEEK 2 – THE STRAIGHT HIGHWAY – Isaiah 40: 3-5**

**WEEK 3 – THE BREATH (WORD) OF GOD – Isaiah 40: 6-8**

**WEEK 4 – GOD'S GOOD TIDINGS – Isaiah 40: 9**

**CHRISTMAS EVE – GOD'S GENTLE POWER – Isaiah 40: 10-11**

If you have not read the book of Isaiah recently, it may be a good time this advent season to read and reflect on some of its great themes, like justice, compassion, deliverance, salvation, to name a few. May you be blessed by the messages of comfort and hope in the book of Isaiah this advent as we remember the incarnation of our Lord and anticipate the return of our risen Savior!

## SERVANTS FOR DECEMBER

### E-Street Rides

5 Joe P  
12 Doug & Jan  
19 Len & Terry  
24 Alice  
26 Don & Elaine

### Greeters

David & Ida  
Len & Terry  
Lou & Ev  
Clair & Hildred  
Gina, Joe P

### Prayer Room

Ev  
Ken  
Ida  
N/A  
Chuck

**Communion Prep** for Dec. 5 Hildred, Rachel & family

## GIVING IN OCTOBER 2021

	<u>Oct</u>	<u>Year-to-Date</u>
Designated Fund Offerings:	\$ 1,620	\$ 32,306
General Fund Offerings	\$ 17,444	\$244,714
Rent / Utilities Income	1,571	25,526
PPP Loan Forgiveness	-	26,700
Interest Income - Undesignated	12	183
Total Undesignated Income	19,027	297,123
General Fund Expenses	(21,280)	(212,264)
Income Over(Under) Expenses	\$ (2,252)	\$ 84,859
Total 2021 budget, including ministry quotas		\$281,796
Year-to-Date Budget for 11 months		\$258,313
Total Undesignated Income		297,123
Income Over (Under) Budget		\$ 38,810

### **Loan Balances:**

Classis: \$ 7,500

## FAMILY PROMISE

Family Promise of Whatcom County, a program of Interfaith Coalition, works with local families to get them into emergency housing first, where they can work toward self-sufficiency. With shelter and food provided, staff focuses on each family's strengths, needs, and values to help them move toward health, employment, and financial stability.

Since its launch in 2018, Family Promise has helped 53 adults and 92 children - 39 of them under 5 years old - out of homelessness. Eighty-nine percent of Family Promise families move into long-term, stable housing.

"Each family member is an important part of the work," said Carolyn Roy, Family Promise director. "We help them tap into their own skills and know-how to build good habits for long-term self-sufficiency."

Local volunteers help provide meals, plus whatever is needed: car repair, tools for a construction job, a ride to a job interview.

Once in Interfaith's Family Promise housing, the family can start saving for an apartment security deposit plus first month's rent. "That's the hardest thing, to get that first couple of thousand saved so they can get into their own home," [Konrad] Kocsis said. "Without that, if they have to continually spend on food or car repair, they can never get ahead."

From the Family Promise Newsletter, September 2021

## CHRISTMAS GIVING TREE

The annual Giving Tree is in the foyer with envelopes for the *Family Promise* families who have been struggling with homelessness and are working hard to find permanent housing. How can you help?



1. Take an envelope from the tree.
2. Purchase a gift card for \$25 to Target, Fred Meyers or Walmart. Why these three? Families will be able to purchase anything from apples to socks there.
3. Return the gift card in the envelope and place in the offering basket by the sound booth.
4. PLEASE RETURN BY DECEMBER 12. We will deliver the cards to the Family Promise office on December 13 for distribution to the families.

Thank you! Your gifts will be appreciated.

The Deacons and Family Promise Team



# December 2021

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
			1 HCC Day2Pray 11:45 a.m. Elders Meeting	2 6:30 a.m. Men's Group 7 p.m. Deacons meeting	3	4
5 9:30 Worship/ Communion 11:00 Sunday School	6 6 p.m. G.E.M.S Meeting	7 12:15 Lunch prayer, Zoom	8 7 p.m. Council meeting	9 6:30 a.m. Men's Group  Trinity School Christmas Program in Worship Center	10	11
12 9:30 Worship 11:00 Sunday School 4:30 Jesus Gathering 7 p.m. Kaemingk Group	13 7 p.m. Friendship Christmas Program	14 12:15 Lunch prayer, Zoom	15	16 6:30 a.m. Men's Group	17	18
19 9:30 Worship 11:00 Sunday School	20	21 12:15 Lunch prayer, Zoom	22 7 p.m. Worship Planning Team	23 6:30 a.m. Men's Group	24 7 p.m. Christmas Eve Service	25 
26 9:30 Worship	27	28	29	30 6:30 a.m. Men's Group	31	

## Happy Birthday



6	Melissa Koning	23	Gracie Macdonald
8	Eliana Ruiter	24	Don Recker
9	Maggie Skovron	27	Brenna Koning
15	Sissy Davis	28	Morgan Roberts
13	Scott Macdonald	29	Doug Scholten
16	Darryl Groothuis	30	Helen Bowman
		30	Abigail McConnaughey