



# HOPE CHURCH NEWS

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Hope Church celebrates 150 years in 2012

*A Living Hope ~ I Peter 1:3*

## THE SEASON OF LENT AT HOPE CHURCH

### BEGINNING WITH ASH WEDNESDAY

On Ash Wednesday, February 22<sup>nd</sup>, we will begin the season of Lent through our Ash Wednesday Supper and a service of scripture, prayer, and meditation. The imposition of ashes is an ancient symbol that calls us into this season of reflection. There will be a soup supper at 6:15 p.m. and a worship service at 7:00 p.m.

The Ash Wednesday service begins our four week Lenten Worship Series entitled: *WE WANT TO SEE JESUS*. Each service of worship begins at 7:00pm on February 22<sup>nd</sup>, February 29<sup>th</sup>, March 7<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup>. There will also be a Healing Prayer Service on Sunday, March 18<sup>th</sup> at 10:00 a.m. in the sanctuary. Dinner will be provided on Ash Wednesday only and will begin at 6:15pm. Watch the bulletin and your mail for a full description of this year's worship series and the program that will be provided for children.

## DISCERNING OUR FUTURE: WHAT'S NEXT FOR HOPE CHURCH

### A FACILITIES DISCUSSION

As we celebrate our 150th anniversary, we're also looking ahead. Part of what we'd like to assess is how our current facility will serve our needs as we move into the future. What might make it a greater asset to our work and lives together?

You're invited to participate in this discussion on **Wednesday evening, February 15, 6:30 to 9:30 p.m., in the Commons; a light supper will be provided.** The evening will be facilitated by Tracy Brower, Hope Church member and director of Performance Environments for Herman Miller, Inc. We will focus on developing a compelling vision of the attributes for the environment we share. "Rather than trying to develop a plan from historical experience, this process will develop a vision by conceiving the future 'backward from perfect,'" Tracy says. The workshop will help us to envision, through creative collaboration, the facility that will support Hope Church in living our mission statement and the themes of the Belhar Confession.

Your voice is important to this process! **To help the event planners and to receive the advance assignment for participants, sign up in the Gathering Area by February 6.** If you're unable to attend the event but would like to share your thoughts, watch the Life of Hope Church blog for a link to an online survey or talk to a member of the Building and Grounds Ministry.

## **CONSISTORY CORNER**

Highlights from the meeting of January 9, 2012

New Consistory members were welcomed. They included Elders Kathy Brownson, Jane Dickie, Curtis Gruenler, Mark Sneller; and Deacons Judy Bultman, Duane Kooyers, Joyce Teusink, and Tom Arendshorst.

### **Motions passed included:**

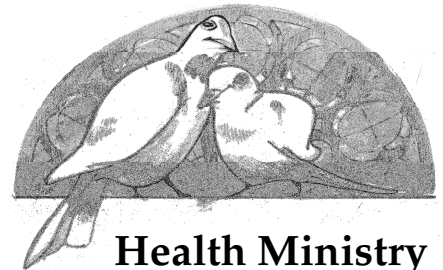
1. The appointment of the following Consistory positions for the next year: President – Gordon Wiersma; Clerk – Kyle Vohlken; Treasurer – Bill VanDyke.
2. The election of Vern Boersma as Consistory Vice President; Lois Maassen as Senior Elder; Jim McKnight as Senior Deacon; and Curtis Gruenler and Peter Hintz as Communion Elders.

## **SEASON OF RECONCILIATION 2012**

**Movie Night: February 5, 6:00-8:00pm ~ PAPERS** – a new nationally-distributed documentary on the stories of youth dealing with the complexities of immigration policies. For more info go to <http://papersthemovie.com/>

## **HEALTH MINISTRY**

The Hope Church Health Ministry is pleased to be sponsoring the February Adult Education offering, ***Out of Darkness: The Facts, Changes, and Choices of Living with Chemical Dependence***. Please see page 3 for a more complete description and class listings.



**Health Ministry**

### **HOPE CHURCH NURSE CONTACT INFORMATION:**

**Hope Church Nurse:** Office hours for Donita Robards, the Hope Church Nurse, are on Mondays from 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 noon in the church library.

You are welcome to stop by and see Donita during those hours,  
or call her at Resthaven 796-3800, or email [donita.robards@resthaven.org](mailto:donita.robards@resthaven.org)

## **GOD IS LOVING – FAMILY CHURCH SCHOOL – SUNDAY, FEB. 12**

Join other families with young children through 5th grade for a time of discussion, interacting and fun. We'll learn about God's love for us and talk about ways to show love to others, not only on Valentine's Day, but everyday. How are we supposed to love God, ourselves, our family and friends, neighbors and people we don't even know? What are some ways that we can show God's love to others?

Come and have these interesting discussions with your family, make a craft and have some fun. Family Church School is on February 12th, 9:45-10:45 a.m. in Room 204.

## **ADULT EDUCATION PROGRAM ~ SUNDAYS AT 9:40 A.M.**

**February 5-26.....In Commons I**

### ***Out of Darkness:***

#### ***The Facts, Changes, and Choices of Living With Chemical Dependence***

The February Adult Education series sponsored by the Health Ministry has been designed by Thomas Mullens, a therapist at Ottagan Addiction Recovery (OAR), serving as the Outpatient Clinical Director of the Grand Haven branch. He is a member of Hope Church and states that this four week series will explore the concept of chemical use, abuse and dependence from the perspective of those struggling with addiction and those who live with and support those struggling with addiction.

The sessions will look at everything from the brain chemistry involved in addiction to the complex social and psychological factors involved in trying to create change. Concrete information about available support systems and interventions will be shared as well as looking at how every one of us deal with the conscious and unconscious dimensions of trying to change behavior.

#### **February 5.....*Into the Light: Moving Past the Stereotypes***

This segment will provide a brief overview of alcohol and other drug user stereotypes; the types of chemicals people use and why some drugs are more prone to abuse. The concept of chemical "Use, Abuse and Dependence" will be introduced as a basic model to discuss why some persons can stop easily, but others have great difficulty. This segment will also touch on the concepts of rates of addiction and rates of recidivism; and introduce the concept of addiction as a biochemical disorder.

Presenter: Thomas Mullens – Therapist at OAR. He has a Masters degree in Clinical Social Work and is a Certified Advanced Alcohol and Drug Counselor.

#### **February 12.....*The Neurophysiological and Pharmacological Basis of Addiction***

The nature of the "Reward System" in the brain, and the role of dopamine in driving that system will be presented. We will consider the importance of this system in sustaining life, and how addicting drugs affect this system. We will discuss experiments demonstrating the ability of this system to dominate behavior, and how compulsive behaviors can activate this system. We will also discuss how drugs can cause long term changes in brain function that make the treatment of addiction so difficult.

Presenter: Dr. Ed Anderson, Professor of Pharmacology, Emeritus, University of Illinois College of Medicine

#### **February 19.....*Living in Chaos – A Family Perspective on Addiction & Recovery***

Addiction is unlike any other health issue a family may have to face. The distorted personal interactions between family members and a loved one struggling with addiction have devastating effects that can last a lifetime. Addiction is an affliction that leaves a scar on every family member. Each family member needs to understand what recovery means for their loved one, and what it means for them as well. This session will explore the family response to both addiction and recovery.

Presenter: Rich Campbell, Executive Director of OAR. Rich has Master's Degrees in Political Science and Social Work, is a Certified Advanced Alcohol and Drug Counselor, and has been working with families facing addiction for the past 14 years in church and social service settings.

#### **February 26.....*Why Don't They Just Stop? A Discussion of How Change Happens***

This session will focus on the concept of changing behaviors, by using DiClemente's "Stages of Change" theory. We will also discuss how prolonged drug and alcohol use can "hijack" the decision making process and make sustained change difficult.

Presenter: Thomas Mullens

## **AN INVITATION TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE**

from Jocelyn Van Heest, Children's Ministry Director

Do you have a heart for sharing God's word and love with others? Do you have a heart for young children who are dealing with some tough times? Hope Church, along with the Fourteenth Street Christian Reformed Church and Christ Memorial Church have committed to leading a *Children in Worship* experience each Monday evening at the Family Hope Ministry Center. We have completed a two-month trial and have decided it is a valuable experience for the children living there. On the second Monday of each month (2/13, 3/12) Hope Church is responsible for telling the story, a response time and a fun group time.

I will be telling the story and I need two or three adults to join me from 6:45 to 8:15 p.m. on any second Monday night. You will be interacting with elementary age children by helping them to listen and to respond to the story. If you would like more information contact me at [jocevh@juno.com](mailto:jocevh@juno.com). I am hoping that you will respond to this ministry of Hope Church and be a part of this team.

You will find it to be a rewarding experience. Please remember this ministry and the children of the Family Hope Ministry Center in your prayers.

### **KIDS HOPE USA**

#### **Kids Hope USA: A New Mentor and Summer Camp Scholarships**

Last month, we expressed our thanks and appreciation to all of our currently active mentors, substitute mentors and prayer partners. Since then we have been blessed by the addition of a new mentor, Vicki Rumpsa. Vicki began meeting with her first grade Kids Hope student the week of January 30 which is the beginning of Vanderbilt's Third Quarter. Please pray for her as she works to establish a relationship with her student which will allow that student to blossom and grow in areas of social and academic weakness.

On another note, by the time you read this we will have completed the first step in the process which enables many of our Vanderbilt Kids Hope students to spend a week at Camp Geneva. Thanks to many generous donors, Camp Geneva is able to provide large scholarships to Kids Hope campers who are entering grades 4-6 in the fall. We ask the parents of our Kids Hope students to provide \$50 towards camp costs if they are able to do so and our very supportive congregation has made a commitment to provide the remaining funds necessary for overnight campers. The congregation also enables us to offer scholarships to our Kids Hope children who are entering grades 2-3 to attend Day Camp. Last year, we were able to send 6 children to Geneva Shores (overnight camp) and 1 child to Day Camp. We are so grateful that we can provide our Vanderbilt students with this chance to make new friends and grow in their spiritual commitment, sense of independence, social skills, and self-esteem. And we know we cannot do it without you. Thanks for being a part of our Hope Church Kids Hope Team and for your generous gifts, which make this opportunity to share God's love possible



Anne Duinkerken and Barbara Joldersma, Co-Directors

## INTERPLAY COMES TO HOPE CHURCH ON SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 12

Do you ever get that feeling in the months of January, February, and March, that there's mid-winter crud sticking to you (like the stuff that accumulates in the wheel-wells of your car when there's sticky, wet snow on the roads), that you'd love to shake off?

Hope Church's Prayer and Spirituality ministry - joyful sponsors of Quiet Days and other practices of spiritual care - would like to warmly offer an alternative.

It's called InterPlay, and we're excited to share an experience of it with all of you on Sunday, February 12, 3:00-5:00 p.m. in the Commons.

InterPlay is devoted to fun. It requires no prior experience and no specific level of "ability". It teaches the language and ethic of play in a deep and powerful way. If you would like to become a "recovering serious person", it might just be for you. InterPlay is the perfect antidote to stress and cynicism, a stimulant to creativity and lightness. In a fragmented world, it integrates body, mind, heart, and spirit, helping to draw things together into balance and wholeness. InterPlay uses a series of incremental "forms" to encourage participants to move, tell stories, enter stillness, and experiment with voice and sound. Through this fun and easy process, we invite experiences of grace in ourselves and our communities.

For our first try at this as a church, we are recommending that participants be 16 years or older...and also anticipate intergenerational fun in future sessions!

## SUPPORT FOR CONGREGATIONAL CARE

We wanted to share two reminders for those in our congregation who might *NEED* help and for those who want to *OFFER* help.

**Hope Helpers:** We now have a list of people who have said they could help around the house with one-time projects and chores. If you need some help remember the Hope Helpers list. You can contact your Congregational Care leader or the church office if you'd like the help of one of our Hope Helpers. We are looking for ways to increase these connections of care, so watch for additional ways to network and share resources in the months ahead!

**Ready Made Meals:** If you've ever wanted to bring a meal to someone during a time of need but were short on time, please remember that there is a supply of meals in the freezer of the church kitchen. Members make casseroles and soups and other meals that freeze well and leave them in the church kitchen for others to deliver to people during times of stress. You can help by making meals for this supply or you can use the supply to deliver a meal!

**New Resource for Caregivers:** We also wanted to share a new resource for caregivers coming in our weekly bulletins. Karen Mulder has launched a ministry for caregivers entitled Wisdom of the Wounded. Her website contains an abundance of resources for those in the caregiving role whether that is in the ministry of a church or within your own family and neighborhood. She offers her words of wisdom and spiritual support through a weekly radio broadcast that can also be heard from her website: [wisdomofthewounded.com](http://wisdomofthewounded.com). We will be sharing the topic of her weekly talk along with the link to her website in our bulletin each week. So watch for this wonderful resource coming soon!

## **BRIM BUNCH**

Wednesday, February 8th is the date of the next Brim Bunch meeting, which will be held in the Commons at 6:00 p.m. Our fellow Hope Church member, John Fleming, will present a PowerPoint presentation of his superb photos of nature and unusual birds. His work is the product of countless hours of patience and talent. Come see and enjoy!

A potluck dinner will precede the meeting and members are asked to bring a casserole, salad, or dessert ample for eight people. Those who have no way to purchase or home-cook food may make a donation of \$8.00 each.

You have all read or heard that our church is collecting "stuff", as Larry Mulder calls it, to be taken to Haiti by those participating in the church's Spring Break work trip. Please bring an item to our meeting. Things such as Tupperware/Rubbermaid boxes or scissors need not be new - - just in good condition. If you prefer to help by buying food, a collection of money will be taken for this purpose, as we all know it is more economical to purchase food in large quantities.

The telephone committee will take reservations which are to be in by Sunday, February 5th. The welcome mat is out for everyone. If you would like to attend and are not on a list, call Lois Boersma at 396-7247 for a reservation.

## **P.A.C.T. (PARENTS AND CHILDREN TOGETHER)**

is a great time to become more connected with other families from church. There will always be a story read while the kids stop to enjoy a simple snack. There will be structured activities offered, but sometimes kids just want to run and play! No matter what happens during our time together, the most important thing is that everybody has a good time. It is a great time for families with small children to connect with others during a time when it is often hard to do so.

**We gather on the first and third Thursdays of the month, 9:30-10:30 a.m.**

## **FROM THE FELLOWSHIP FILES:**

**Pizza Sunday:** Our next Pizza Sunday will be on February 26. Plan to stay and enjoy this time of fellowship together. You may have noticed that we now offer salads at Pizza Sunday. We need help in keeping this healthy addition to our Pizza Sunday menu. You do not have to pay for the supplies. You simply need to go to Gordon Foods and pick up salad. You can now sign up to host Pizza Sunday or to provide the salads for the day. This is an easy task that can be done by a couple of friends or as a family. Instructions are provided and easy to follow. Please consider signing up to host or supply salads for a Pizza Sunday in 2012!

**Bowling:** Fellowship Ministry is hosting a church bowling party on February 19 at 2:00 p.m. at Century Lanes. Watch for an opportunity to sign up. The cost of \$8 per person includes two games and shoe rental.

**Cran Hill Ranch Summer Campout:** Just a reminder that our all-church campout is scheduled for July 20-22. Watch the bulletin for a chance to confirm your reservation for summer camping, and as we get closer to the event, there may still be room for additional people to join us who did not sign up last fall. If you have questions, contact a member of the Fellowship Ministry. This is a great way to relax in a beautiful setting and share in a great time of fellowship with members and friends of Hope Church!

## OFFICE HOURS:

The Personnel Committee has noted that the church office does not have much foot traffic or phone traffic during the present Friday hours of 9:00 a.m.—12:00 noon. Personnel has decided to institute a three-month trial, from February through April, of having the church office closed on Fridays. Office hours will be Monday through Thursday, 9:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m., open during the lunch hour. Toward the end of the trial, feedback will be solicited as to whether to continue or reinstitute the Friday morning office hours.

## WALK FOR WARMTH: FEBRUARY 11, 2012

Warm hearts, warm boots, warm homes! You can walk or support Walk for Warmth which will happen on Saturday, February 11. There will be tables in the Gathering Area on Sunday, February 5th, to sign up or donate to support Hope Church members who will walk.

Because of support and donations last year, Community Action House was able to keep the heat on in nearly 400 homes throughout Ottawa County last year. All donations to Walk for Warmth are used directly to assist families facing utility shut-off.

Registration for Walk for Warmth begins at 8:30 a.m. on Saturday, February 11 (no registration fee) at City on a Hill, 100 Pine Street, Zeeland. Come and join a brisk two-mile, well-marked winter walk around downtown Zeeland. Please see Marjorie DeBlaay (Health Ministry), Peter Boogaart (Caring for Creation), or Norma Killilea if you have any questions. We hope some of you sturdy Michiganders will choose to join us in this local, supportive activity!

## CAMP APPLICATIONS

Summer will come, sooner than you think! Applications are available in the church office for Camp Geneva and CranHill Ranch. These Michigan RCA camps offer wonderful opportunities to meet new friends, have fun and adventure, and draw closer to God.

**Pick up your application soon to participate in the camp experience!**

***Attention families of 4th & 5th graders:***

***Scholarships are available for your child.***

***Contact Gordon Wiersma in the church office (392-7947).***

## HOPE CHURCH BLOG HELPS MAKE CONNECTIONS

The New Year is a great time to sign up to receive email alerts for the Life of Hope Blog. If you have not yet joined this growing rank of connected Hope Church members and friends, you can sign up today by going to [lifeofhopechurch.wordpress.com](http://lifeofhopechurch.wordpress.com) and putting your email into the **Email Subscription** box on the front page of the blog. You will receive an email each time there is a new post on the blog so that you can stay connected to opportunities to volunteer both in the community and in the ministry at Hope Church. And don't forget to **USE** the blog to promote volunteer opportunities. Just contact the church office with the notice you would like us to send out over the blog including the email contact for those interested in helping.

## THANK YOU

*We would like to thank the members and friends of Hope Church for their prayers, support, and visits during Bob's recent hospitalization and recovery. You are appreciated!*

Bob J. and Joyce T. and family

*Dear Hope Church friends,*

*You have been faithful in keeping me and my family in your prayers for these past nine months. Thank you for your kind words, many cards and generous actions. My family and I are truly blessed to be part of this church community.*

David K.

*Dear Members of Hope Church,*

*After 70 years of membership (that makes me almost 91!) I am now living in a retirement home near my daughter Vicki in Oklahoma City. However, I really am grateful for the "Hope Church News" and devour it from cover to cover.*

*May you have a wonderful Christmas season. I'll be thinking of you. With best wishes to everyone. I miss you!*

Ruth V.

*Many thanks for the great job Fish Club did cleaning up my yard for winter. They all worked hard and finished the job in jig time.*

Kay M.

## THANK YOU

### **To the Carolers, Youth, and Children of Hope Church**

*You have all been so kind to me while I have had to give up attending church services because of two painful knees. I am with you in spirit, however, as I listen to the service over the radio. All your Christmas cards, the carol singers, the Christmas cookies, and the beautiful poinsettia are so appreciated. Many thanks to you all.*

Winnie H.

*Thank you so much for your kindness. The cookies are wonderful and the St. Nicholas figure is now on my tree. Thank you.*

Grandma Anna M.

*We would like to thank all of you for your kindness at Christmastime. The Sinter Klaas we have on our desk holding important papers together. When we look at him we think of all of you. Thank you too for the delicious cookies; since we are "Cookie Monsters" they were gone in no time. And thank you for the many lovely cards and messages, and for the beautiful poinsettia plant ~ it was gorgeous.*

*Shalom and much love,*

Abe and Elin M.

*My deep appreciation and thank you for your prayers and remembrances. The choir and gifts of flowers, cookies, and cards, so gracious and generous, were a real outpouring of your lovingkindness and tenderness. So much needed and received. I trust that our Heavenly Father will take note and bless you in abundance. To the Young People who took time to send their blessings and kind thoughts to me: I pray for you and yours that you will enjoy God's wonderful gifts at this time of year and forever in the future. Love you.*

Bob H.

*Thank you so much for the wonderful cookies you brought to us. They were delicious. We especially enjoyed the St. Nicholas ornament.*

Bob & Peg D.

*Thank you for all your lovely carols, the gorgeous poinsettia, and the thoughtful bag of cards. Your visit was, as always, one of the highlights of the season! You are very much appreciated.*

Leola R.

## **THANK YOU ~ From the Pastors**

*Dear Hope Church Friends,*

*It was wonderful to be able to celebrate our wedding day on New Year's Eve with so many of our Hope Church friends and to receive the congratulations of many who weren't able to be there.*

*We had already received such kindness in all the good wishes people had expressed to us leading up to our wedding, and then to be surrounded on that day with such a spirit of joy for the ceremony and reception was truly a thrill for us.*

*We were also so grateful to receive the combined gift from the congregation, which was very generous and is a great help to us as we begin this new chapter in life for us and our family. We will be sending a personal thank you to each of you, but that will take a little while so please accept this as an initial thanks to all of you.*

*Our special thanks as well to the staff of Hope Church and the many people who helped with the ceremony and reception to make it all such a fabulous celebration. We cannot fully express what a marvelous day it was and all of our gratitude for it, but we do want you to know how blessed we feel to have your love and support. Thank you.*

Gordon & Anne Wiersma

*Dear Friends at Hope Church,*

*Andrew and I want to express our deep gratitude to the congregation for the family leave you all afforded to me after Von was born. The time we had to bond as a family was precious time for all of us. We appreciated all the many prayers, calls, notes, gifts, meals, and visits that so many of you shared with us. We felt surrounded in love and support and it was a real blessing. I also wanted to express my appreciation to Jerry VanHeest, Lynn Japinga, and Laurie Beyer-Braaksma who all took on different aspects of my responsibilities while I was on leave. I know I was blessed by Lynn's preaching through that time and greatly appreciate the time and energy Jerry and Laurie invested in our congregational life during my leave as well!*

*Thank you all,*

Jill Russell & Andrew Bunnell  
Cassidy Russell & Von Bunnell

### **TAKE A RETREAT DAY AT BETHABARA**

*~ funded through the Les Beach Memorial ~*

You are invited to enjoy a retreat day at Bethabara Retreat Center in Saugatuck. Bethabara is run by Mary VanAndel and Ben Sikkink, and you can find out more about Bethabara and taking a retreat day at <http://bethabara.net>. Just contact Mary at 269-857-7010, or email [bethabara@comcast.net](mailto:bethabara@comcast.net), to schedule a time and tell them to contact Hope Church for payment – it's that simple! Bethabara offers a beautiful setting for retreat for body and soul, and we're grateful for the costs to be covered through the ongoing support of the Les Beach Memorial Fund at Hope Church.



**COFFEE TIME!**

This is a caring outreach and fellowship opportunity for residents and their friends at different locations to meet with the pastors and other congregation members and staff. Two or three staff members, Congregational Care Ministry representative(s), and any other congregation members who would like to attend are all welcome. The next *Coffee Time* will be at Warm Friend on February 14 at 10:30 a.m. Mark your calendar, and come for an hour!

**HOPE CHURCH READERS**

will meet on Wednesday, February 15 at 1:00 p.m. in Commons II. Marilyn Cook will lead a discussion of *Bloody Crimes* by James Swanson. Visitors are always welcome!

**CIRCLES**

Circle 1  
Wednesday, February 1, 9:30 a.m.  
Circle 2  
No Circle 2 meeting in February  
Circle 4  
Wednesday, February 8 at 7:00 p.m.

**FISH CLUB**

Our annual trip to CranHill had to be canceled this year. Our kids had too many other obligations, but we'll try again next year. We will be hosting Pizza Sunday on January 29, then meeting in the evening to explore Restorative Circles. We look forward to bowling and sledding in February.

**HIGH HOPES**

We made it up to CranHill the weekend of January 20-22 and had a fantastic retreat. The first Sunday of February we will be learning about Restorative Circles. After that, it's a sponsors meeting to figure out the rest of our spring schedule.

**AT HOME WITH THE WORD**

**Daily Bible Readings from the Revised Common Lectionary**

January 30 - February 5

**Monday** Isaiah 40:21-31  
**Tuesday** Psalm 147:1-6  
**Wednesday** Psalm 147:7-11, 20  
**Thursday** I Corinthians 9:16-23  
**Friday** Mark 1:29-34  
**Saturday** Mark 1:35-39  
**Sunday** 5th Sunday after Epiphany

February 6 - 12

**Monday** II Kings 5:1-7  
**Tuesday** II Kings 5:8-14  
**Wednesday** Psalm 30:1-5  
**Thursday** Psalm 30:6-12  
**Friday** I Corinthians 9:24-27  
**Saturday** Mark 1:40-45  
**Sunday** 6th Sunday after Epiphany

February 13 - 19

**Monday** II Kings 2:1-8  
**Tuesday** II Kings 2:9-12  
**Wednesday** Psalm 50:1-2  
**Thursday** Psalm 50:3-6  
**Friday** II Corinthians 4:3-6  
**Saturday** Mark 9:2-9  
**Sunday** Transfiguration Sunday

February 20 - 26

**Monday** Genesis 9:8-17  
**Tuesday** Psalm 25:1-10  
**Wednesday** Ash Wednesday;  
Psalm 51:1-17  
**Thursday** I Peter 3:18-22  
**Friday** Mark 1:9-11  
**Saturday** Mark 1:12-15  
**Sunday** 1st Sunday in Lent

February 27 - March 4

**Monday** Genesis 17:1-7, 15-16  
**Tuesday** Psalm 22:23-31  
**Wednesday** Romans 4:13-15  
**Thursday** Romans 4:16-25  
**Friday** Mark 8:31-38  
**Saturday** Mark 9:2-9  
**Sunday** 2nd Sunday in Lent

## AND FINALLY...

As we ordained new elders and deacons on January 8<sup>th</sup> I spoke these words in the opening liturgy for that service of ordination and installation: "We are ambassadors for Christ who reconciles and makes whole." This was in the part of the liturgy that describes the calling we each receive in baptism. We are, **all** of us, ambassadors for Christ. As I was sharing this piece of the liturgy I was struck by the language of reconciliation as the defining purpose for Jesus' ministry. He is described as one who reconciles and makes whole and as his ambassadors that now defines our ministry as well. During the ordinary time after Epiphany we now celebrate a Season of Reconciliation. We are in the midst of it right now and it feels right and good to dedicate a season to this theme since it is so central to the work of Jesus Christ.

I hope you are catching the spirit of this season. It has to do with a wide range of concerns: racial divisions, economic inequities, relational conflicts....any place in need of reconciliation. This year we are hosting a small group book discussion on interfaith dialogue, showing a film on immigration concerns, and will vote to advise the consistory on whether to become a Room for All Congregation.

We are also launching a new ministry in February that will be called the Reconciliation Ministry. This group will track a number of issues for us a congregation:

- Support all of our ministries in living into our commitment to multicultural diversity
- Support the development of Restorative Circles as a tool of reconciliation both within Hope Church and in the wider community
- Connect to and support community agencies that work on reconciliation like the Alliance for Cultural and Ethnic Harmony and Lakeshore Ethnic Diversity Alliance, and promote and support the Summit on Racism
- Advocate for issues of justice and reconciliation in our community as they arise

This ministry will seek to lead us in being more and more intentional in our commitment to be ambassadors for Christ who reconciles and makes whole. If you are interested in joining this ministry please speak with either me or Pastor Gordon or one of the three consistory members who will be serving on this ministry: Tom Arendshorst, Jane Dickie, and John Koch. We covet your prayers as this ministry is formed and begins its work.

As we come into our final week of this Season of Reconciliation on February 5<sup>th</sup>, I leave you with this prayer from *A Reconciliation Sourcebook*:

*In Christ you give your people a season of reconciliation and grace:  
a time to draw new breath  
for our journey back to you,  
a time to open our hearts to your Spirit  
and to respond to the needs of all.*

Peace to you,

