

Spirit of Hope

Mount Hope Lutheran Church

Preschool and Childcare

February 24, 2021

Message from Pastor Fran Green

"I focus on this one thing: Forgetting the past and looking forward to what lies ahead, I press on to reach the end of the race and receive the heavenly prize for which God, through Christ Jesus, is calling us."

(Philippians 3:13-14 NLT)

We have been journeying the 2021 year thus far in a worship series titled *Forward* based upon a book of the same title by Dr. David Jeremiah. This has been a good challenge for us as a church to consider what our life together may look like post COVID-19 restrictions. The end is certainly in sight as more and more are being vaccinated each week but cannot come quickly enough after nearly one year.

We know that the Lord has placed Mount Hope exactly where we need to be to accomplish His work. The specific manner in accomplishing that work may differ depending on many factors, including pandemic restrictions; but we know that the actual mission never changes. We state it in the words of our vision statement each week as we close our worship services, ***Our vision is to REACH our friends and neighbors, with the truth, love, and hope of Jesus Christ while growing as His disciples.***

We live at this Mountain of Hope to reach people with Jesus' love and hope. Our path forward is in living this out by being The Friendship Center of Bloomington and beyond. It is an exciting time to move forward! How will each of us engage in this exciting opportunity?

Invite a guest to join us in person at 9:30 each Sunday or via live streaming on our YouTube page: Mount Hope Lutheran Church or catch it at a later time either on our website: mthopelutheran.org or call for a DVD copy. Remember, there are a lot of lonely people out there and perhaps that lonely person is you. Your Mount Hope family is here for you, please reach out and connect with us.

Communion will not be available during the week while I am away (see below). Perhaps, there will be other opportunities offered, please watch this newsletter in the weeks ahead for more information.

On a personal note, I am scheduled for a total knee replacement on March 1. At this point, I will have pre-op appointments this week and on Saturday, February 27, I will have a COVID test. So, that means I will need to quarantine from that point on. Pastors Dan Ritter and John Stern will be covering for me while away. The surgeon has not been very specific in the amount of recovery time necessary, so we will proceed with our tentative plans for the month of March. Thank you, Pastor Dan and Pastor John, for helping us out during this time.

Thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. 1 Corinthians 15:57

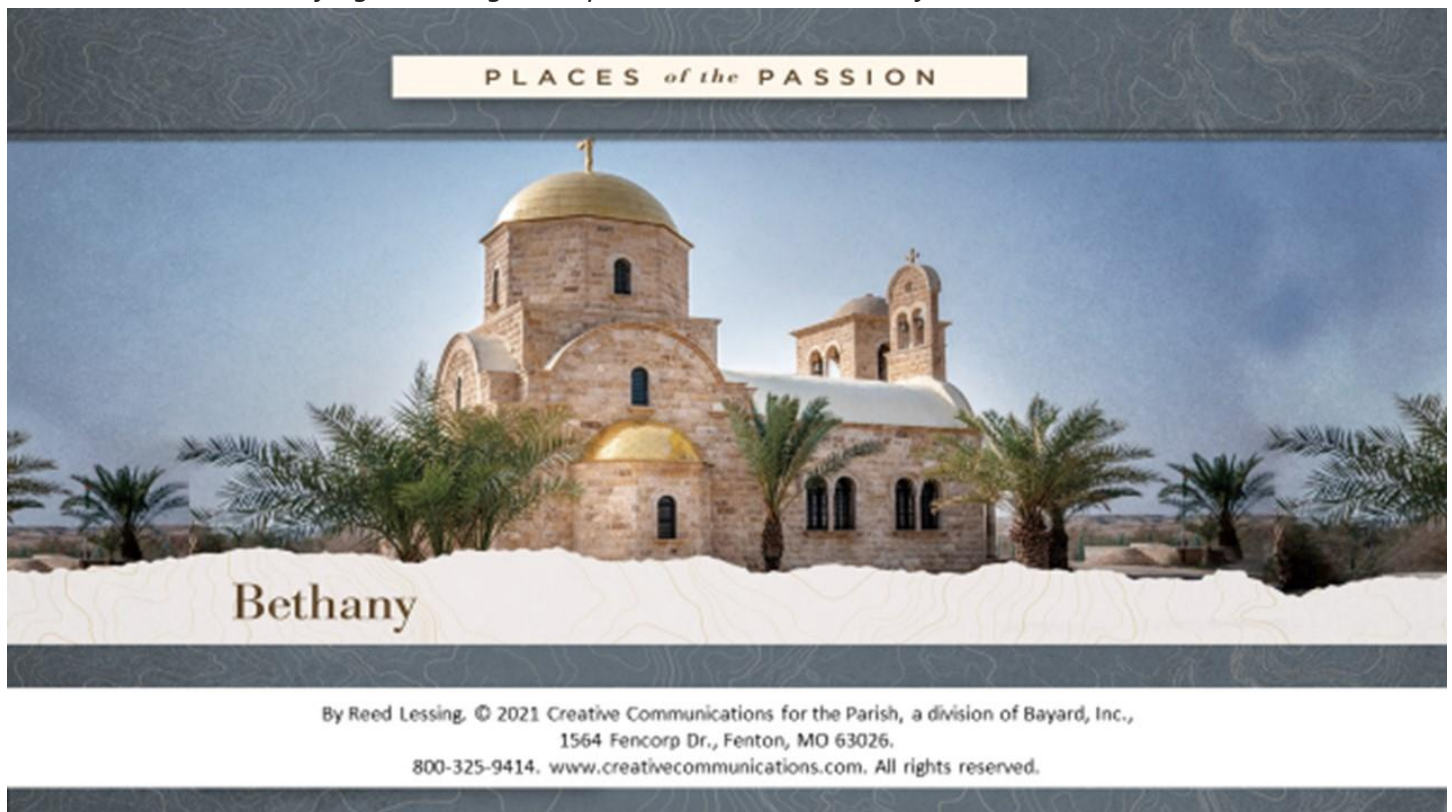
We are Mount Hope, Where Guests become Friends, Friends become Family!
Serving together, Pastor Fran Green

The Season of Lent

Lent begins this week!

Our Lenten season continues this week as we are walking with Jesus to Bethany, visiting Places of the Passion.

The places where the passion of our Lord took place hold special meaning to Christians the world over. These places remind us that Jesus walked this earth and stood in locations we can still find today to carry out his mission of salvation. This was no sightseeing trip for our Savior. There was a serious reason he came to be at certain places and at particular times to suffer and die and rise again. He was fulfilling the will of his Father who desired that we be forgiven and given a place in heaven with him forever.



Each week, these worship services will be available online at mthopelutheran.org/sermons and on our YouTube page. They will also be available in DVD at church or we can send them to you in the mail, simply let us know.

These prerecorded worship services will be available on the web at:

Youtube: [Mount Hope Lutheran Church - YouTube](#)

Facebook: [Mount Hope Lutheran Church, Bloomington, MN | Facebook](#)

Instagram: on your phone at Mount Hope Lutheran Church

and our Website: [Mount Hope Lutheran Church – Minneapolis, MN \(mthopelutheran.org\)](http://mthopelutheran.org)

DVD's will be available at church or we can send them to you in the mail, simply let us know.

We are continuing with this format of online services during the week and in-person worship on Sundays as this has worked very well in limiting contacting or spreading COVID-19. For Easter Sunday, we will be asking people to sign up for one of two services so that we are able to gauge our worship numbers. Thank you for your continued patience and understanding as we navigate, what is hopefully, the final phase of the coronavirus limitations.

Sunday's Message

“Remember what the Lord said to Moses about you and me when we were at Kadesh-Barnea?” Caleb asked Joshua. ‘I was forty years old at the time, and Moses had sent us from Kadesh-Barnea to spy out the land of Canaan. I reported what I felt was the truth, but our brothers who went with us frightened the people and discouraged them from entering the Promised Land. But since I had followed the Lord my God, Moses told me, ‘The section of Canaan you were just in shall belong to you and your descendants forever.’” (Joshua 14:6-9 TLB)

Can you imagine the dreaming that Caleb must have done for the past 45 years?! Or, going way back to his time of bondage in Egypt, can you imagine the dreams that he and the people of God dreamt. Of course, to make matters worse, Caleb had seen the amazing Promised Land; but was unable to go into it until the Lord allowed. He wanted to go Forward as he had done as a much younger man of 40. Do you think he ever wondered, “If only” If only we had obeyed the Lord, I would have been enjoying that incredible place this entire time! If only...

We too, have been journeying Forward since beginning the new year. We’ve been challenged to Dream as individuals and as a church asking the Lord for a mission. We have been engaged in Prayer as well seeking His will for our lives. We also talked about choosing and Focus realizing that there is power in being able to choose a direction and move forward eliminating distractions as well.

We talked about God’s call and that it certainly almost always involves RISK challenging our faith and where we place our trust. And last week we looked at Believe. Jesus told us that, **“Everything is possible for the one who believes.”** We build our lives on that promise, we build it on the Lord Jesus, He is worthy of our love and trust.

Caleb experienced all of this and laid it all on the line because of his trust and belief in the Lord God. Of course, it was all in God’s timing, but Caleb lived the dream! At 85 years old, he will experience the longing of his heart. **“Now, as you see, from that time until now the Lord has kept me alive and well for these forty-five years since crisscrossing the wilderness and today, I am eighty-five years old. I am as strong now as I was when Moses sent us on that journey, and I can still travel and fight as well as I could then! So, I’m asking that you give me the hill country that the Lord promised me.” (Joshua 14:10-12 TLB)**

Now that's moving forward! That's keeping the eyes on the prize living in faith and trust of the Lord. Doesn't Caleb's life fit our theme verses perfectly? **"I focus on this one thing: Forgetting the past and looking forward to what lies ahead, I press on to reach the end of the race and receive the heavenly prize for which God, through Christ Jesus, is calling us." (Philippians 3:13-14 NLT)**

So, we return to these questions from week one, What about you? What's your dream? Can you envision God's next step for your life? What does He want to do through you this year, in the coming years, and in the remaining time He gives you in this life? We don't want to lament and wonder, "If only". What are the things keeping us from charging forward?

Caleb provides us with a wonderful example! **Joshua 14:14 NIV, "So Hebron has belonged to Caleb ever since, because he followed the Lord, the God of Israel, wholeheartedly." Number 14:24, "But because my servant Caleb has a different spirit and follows me wholeheartedly, I will bring him into the land he went to, and his descendants will inherit it."**

It is interesting, but Caleb literally means "dog" in Hebrew. It is interesting because dogs aren't presented as the loving companions that they are today in the Scriptures. It is a mystery and not resolved by scholars, but Caleb certainly possesses the good qualities that we love in dogs and he follows the Lord God wholeheartedly, just like the loyal companions that we love. And most often when one does a study on the name Caleb, it is defined as loyal, faithful, wholehearted, bold, brave.

We are called to love the Lord and follow Him wholeheartedly just like Caleb. Words of Old Testament scholar: "It would have been natural for Caleb to ask for a 'soft spot'—a portion of land already conquered where he could settle down and spend the rest of his life raising a few vegetables or flowers. Instead, at 85, he asked for the very section that had struck terror into the hearts of the ten spies..." "This courageous old warrior, who did not expect to receive his inheritance without exerting himself, is a splendid example for an age which increasingly looks for cradle-to-casket protection." (Jacobsen, NET Bible)

So, here we are at the conclusion of our study, Forward. Where are we heading?

This past week I was re-reading through a book I look at every now and then, Anatomy of a Revived Church by Thom Rainer. This paragraph always jumps out and troubles me in so many ways. In speaking of another book Rainer writes, His central thesis was both profound and disturbing. If given a choice between life and death, most people and leaders choose death if life requires substantive changes. This is profound and disturbing! I don't know about you, but I can't disagree with it. I can think of many examples in my own life and observations of others.

We were finally able to hold our annual meeting this past Sunday. As I mentioned there and it is also included in my annual report, I don't believe we are close to dying here at Mount Hope. I think there are many encouraging things happening here. But I do believe we are on the verge of a pivotal time in our church life. Will we move forward boldly following Jesus wholeheartedly just as Caleb?

Having said that though, I think it is important for us to face reality as well. According to the most recent research conducted by Thom Rainer, there are Six Types of Churches That Have Died During the Pandemic.

1. The aged church. For churches where I have data, the median age of the remaining members (of the dead church) was 76.
2. The fighting church. The deceased churches had numerous conflicts.
3. The deferred maintenance church. These churches did not make wise decisions to keep the facilities in good condition.
4. The run-the-pastor-off church. These churches pushed their pastors out – Usually, there was a power group in the church that did not want the pastor to lead.
5. The neighborhood-looks-different church. The neighborhood changed, but the church didn't.
6. The infant church. These churches were relatively new and did not have many members or givers prior to the pandemic.

No one knows what church will look like – post COVID-19. We do know that Jesus is Lord of the Church and He is and will continue to build it. We do our best to follow Caleb's example, following Jesus wholeheartedly. We are committed to be the church here at Mount Hope! We truly desire to be that church Where Guests become Friends and Friends Become Family. We do that by living as growing disciples of Jesus. Our vision is to REACH our friends and neighbors with the truth, love, and hope of Jesus Christ while growing as His disciples.

Interestingly, Rainer's research also re-visited the question of what is the most notable mark of a growing disciple today? Do you know what it is? Daily Bible reading! Should we be surprised? Spending time in God's Word will most certainly drive us to desire to seek guests to tell them the Good News of Jesus and to invite them into our midst.

And the top priority of a revitalized church is Prayer. Praying for those who do not know Jesus; praying for God to empower us to be His witnesses. Praying and in God's Word! That same daily praying and reading breaks our hearts for people moving us to be their friends and ultimately to invite them into our family. All of this by the power of God's Holy Spirit working in and through us. That's our path FORWARD here at Mount Hope!! AMEN.

Announcements

Altar Flowers

The new 2021 Flower Calendar is up on the bulletin board in the information hallway. Please sign up for a date that you would like to recognize a special date or want to beautify the church. The arrangements are \$30.-Make your check payable to *The Women of Hope* and place it and your dedication in Karen Mack's mailbox or call her at 952-831-7428. There are many spots available to choose from. Sign up today! Sunday, Feb. 28 is available.

Prayer Requests

Let us pray for you. Share your request at conradmarilyn@usfamily.net or by calling Marilyn 952 881 0014 or the church office at 952-888-5059.

Christian Literature Collection

Mount Hope continues to collect Christian literature materials for the International Christian Literature Distributors located in Minneapolis. They take both hard and soft cover Bibles, soft cover books, pamphlets and devotional books. A donation box is located on the coat rack on the east side of the building. The materials are sent free of charge to English-speaking parts of the developing world. Thanks-Marilyn & Conrad Nelson.

Open Enrollment

Registration for the 2021-22 school year opens to the public on February 1st. If you know of anyone looking for preschool, please have them contact Kim in the office 952-888-5059 or direct them to our website. Mount Hope cares for children starting at 33 months of age. We would love to reach more of our neighbors.

HYMN Bible Study

Bible study continues to take place at Mt Hope. Our HYMN Bible Study meets in-person and through video! Our group of ladies are enjoying our studies on the authors of, inspiration, and basis of old and new hymns throughout the ages.



New Life Family Services

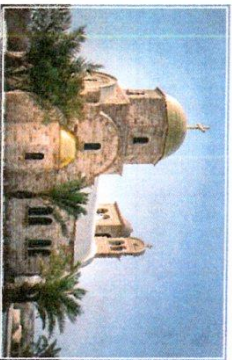
Your donations in January are making a difference! A delivery was made to First Care. First Care Center is one of three programs supporting families through New Life Family Services. These three programs include the First Care Center, Conquerors, and Adoption Services. First Care Center provides free pregnancy testing, counseling, ultrasounds, parent support, and more through four locations (Richfield, Minneapolis, St. Paul and Rochester). Many, many items and cash donations were taken to the Richfield location on Thursday, Feb. 18 by Jennifer Adamek, the car was full! The staff was very appreciative and thanks you for your support for this ministry!



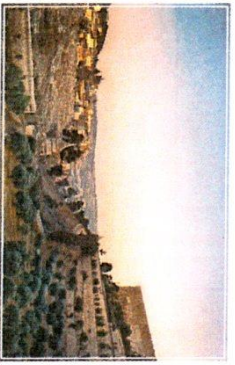
A Series of Services for the Season of Lent



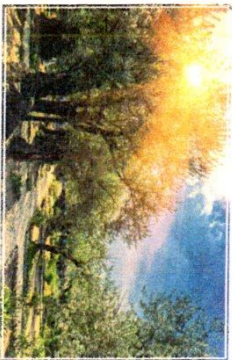
The City of Jerusalem



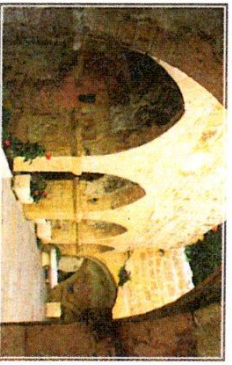
Bethany



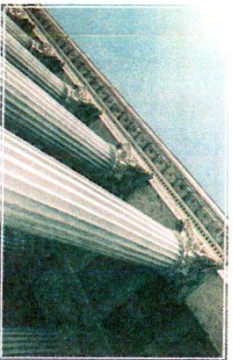
The Mount of Olives



Gethsemane



The Courtyard



Pilate's Judgment Hall

Experience the Season of Lent

In this worship series for Lent, we follow in the footsteps of Jesus, contemplating what happened at each place our Savior stood along the path of his Passion for our sake. Each service explores the meaning, history and spiritual inspiration associated with the location highlighted. Parishioners will learn things they may not have known before as they grow to understand the hard road our Lord took to open heaven to us.

ASH WEDNESDAY

The City of Jerusalem

Jerusalem is the place of the Passover, where Jesus gathers with the crowds.

Matthew 26:1-5

WEEK 1

Bethany

Jesus is anointed for burial by his friend Mary, at her home in this small town.

Matthew 26:6-13

WEEK 2

The Mount of Olives

The disciples sing a hymn with Jesus before they head out to this place of prayer.

Matthew 26:30-35

WEEK 3

Gethsemane

Jesus is betrayed and arrested in this garden under cover of darkness.

Matthew 26:47-56

WEEK 4

The Courtyard

While Jesus is put on trial before the high priest, Peter denies Jesus in this place.

Matthew 26:57-69

WEEK 5

Pilate's Judgment Hall

Pilate is positioned here to set Jesus free, but turns him over to be crucified instead.

Matthew 27:11-23

Sunday Worship Schedule

9:30am In-Person Worship

Services Online at

www.mthopelutheran.org/sermons

Phone: 952-888-5059

E-mail: church@mthopelutheran.org

Website: www.mthopelutheran.org

Youtube Channel: Mount Hope
Lutheran Church

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