

# The Voice of Hope

DECEMBER 2019

*“Knowing and sharing the good news of Hope in Christ”*



Pastor Daniel Severson

**D**ear Friends,

In Luke’s version of the Christmas story, the angels proclaim to the shepherds that “...to you is born this day...a Savior, the Messiah, the Lord.” (Luke 2:11) These are familiar words to us because we hear them read to us each year at this time, and have since childhood. Moreover, that these titles: “Messiah,” “Savior,” and “Lord” apply to Jesus; this too is as familiar as our first memories of attending church services. “This is who he is,” we have been told, as have generations of people since Peter first made his confession at Caesarea Philippi in the year 29 A.D. However, when the shepherds hear this, it is not a new born baby who would have come to mind. Rather, since the year 27 B.C., Caesar Augustus, as the first emperor of Rome, was given these same titles, or titles that meant the same thing. Why? Because after years of bloody conflict, he had finally brought peace to the Roman world. And yes, he was also referred to as a “peacemaker” and a “Son of God.” Luke’s message is that the world is confused about this. These titles belong to Jesus instead Caesar, not only because Jesus saves people from the hopelessness of death through his resurrection to eternal life, but also because, through his ministry, he is going to revolutionize the values we live by. In a mere eighteen to twenty-six months, (the gospels are not clear on this) and without holding any position of power: without writing a single book: and living in what anyone would call poverty since he owned nothing, his deeds, teachings, and sermons remade the world.

Before Christians proclaimed that a crucified man was the Lord, no one believed that it was anything but shameful to die for whatever it was you were living for. Glory was to be found in destroying the opposition, not by suffering for your convictions, or by suffering for others. That suffering was an essential aspect of Jesus’ victory made no sense to anyone. This is why they hounded him while he was on the cross by

saying, “If you are the Messiah, come down from the cross. Then we will believe in you.” One of the criminals also said, “If you are the Messiah, save yourself and us!” That’s what Caesar did. He defeated the enemy, and his enemies were so humiliated that they committed suicide. Since that time, and the time of the Christian martyrs, the courage and resolve to suffer for what is good, right, and true is not only admired. It is considered a victory because evil has not defeated the suffering person’s conscience and soul. The courage to suffer and die for the right is celebrated whenever we pay tribute to those who are willing to sacrifice everything for others. “Give me liberty or give me death” is the American version of this transformation in values.

One of the most enduring legacies of what Jesus said and did is that we have a moral duty to care for those who cannot care for themselves. In the Roman world, the poor, the sick, slaves, unwanted infants, and orphans (unless they could be used as slaves) were simply discarded as human debris. The idea that a person’s community or society had a moral obligation to care for such people would have been seen as an absurd waste of resources. The early Christian communities routinely gathered-up abandoned infants and cared for them as if they were their own. Pagan priests, famous for their debauchery, complained that the Christians were taking people away from the temples of the gods because they fed the hungry and clothed the naked. “Don’t expect us to do that!” was their response to one of the emperors, who was concerned about the growth of churches.

Nero, emperor during the first bout of persecution in 65 regularly had street festivals where women were expected to submit to any man who wanted sexual favors. Adult men often kept young boys for the same reason. Jesus’ equal respect for and ministry to abused women was seen as unbecoming for a rabbi. Moreover the Apostle Paul had told the Corinthian Church that “Your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit.” That clearly meant that Christians had an obligation to say “NO” to anyone who wanted to use them for sexual gratification. Moreover, many Christian women chose a life of chastity for spiritual reasons and thereby took

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complete ownership of their bodies. While most people today may not know that this idea originates with Christianity, nevertheless, refusing to submit to unwanted sexual advances is now considered a moral obligation.

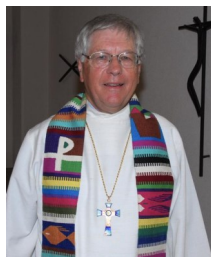
Roman Society, much like England in the Victorian Age, was extremely class conscious. Upper class people owed no respect to lower class people. However, lower class people disregarded this obligation to the rich at their own peril. Unfortunately, the Church of England was seemingly unaware of the fact that Jesus preferred the company of the poor, and this backfired on the church when the working class population lost interest in Sunday services. In any case, the idea of equality eventually won out, and once again, the revolution introduced by this obscure Jewish Rabbi between 28 and 30 A.D. prevailed.

These are just a few of the ideas related to the fact that, when the angels sang the birth of the Lord, they knew what they were saying. Jesus' Lordship spread in ways that are now so ingrained in the way we see things, and in the values we aspire to, that we take them for granted—as if people always believed many of the things he taught. This is most certainly not the case. Jesus is Lord, not just of Heaven, but of the earth as well. And the influence of his rule is all around us.

Merry Christmas!

, *Pastor Dan*

*Pastor  
Paul's Notes*



*Senior Ministry*

**A**re you ready for Advent? From “Sundays and Seasons”, some reflections on this season which begins on December 1:

The cycle of the church year orders our time in Christian community around the central mystery of our faith: the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

The “now-and-not-yet” nature of the fulfillment of our hope in Christ is never more real than in the season of Advent. The scripture readings launch us into this wheel of time that is much like our own lives, full of endings and beginnings – and of course, waiting.

Advent is indeed a season of anticipation. “The world is about to turn” (as we sing in a fiery paraphrase of the Magnificat (ELW 723). The readings prepare us to receive not only anew baby, but a new world where god’s justice and mercy reign.

It’s all here: hope, longing, fear, comfort, repentance, restoration, death, birth, endings and beginnings. And like our lives, it doesn’t all come at us in a tidy package. But over these four Sunday, the arc of the story is clear: the darkness is giving way to the light, the world is being re-born, and god is on the way.

Lord, how could the people wait so long for your birth?

How could they hope...and not give up? How does a notion

Wait for 1,000 years? Thanks for the patience and the hope

That keeps each day open.

You are not old and out date. You are new and for the future.

For the next generation. For the next century. For tomorrow.

Lord, you put us in this life in which things keep happening.

And You keep coming.

So take us on. Keep coming, and keep us going, Jesus.

(from Herbert Brokering’s Surprise me, Jesus)

*Altar Guild 2020*

“Altar Guild 2020 Calendar is ready for sign-ups” It is on the counter in the Vestry!



*Message from  
our  
Council President*

I enjoy keeping up with news and events in our area. I pay attention to other areas as well, especially where I have lived or where family members now live. I have a variety of sources – local newspapers, social media, radio, and TV. I especially appreciate two local papers, the Daily Post and the Daily Journal. Because I live and work at the southern end of San Mateo County, I sometimes pick up the Almanac (a weekly centered around Menlo Park) and the Palo Alto Weekly.

I was stunned a few weeks back to see in the Palo Alto Weekly that First Baptist Church in Palo Alto will be closing and selling off its assets. This is a congregation that traces its roots back well over one hundred years, to the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Like many churches in our area, and across the U.S., membership has aged and participation in worship has waned since its heyday in the '50s and '60s. Its leaders had talked about partnering with other congregations. They had tried outreach to their neighbors, but this did not produce any growth. The congregation tried to serve the community by renting out its buildings on a regularly basis, but this ran afoul of zoning laws and its neighbors. A consultant determined that the church could continue for a few more years, but it would not be sustainable as it is. The leadership pool has been depleted. Church leaders are in the process of choosing charitable organizations they have supported in the past to receive proceeds from the sale of the building.

I started thinking about other churches that have faced a similar fate. Before our family's move to San Mateo and our involvement in Hope from the very beginning, we belonged to Norwegian Lutheran Church across from Dolores Park in San Francisco. My parents were married there, and I still have vivid memories of Sunday School and Vacation Bible School. Membership gradually declined, and the name was changed to Ascension Lutheran Church to reach a broader audience. Merger with another Lutheran congregation provided a third name, Golden Gate Lutheran Church. Even so, membership continued to decline. Although the members worshiped regularly and provided free meals to the communi-

ty, the death knell for the congregation was a new city ordinance that required earthquake retrofitting for unreinforced masonry buildings. Although the church had replaced the roof and covered the large stained-glass windows with plexi-glass (to prevent target practice from kids in the neighborhood), it could not afford the retrofitting. The congregation was forced to disband. The building was eventually sold to a developer who remodeled it and tried to market it as a residence called "Castle on the Park." He was unsuccessful, and the building became the second campus of a nearby private day school. I was sad to see the church close; the last time I was there was for the funeral for a long-time family friend who had grown up in that church. A funeral seemed fitting for my last visit.

As a Lutheran, I'm somewhat averse to change. ("How many Lutherans does it take to change a light bulb?" Answer: "Change?!?!") However, times are changing, and I've got to adapt. I've seen big changes at Hope over the years. At one time, believe it or not, we had two sessions of Sunday School, one at the same time of each of the two worship services. If you worshipped at 9:30, Sunday School for you was at 11:00, and vice versa. Over the years, programs and attendance patterns have changed at Hope. Underlying all of these changes, God is our constant. What we must remember is that the love of God for us and the mercy He shows us never changes. We can depend on Him forever. As a child, I thought of a church in terms of being a building with a spire, but the better definition is that it is the family of Christ who come together to worship God and support each other.

Blessings,

Don Hermansen

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## *Hope Church Council Updates*

On behalf of the entire Congregation Council, I wanted to make all Hope members aware of an important effort that is currently underway. In September, the council voted to initiate the process to update Hope's constitution to be compliant with the current version of the *Model Constitution for Congregations of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America 2019*. This is a significant process, as our cur-

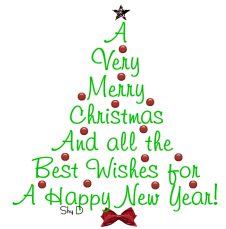
## Preschool Corner

The month of December is Jesus' birth, which is celebrated with love, blessing and songs. We are teaching our little angels beautiful songs that they will perform for their families at the annual Christmas sing.

It's a time to spread joy, kindness, gifts and comfort to those in need- especially families who lost so much in the recent fires.

We are gearing up for registration for 2020-2021 school year. If you have any families that you know of seeking an amazing preschool, let them know about us.

May all of you have the comfort of family and share in God's blessings



Helena Dummler	12/1
Marlys Loveall	12/3
Skip Dahl	12/4
Timothy Helland	12/4
Nina Amarandos	12/7
Shafer Smith	12/7
Michael Sallander	12/8
William Fischer	12/10
Sally Worthge	12/10
Diane Bare	12/11



Linda Havenor	12/11
May Fong	12/13
Karen Reed	12/13
Angamma Prasad	12/15
Roger Childs	12/18
Avnit Prasad	12/24
Bill Hastings	12/25
Katlin Kane	12/28
Jerry Milner	12/31

## Special Thanks to home and Hope Volunteers

Thank you to our generous volunteers for providing our three visiting families with a warm, safe place to sleep and enjoy good food. Our partnership with St. Ambrose Episcopal and Belmont Congregational Churches is important to our success as they cover four days in our week. We especially thank the steadfast help of Claire, Alex and Owen Hoover in setting up the rooms. Dinner volunteers are as much appreciated, as are Laundry Angels. Our overnight volunteers continue to need more help.

As we enter our 20th year serving our neighbors in need, please consider volunteering in 2020! Next hosting week is March 1st.

## Women's Christmas Potluck Luncheon



We are inviting you to the Women's Christmas potluck luncheon. It will be Saturday December 7, at 12:00 noon.

## Signs Ups' on the Patio!



Continuation from page 3.

rent constitution was put in place in July 2001, and there have been many updates from the ELCA since this time. To review and assess the updates, we have assembled a committee comprised of council members and Hope members at large. The committee is: Elaine Dummler, Hank Harper, Judy Jeschke (chair), Marlys Jungroth, Lynn Loveall, and David Philips. Our intent is to have approved changes go into effect on July 1, 2020. Following the committee's assessment, the recommendations from the committee will be presented and reviewed by the Hope Council, and the Council will call a congregational meeting to review the recommendations with the congregation. We expect this meeting to take place in early 2020. Notice of this meeting will be mailed to all voting members in late 2019 or early 2020.

Also, please mark your calendar for our next annual meeting to be held on **January 26, 2020** immediately following our worship service. At this meeting, we will complete regular annual meeting business, including the presentation and vote on the budget for 2020.

In Christ,

Judy Jeschke, Hope Council Secretary

## *Financial Report* November 1, 2019

Our operating income through October, which eliminates memorial gifts, was: **\$306,487**

- This represents a **\$54,041 income shortfall** from our 2019 budget through October
- Our challenge income is **\$7,626** and our budget specifies **\$35,000** in challenge income by the end of the year.

As of November 1, our actual expenses of **\$348,498** are below our budget of **\$360,528**

Please prayerfully consider what challenge gifts you might be able to provide, as we face this budget shortfall.

Margo Kannenberg, Treasure

## *Matching Challenge Gift*

Dear Members and Friends,

A kind friend has just provided a matching gift of \$10,000 to help us reach our 2019 Budget Challenge amount of \$35,000. This friend will match any specific challenge gifts, up to \$10,000, that are made between now and December 31, 2019, so that we can meet our budget. Please prayerfully consider what you might be able to give, as it will be matched. Please clearly indicate that the gift is a challenge gift.

## *Candle*



As of Sunday November 10, we had 36 pledges to date! Please look for future updates symbolized by the candle. Let us all be lights to our church and each other.

“Let your light  so shine before men that they may see y

our good works and glorify your Father in heaven.” Matt 5:16

Karen L. Reed

## Spark Time Sunday School



Children Ages 3-8 are dismissed after the Children's Message for a 15 minute lesson and return to their parents in church.

Children Grades 3-6 dismissed to Sunday School during Sending Hymn and join parents in Café Hope after 30 minutes of study and activity.

Date	Lesson	Bible Text
Dec 1	A Child Called Immanuel	Isaiah 7:10-17
Dec 8	Angels Visit	Matthew 1:18-25
Dec 15	No Spark	
Dec 22	Jesus Is Born	Luke 2:1-20
Dec 29	Wise Men	2:1-12

## Ministry Assistants

Date	Assisting Ministers	Communion Assistants	Readers	Spark Leaders
Dec 1	Bill Kannenberg	Tom and Deb Stucke	Erica Lin	Deb Stucke
Dec 8	Hank Harper	Kirsten Severson and Sandi Kane	Carl Voss	Sandi Kane and Hank Harper
Dec 15	Kirsten Severson	Dahl Skip and Esther Ekong	Marlys Jungroth	No Spark
Dec 22	Margo Kannenberg	John and Helena Dummmler	Don Hermansen	Judy Jeschke
Dec 29	Sandi Kane	Bill Fischer and Hank Harper	Monika Hastings	Judy Jeschke

# Upcoming Events

## Hillsdale Peace Pantry

Our donation Sunday is moved to the second Sunday of December (December 15)

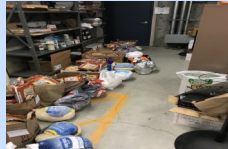
**I am sharing with you the Thank You Note from the Principal.** Deb Stucke

Good Morning,

On behalf of our Peace Pantry Team, we wanted to thank all of you for supporting our Thanksgiving Dinner drive. We supplied 22 families with a complete Thanksgiving dinner including a turkey for each family. A special thank you to the Transfiguration Church and Hope Lutheran Church for your continued support and some generous staff for your very kind donations to make this holiday dinner happen for Hillsdale families! Also, a special thank you to Lucy White for holding our Peace Pantry together. I am very thankful for our Hillsdale community.

Brett Stevenson

Hillsdale Assistant Principal



## WORSHIP COMMITTEE —Dec 4th

Worship Committee meeting is moved to Dec 4th.

## THE ELMS

Next Elms will be in Dec. 18, 2019 at 10:30 am.

## PASTOR DAN'S MID WEEK CLASS

Class will end Dec 11, 2019 and it will begin again on January 5, 2020 on How Christianity shaped western culture.

## SUNDAY MORNING BIBLE STUDY

Bible Study will resume on January 5, 2020.

## EVANGELISM COMMITTEE - Dec 5th

The next Evangelism Committee meeting will be in December 5th, 2019.

To all Our Members and Friends,

*Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!!*

Our



*We have a service on Tuesday, Dec 24, 2019 at 5:00 pm  
and at 10:00 pm.*

*Then on Wednesday, Dec 25, 2019 at 10:00 am.*

Hope Lutheran Church  
600 W. 42nd Ave.  
San Mateo, CA 94403

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**Voice of Hope Deadline for January edition: Friday, December 20**



## Hope Lutheran Church

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[www.hopelutheransanmateo.org](http://www.hopelutheransanmateo.org)

[www.facebook.com/hopelutheransanmateo](http://www.facebook.com/hopelutheransanmateo)

**Sunday Worship at 10:00 AM**

**Sunday School at 11:00 AM**

