

A BIMONTHLY NEWSPAPER PUBLISHED ON THE WESTSIDE, FOR THE WESTSIDE!

## WHICH LIVES MATTER?

One question especially beset the nation this summer: Do black lives matter, blue lives, or all lives? The question is not theoretical. People are dying violently in the prime of their lives, and their souls are going out of this life to an eternity in heaven or hell.

To say that all lives matter, is not to dodge the prevailing anger in the African-American community. It is to begin with the universal value of human life, black lives included. This value, Christians believe, is set by man's creation in God's image (Genesis 1:26–27). Accordingly, the deaths of God's image bearers is a serious matter to God, and ought to be to each one of us. Why, then, is life treated so cheaply? History suggests a number of reasons:

- **The want of Christianity.** Continuing the Hebrew emphasis on man's image bearing, Christianity challenged the Roman practice of abandoning their infants to the elements. In fulfilling Christ's Great Commission, missionaries undermined the ancient Aztec and Inca ritual of child sacrifice to the gods. We should not be surprised, then, that a decline of Judeo-Christian values coincides with an upsurge of violence.
- **The distortion of Christianity.** As much as Christianity has fought for life, not all that occurs in the name of Christ is Christian. The actions of the Klu Klux Klan, for example, denied in principle biblical teaching and in practice the power of Christ to unite different races.
- **The opposing of Christianity.** If we teach that man is but an animal, then he will act like one. Consider the impact of evolutionary thinking on eugenics and the holocaust (two related wars on the weak for the creation of a master race). Today's arguments for euthanasia and the staggering death toll of abortion typify what happens when we cease to view humans as God's image bearers.

- **The ignoring of Christianity.** Many are not so sophisticated as to undervalue human life on ideological or theological grounds. They've simply bought into the idea that actions have few consequences. In short, there has been a loss of the fear of God which impacts our conduct. We forget that we die once, and then comes God's verdict on our actions in this life (Hebrews 9:27).

So how does our bearing of God's image encourage the protection of life, specifically black and blue lives?

First, by revealing how essential it is that we repent to God for the history of racism in the land. Civil Rights legislation can restrain evil and calls for accountability, but law has no power to change the heart. God, however, has promised to heal the repentant, but warns us that if we cover our sins we shall not prosper (Proverbs 28:13).



Second, by encouraging us to pray for the governing authorities, including law enforcement. The police have a privilege of authority to which we are subject (Romans 13:1), and earn our admiration when standing in harm's way and promoting a peaceful society. Yet, the police are not beyond the law, nor temptation to prejudice and the corruption of power. The police, too, will answer to God.

In short, the Bible is opposed to both tyranny and anarchy. It places an expectation on God's people to "seek the peace of the city" (Jeremiah 29:7). We Christians teach, then, God's hatred of all injustice (Psalm 89:14), and his power to reconcile us to himself and to one another through the shed blood of the Lord Jesus (compare Ephesians 2:11–22). This is the hope for these United States of America!



## WHAT IS HOPE?

Welcome to the second issue of *The Way!* Whereas the first explained how Christians became known as a people of “the Way” (John 14:6; Acts 9:2), this issue focuses on the hope we enjoy through Jesus who is the Way. Although he was crucified for claiming that he alone can bring men and women to God and to heaven, those who have trusted his Word have found hope in him. We want you to find it, too, if you have not already.

What do we mean by hope? Obviously, we are not speaking of a girl’s name (Hope), nor are we referring to something optional. We all need hope, because it entails a relationship with God which begins here and continues forever after in heaven to come. This reality is not something vague or “hopeful,” but certain. How so?

**First**, because hope finds its source in God. Now nowhere does the Bible seek to prove God’s existence. Rather, the Bible portrays his existence as evident, both within us (in our consciences, for instance) and all around us (in the creation). For this reason, Scripture gets right down to describing who God is. One of the marvelous truths taught us in the Bible is that God is a “God of hope.” Not only has he created us to be hopeful (which is why suicide is so unnatural), he provides for us irrespective of whether we believe in him, and he calls us to trust in his Son, Jesus, for hope for this life and for the next.

**Second**, hope is certain because it is spoken of in God’s fully authoritative Word, which we call the Bible. The Bible tells us how God’s Son came into this world of sin, dysfunction, despair, and condemnation. In other words, he came to take upon himself the consequences of man’s fall into sin, and became thereby our sin bearer. He has shown us in effect that none of us need be forsaken of God because he has already been forsaken on the cross on account of our sins. There, bearing in his soul and body the righteous consequences of sin, he cried out while dying, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken

me?” (Matthew 27:46). From that cry we learn that Jesus went to the hope-lessness of the cross, to purchase our hope. Now that is good news!

**Third**, hope is certain because Jesus has come back from the dead to tell us so. Sometimes, people exclaim rather flippantly, “Well, no one has come back from the dead to tell us!” To which the Christian responds, “What was the resurrection of Christ then?” It is Christ’s resurrection which tells his payment for our hope has been accepted in heaven, and which promises that those trusting in Christ will be raised to life when Jesus returns. Indeed, as the apostle Paul well understood, if Christ was not raised to life, then “we [Christians] are of all men the most pitiable.” Yet, “Christ is risen from the dead” (I Corinthians 15:19–20). Many were those who testified to the fact.

Since hope in Christ is so certain, we invite you to investigate it. Here’s how:

**Read** the Bible. Long ago, the author of the Bible’s longest Psalm (hymn of praise) turned his troubles over to God. He told God that he cried for help and hoped in his Word (Psalm 119:147). If you need a copy of the Bible, do call the church office to request one.

**Trust** in the Lord Jesus Christ for forgiveness and a bright hope for tomorrow. The apostle Paul expressed our prayer for you like this: “Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit” (Romans 15:13).

**Come** and hear more of this hope. You will not only learn from God’s Word, but meet those like Eric (see opposite) who have experienced this hope in Jesus. If a Sunday service is a bit daunting to you for now, why not set up an appointment with one of the pastors at the church to speak further about these things. We would welcome your call. This is what we would tell you: “Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit, who was given to us” (Romans 5:5). If, however, you are unable to visit us, or desire a “safe” way to check us out first, then tune in on Sundays to WFUR, FM 102.9, at 11 a.m. and 7 p.m.



## DISCOVERING HOPE IN JESUS

Eric Cuer De Andrade

I am from São Paulo City, Brazil. Like many children of my generation, I was born and raised a Roman Catholic. As in other Catholic families, I was introduced to alternative religious beliefs. I still remember how busy we were each week pursuing spiritual growth and relief.

On Wednesdays, we went to a class on Spiritism, the founder and main prophet of which is Allan Kardec. While I enjoyed the love of the Spiritists for people (most of whom were poor), I never found hope for this life. Hope, the Spiritists believe, entails freedom attained by going through uncertain and innumerable incarnations.

On Fridays my parents took me to the “Witchcraft Center,” called in Brazil “Macumba, Umbanda, and Candomblé.” As in the Black Magic of Africa, the witch doctors promised those attending the center not only health and wealth, but the ability to harm or to bring bad luck to others. They taught that my parents had to please the spirits of certain deities if they were to help us to succeed. To be honest, I always wondered how my parents could trust in any spirit who promises good or bad to a person depending on how they felt about my parents’ weekly offerings to them. Evidently, my parents’ relationship to the spirit was based on fear!

On Sundays my parents took me to Mass and to other Catholic feasts. These generally involved walking miles with candles and crosses, performing good works in order to gain merit toward everlasting life.

Although we had undertaken everything asked of us, our burden was greater than ever. We had no assurance of our salvation. How confused and hopeless I became! I still remember the day as a ten year old boy, when I laid down on my bed and cried without stopping. I wondered how I could be free from the guilt of my sins and enjoy the freedom to love God without fear. Not until I was 21 years old did I hear the truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Invited by some friends to attend a service at their church, I listened to the good news of the gospel and accepted it. That night was really a turning point for me. Certainly, I felt God’s Word pointing out how guilty and condemned I was apart from faith that Christ had died on the cross for me. At the same time, God revealed to me his love and mercy through the preaching in the church. I came to understand that he had provided forgiveness for my sins through Christ’s death. By paying my penalty Christ had

made a way for me to be reconciled to God. This news filled my heart with a sense that I was blessed with Christ’s unmerited favor (what we call his grace). I was assured through trusting in Christ’s work that I had now entered God’s family, and had become his child forever. This change was as radical as the difference between night and day.

Possessing a new heart I now wanted to grow in the knowledge and grace of God. So I left my old life behind, turning away from bad friends, places, and even from my musical career. As is typical of followers of Christ, I began to face many trials and tribulations, not least opposition from my family. I found comfort in what the Bible calls Christ’s body, which is his church. Indeed, fellowship with the members of the church I attended proved crucial in encouraging my first steps with Christ. I learned to have joy amid my trials, for I was confident that God’s love and mercy carried me each day. This privilege was mine not for any work I had done, but because of the perfect work Jesus had completed on my behalf.

That said, I kept undertaking the good works I was taught as a boy, but no more as a way of salvation. I now understood that I was saved to do good works. As the Apostle Paul has written in Ephesians 2:10, “For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.” Christ has freed us to love God and our neighbor. This freedom is gained only through Christ’s life, death and resurrection on our behalf, and is the true freedom for which my parents had searched throughout their lives.

Blessed by this freedom, I witnessed about Christ to my family. In spite of their initial opposition, many of them also came to know Christ! This confirmed the relentless sense I had that God has planned that I should use my life to spread the good news of Jesus. I therefore left my job and career and went to serve as a missionary for years in Brazil and in other countries, such as Argentina, Bolivia, Colombia, Peru, Mozambique, and South Africa. I am looking forward to the day when I will meet the Lord Jesus Christ, whether after my death or when he returns to earth. Regardless, I know that the joy I have today will be infinitely superior and fulfilled when I get to live with



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## FALL/WINTER ACTIVITIES

I<sup>st</sup> Meeting October 12

### † GEMS Girls' Club

- ♦ Awareness Group: Grades I–3
- ♦ Discovery Group: Grades 4–6

GEMS Girls' Clubs is all about—well—girls!

Girls are active, imaginative, and unique. They are passionate! And GEMS offers them the perfect place to learn and grow as they discover who God created them to be. Clubs are offered in local churches and Christian organizations throughout the U.S. and Canada, and our mission is to bring girls everywhere into a living, dynamic relationship with Jesus Christ.

### Club Life

GEMS Girls' Clubs is a place to belong. At club, girls are welcomed into a vibrant community of mentors and peers who genuinely care about them. GEMS is an exciting, safe environment for girls to learn about God, His Word, and His world. Each meeting the girls will have a Bible lesson, a time for crafts, and practice movement to our theme song for the year.



Our free programs for the community will begin **October 12** and will meet the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Wednesday of the month at **6:45** for the months of October–March (except for November meeting the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Wednesday and December meeting only the 2<sup>nd</sup> Wednesday due to the holidays). We also include a Family Night Dinner (5:30) for those attending programs, a Children's Chorus (6:10), and Prayer Meeting for those not attending the other programs. The whole family is invited to join us!

Questions? Call or email Tammy at Seventh Reformed Church, 616-459-4451 or tammy@7thref.org.



### † Cadets Boys' Club

- ♦ Junior Cadets: Grades I–3
- ♦ Recruit | Pathfinder | Builder: Grades 4–6

The goal of Cadets—Luke 2:52 states that “Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.” The goal of the Calvinist Cadet Corps, based upon that verse, is to help boys grow spiritually in all areas of life (devotional, mental, physical, and social) by providing Christian men with a uniquely designed structure, program and materials.



### † English as a Second Language

Our ESL classes are available to anyone of any age looking to improve their English skills. Individualized English instruction in a casual setting. English learners of any skill level are welcome to come improve grammar, reading, writing, vocabulary, or pronunciation.