

START WHERE U R

Greetings Friends,

We want to give you an update on what's been happening with us, and with our ministry endeavors. As you might remember we started a new chapter in our lives in 2012 when we launched a ministry called Start Where U R--see the last page for a the vision of that ministry. Part of the outflow of that vision led us to join a group from our area in launching Hope Community Church. The two ministries really have the same goal: to help and support the Jesus follower movement during whatever time our Lord has left for us here on this earth. We wanted to share an update with pictures and stories about both:



Thursday 6 am Group



Thursday 7:30 am Group

Thursday Morning Men's Groups - Nathan leads 2 groups of men on Thursday mornings (21 total, if everyone makes it). The goal is to help these men become self-feeding disciples of Jesus, who can and are passing on to others what they are learning. We started by studying 2 Timothy--pericope by pericope (a pericope is a bite-sized section of scripture suited for teaching or preaching). Our current focus is **Walking with God**, a Christian Life Journey Training Module (see more on that below)

- **The 6 am group** includes men who have to be to work by 8 am: business owners, salesmen, managers, a pastor of a nearby church, a middle school principle, an engineer, a chemist and a man whose family moved to our community from Haiti after their earthquake a few years ago.
- **The 7:30 am group** has mostly retired guys, plus a Pharmacist who has to be to work at 10:30 am and a recent college grad in the job search mode (recently got one). One of the retired guys, joined us after seeing us at Tim Horton's every Thurs and being curious about what we were doing. He's got me interested in trying out Pickle Ball--if I can do it with my replaced knee.

I'm writing the **Walking with God** training module materials as we go. This excerpt from the intro gives the training's purpose: *My heart is that, as a result of doing this adventure together, each of us will be deeply embracing Triune God and actually be becoming more like Jesus as we journey. An important component of our training will be learning about and sampling spiritual practices that followers of Jesus have used through the centuries to keep in step with the Spirit. My hope is that this training will encourage each of us to embrace for ourselves those practices that help train us to be godly (1 Timothy 4:7-8). I believe this material can become a helpful tool towards Christian life training for any who use it. I'm encouraging each man to pass on to others what he is learning.*



Pastor Encouragement Retreats - I continues to meet twice a year for 3-day retreats--next one April 7-10 -- with a pastor-peer encouragement group: **Jeff** of Ada Bible Church - Grand Rapids, MI, **Carlton** of College Ave Baptist, San Diego, and **Kevin** of Hope Community Church, Detroit. SWUR's vision is to encourage--and be a catalyst when needed--to see as many local church and Mission leaders as possible establish and commit to meeting regularly with their own peer encouragement groups.



Leader Development Retreats - I took 5 men from the Thursday groups to KY for a 2 day training retreat. It was good to have KY friends, Jim (site host) and Charles join us for part of our time.

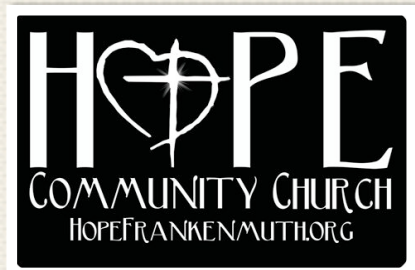


Leader Encouragement - Periodically leaders and groups going through tough times, who had heard we might be able to provide safe listening ears and helpful counsel for their situations, give us a call. Here are a couple of examples:

- Some individuals who felt their church's elders had unjustly fired their Sr. Pastor with no charges of sinful behavior or misconduct. After attempting to follow biblical guidelines with their leaders regarding their concerns, and getting nowhere, a group is proceeding to start another church in their town with a different vision. They called seeking counsel regarding things for them to consider moving forward.
- After his friend, the Sr. Pastor had resigned after a leadership power struggle in their church, the friend contacted us. He felt the other leaders had not been forthcoming with their people regarding what had happened and why their pastor of 20+ years was leaving, saying just that the Lord had led him to another ministry. He felt the church's leaders were trying to hide their role and the philosophy differences that had prompted the Pastor to start looking. The pastor's friend wondered how he should respond to his church's leaders and how he could best encourage his pastor friend.

Safe Place Away Oasis stays - Here's an example of how this can work: A couple who had been fired from a church over a year ago were feeling discouraged with their, so far, unsuccessful new ministry search. They were referred to us and we invited them to spend a few days with us at our place in Frankenmuth. We were able to gift them some spending money to explore our town and while they were with us had several unscheduled "chat" times with them related to this difficult season in their lives. Since their stay, we check in on them periodically to see how they are doing. Sometimes it helps just knowing there is someone out there who cares and understands.

Launching & Pastoring Hope Community Church - A good deal of our time and focus this past year has been, on guiding a group of about 150 people from our area to launch a new church in our community. We began meeting weekly for worship on Sept 9, 2012. Two verses from **Romans 15** describe our Hope heartbeat and why we chose to include "Hope" in our name: verse 4, *For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have **hope**...*; and verse 13, *May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may **overflow with hope** by the power of the Holy Spirit.* We believe we should be picturing, as we function together in community, what our Triune God had in mind for "church". We believe that, when we are doing this, others will be drawn to Triune God through what they see, hear and experience when they are with us individually and with our Community. In attempting to be a picture of "church" Jesus had in mind we have chosen to follow the pattern of the early church found in Acts 2:42 *They devoted themselves to the apostles' **teaching** and to fellowship* (Greek word is *koinonia*, literally means **sharing**), *to the breaking of bread (**Communion**) and to **prayer**.* Though we know it won't be without issues, many in our community have expressed that this is the most encouraging local church community they have ever experienced.



It has been challenging and exciting being involved in this church planting adventure and has given us a chance to consider what we believe are the core essentials to healthy Jesus follower communities. We've intentionally been approaching decisions from the perspective of, what would we do if all we had was the Bible to guide us? We attempted to capture our local church philosophy in a Constitution completed this past summer and then invited people to identify officially with Hope Community through membership. Those who did, recently affirmed four of the men from the Thursday groups (2 from each) to join me as elder/shepherd/overseers within our Hope Community as a "team of dads". Our focus and challenge now is to enculturate Hope's values--what we believe our Triune God had in mind for His church--within this local church community and beyond.

An added benefit of doing this is that it has kept us on the front lines of local church ministry so that the encouragement and counsel we are able to provide to other leaders is as fellow travelers, not from someone who used to do this way back when.



Hope Community's Worship Location and base of operations is on Main St. in Frankenmuth in the Bavarian/Kroger Mall, where just about everyone in this area goes at least once per week.

The Vision of Start Where U R [For those considering support]

Encouraging Individuals and Teams towards Hope-filled next steps

We would like to help local church and missions leaders experience God's grace, truth, wisdom, and hope in safe relational contexts and conversations so that they come to know God better and experience increased freedom, vision, courage and empowerment toward running well and finishing strong the race God has marked out for them.

We believe that, through the power of God, it is possible, when we get off track, to get back on track, and also to help others who might have gotten off track to get back in their race. Our desire is to help leaders be able to say at the end of their race, like Paul did, *I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day...* (see 2 Timothy 3:14 -4:8). Our vision is to offer/facilitate:

- **Training, Encouragement, Team Consultations** for local church & missions leaders & teams—including, when needed: Conflict Mediation/ Crisis Guidance to provide an objective, outside perspective and practical best next step wisdom when relationships/organizations find themselves paralyzed by polarized positions, unloving attitudes or hurt feelings.
- **Encouragement Retreats:** to facilitate pastors/ministry leaders getting away together to experience 2-3-day retreats with peers that encourage them to stay in the race, run strong, and finish well.
- **Safe Place Oasis Getaways:** We invite to our home in Frankenmuth leaders & couples who might benefit from 2-3 days at our safe place away oasis. These away oasis times can be a great help towards healing and processing responses and best next step decisions. We are also gathering contact info about other organizations set up to help Christian leaders to pass on to those who might benefit from them.



THANKS TO YOU WHO HAVE BEEN SUPPORTING SWUR! WE HOPE YOU WILL CONTINUE AND WE INVITE OTHERS TO CONSIDER BECOMING SWUR PARTNERS

♣ So SWUR services can be offered free to the leaders who need, but would struggle to afford them, our Goal is to raise \$24,000 annually (Hope CC supports our remaining annual needs). To reach this goal, we are trusting God to provide an additional \$500/mo \$6,000/annually. If you sense God prompting you to partner with us, just let us know by email or letter. Tax Deductible gifts may be sent to:

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Nathan & Jeanne are well equipped by experience, training, and tested maturity to walk with others on their journey through both good times and hard toward greater Christ-likeness. In these troubled days, wise counsel that draws us into God's story is more vital than ever. I believe this godly couple have been positioned by God to provide much needed guidance.

--Larry Crabb, Author, Speaker, Founder & Director of New Way Ministries