

# New Hope Lutheran Church

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## Pastors:

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*January 3, 2021*

*2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Christmas*

## Coming Events

English services have been paused,  
until January 17, 2pm at **Regent St.**

Finnish services have been paused,  
until January 24 10am at **Voima Hall.**

Finnish sermon emailed and on website [nhlc.ca](http://nhlc.ca)

**In our prayers** Fred, Esme, Martha.

## Mission Statement

Encourage and support people in their Christian faith while reaching out, in love, to the community.

*We now have a **donate button** on our web site [nhlc.ca](http://nhlc.ca)  
Previous Sunday sermons and bible studies can be found  
on the website.*

Psalms 147:12 – 20

<sup>12</sup> Extol the Lord, Jerusalem; praise your God, Zion.

<sup>13</sup> **He strengthens the bars of your gates and blesses your People within you.**

<sup>14</sup> He grants peace to your borders and satisfies you with the finest of wheat.

<sup>15</sup> **He sends his command to the earth; his word runs swiftly.**

<sup>16</sup> He spreads the snow like wool and scatters the frost like ashes.

<sup>17</sup> **He hurls down his hail like pebbles. Who can withstand his icy blast?**

<sup>18</sup> He sends his word and melts them; he stirs up his breezes, and the waters flow.

<sup>19</sup> **He has revealed his word to Jacob, his laws and decrees to Israel.**

<sup>20</sup> He has done this for no other nation; they do not know his laws. Praise the Lord.

## Prayer of the Day

O God our redeemer; you created light that we might live, and you illumine our world with your beloved Son. By your Spirit comfort us in all darkness, and turn us toward the light of Jesus Christ our Savior, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

## First Reading “Jeremiah 31:7 – 14”

<sup>7</sup> This is what the LORD says: “Sing with joy for Jacob; shout for the foremost of the nations. Make your praises heard, and say, ‘LORD, save your people, the remnant of Israel.’ <sup>8</sup> See, I will bring them from the land of the north and gather them from the ends of the earth. Among them will be the blind and the lame, expectant mothers and women in labor; a great throng will return. <sup>9</sup> They will come with weeping; they will pray as I bring them back. I will lead them beside streams of water on a level path where they will not stumble, because I am Israel’s father, and Ephraim is my firstborn son. <sup>10</sup> “Hear the word of the LORD, you nations; proclaim it in distant coastlands: ‘He who scattered Israel will gather them and will watch over his flock like a shepherd.’ <sup>11</sup> For the LORD will deliver Jacob and redeem them from the hand of those stronger than they. <sup>12</sup> They will come and shout for joy on the heights of Zion; they will rejoice in the bounty of the LORD— the grain, the new wine and the olive oil, the young of the flocks and herds. They will be like a well-watered garden, and they will sorrow no more. <sup>13</sup> Then young women will dance and be glad, young men and old as

well. I will turn their mourning into gladness; I will give them comfort and joy instead of sorrow. <sup>14</sup> I will satisfy the priests with abundance, and my people will be filled with my bounty,” declares the LORD.

## Second Reading “Ephesians 1:3 – 14”

<sup>3</sup> Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. <sup>4</sup> For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love <sup>5</sup> he predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will— <sup>6</sup> to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves. <sup>7</sup> In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God’s grace <sup>8</sup> that he lavished on us. With all wisdom and understanding, <sup>9</sup> he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, <sup>10</sup> to be put into effect when the times reach their fulfillment—to bring unity to all things in heaven and on earth under Christ. <sup>11</sup> In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will, <sup>12</sup> in order that we, who were the first to put our hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory. <sup>13</sup> And you also were included in Christ when you heard the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation. When you believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, <sup>14</sup> who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God’s possession—to the praise of his glory.

## Gospel “John 1:10 – 18”

<sup>10</sup> He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. <sup>11</sup> He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. <sup>12</sup> Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God—<sup>13</sup> children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband’s will, but born of God. <sup>14</sup> The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth. <sup>15</sup> (John testified concerning him. He cried out, saying, “This is the one I spoke about when I said, ‘He who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me.’”) <sup>16</sup> Out of his fullness we have all received grace in place of grace already given. <sup>17</sup> For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. <sup>18</sup> No one has ever seen God, but

the one and only Son, who is himself God and is in closest relationship with the Father, has made him known.

## Sermon

### *“Your Adopted”*

If you look closely at some of our lessons today, one thing becomes abundantly clear: God adopts us as God’s children. We are not God’s children due to some birthright. We are not God’s children because we somehow worked or bought our way into God’s good graces. Each of us is a child of God because God chose each of us. God offers to all the position of adopted child, and it is up to us to accept or reject that adoption.

Because of this condition, we are not automatically faithful Christians at birth. It is when we learn about God, learn about God coming to earth, and learn about what God has done for us that we begin to understand what this adoption process can mean for us. For most of us, we learned such things from our parents, in Sunday School, and through confirmation. If we took a real interest, we continued the learning process through Bible study, reading materials, and regular worship. In all of this we learn about living life in ways that express God’s love for us, including showing that love to others.

One of the ways we show that love is by passing on the faith, by passing on the information we have received through study and life experience. In doing so we preserve the faith. One of the most important things we are to do is to pass on faith. In many ways, this is our mission. It was the reason the gospels were written and preserved. But we don’t seem to do such a good job of it anymore, when it comes to our youngest generations. Learning about faith often appears to have become secondary to learning about many other things. We may baptize children, we may place them in Sunday School and even send them to confirmation, but something seems to be missing in these times.

The trouble is that we don’t inherit faith, yet we often act as if that’s how faith is transferred. We can inherit a religious tradition, but not faith. The letter to the Ephesians reminds us that we are not born into faith, we are adopted. We ourselves learned about the faith somewhere, from someone, and embraced it; accepting the adoption offered. Someone showed us what it was by how they lived, what they believed, and how

important it was to them in their lives. They may have shared their personal stories of how their faith shaped them in making their most important life decisions. They may have shared how their faith gave them hope when times seemed hopeless. They may have shared the comfort they received from scripture, from prayer, and from Godly conversation in times of grief. They may even have shared how and when they saw God working in their lives to bring them joy and thankful hearts.

So how do we encourage people then to at least try on the faith? How do we encourage them to take a hard look at the adoption offered to them? We invite them. And we invite them not by quoting vague scripture verses, or shipping them off for someone else to do the job, but by simply sharing our own stories of our adoption into the heavenly kingdom.

For this coming year, as we look forward to re-opening, to getting back to pre-pandemic conditions, can we become more inviting? The good news is that we don’t wait until we reopen! Share your experiences with God (even if you don’t think they are all that exciting or intriguing), over the phone, in an email, or even a letter. Don’t be shy about inviting others to see what we offer right now, on our web page. That is a pretty easy invite when you think about it. It doesn’t take a genius for example, to share a video to your Facebook page, or to copy and paste a meaningful sermon to an email.

Something that has become very apparent in this pandemic is how electronically connected we are in this world. You may know ten people at church fairly well, but you probably know twice that number outside of church. Why not let them know about this adoption offer? Think of how many people our congregation can reach using each of our personal connections!

I know that not everyone will seize such an opportunity. John’s gospel reminds us that when Christ was actually present on earth, in a bodily form, people still didn’t recognize him and follow, so we can’t be expected to draw the masses. But we can still do incredible things using the tools we have been given. Our job is not to simply leave our faith as an inheritance to some family members, but to express it to as many people as we possibly can. What better time to do it than right now? Amen.

## Prayers

Joining our voices with the song of the angels, let us pray for the church, the world, and all who are in need:

Redeeming God, you gather together your people from the farthest parts of the earth. Protect your church from stumbling. Let it not be overcome by sorrow, division, or despair. Make us radiant with goodness, that we might live always to the praise of your glory. Lord, in your mercy... **hear our prayer.**

You bring together heaven and earth. All creation testifies to your splendor. Hold the ecosystems of this earth in delicate balance, from coastlands to farmlands, forests to wetlands, deserts to rainforests. Show us new ways to live in harmony with the world around us. Lord, in your mercy.... **hear our prayer.**

You overflow with grace upon grace. Expand the imaginations of those who serve in positions of authority. Open their hearts to the needs of their nations and communities. Protect all those in harm’s way and those risking danger for the sake of others. Lord, in your mercy.... **hear our prayer.**

Lord of healing; your blessed Son Jesus Christ went about doing good, and healing all manner of sickness and disease among the people: Continue this, his gracious work among us in regard to the spread of Covid-19 and other forms of illness. Cheer, heal, and sanctify the sick; especially those we now name in our hearts, or aloud... Lord, in your mercy... **hear our prayer.**

You come to us in the beauty of darkness and of light. Bring justice and reconciliation to communities divided by oppressions and misuse of power. Guide us to speak holy words of advocacy and truth. Help us to honor your image in one another. Lord, in your mercy... **hear our prayer.**

Because you guide us to pray for one another, we pray for our downtown congregations and today remember before you St. Peter’s United Church and their pastors Dawn Vaneyk and Charles Bolduc. Look over them in any difficulties and guide them with love and mercy. Lord, in your mercy.... **hear our prayer.**

God of mercy, come quickly to us with grace upon grace as we lift these and all our prayers to you, in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord, who taught us to pray...

**Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and forever. Amen.**