

New Hope Lutheran Church

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February 28, 2021 Second Sunday of Lent

Coming Events

Mar 2 1:00pm Zoom Raamatupiiri
Mar 3 7:00pm Zoom Lenten service & coffee
Mar 5 7:00pm Zoom Confirmation
Mar 7 10:00am Messu † **Voima Hall**
Mar 7 2:00pm Worship Service **Regent St**

Sermons are available on our website nhlc.ca

We now have hymns you can hear using the link provided.
One at the beginning and one at the end of the bulletin.

In our prayers Fred, Esme, Martha.

Remembering Helen Koski 84v.



We light a candle today for Helen Koski Lord, and pray that you will be with their family and friends in this time. Comfort them with your presence, guide them with your Holy Word, and may they feel your loving arms around them. This we ask in Jesus' name. Amen.

Hymn - Lord Jesus, You Shall be my Song 808
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1MTkKfKZORw>

Psalm 22:23 – 31

- ²³ You who fear the LORD, praise him! All you descendants of Jacob, honor him! Revere him, all you descendants of Israel!
- ²⁴ For he has not despised or scorned the suffering of the afflicted one; he has not hidden his face from him but has listened to his cry for help.
- ²⁵ From you comes the theme of my praise in the great assembly; before those who fear you I will fulfill my vows.
- ²⁶ The poor will eat and be satisfied; those who seek the LORD will praise him— may your hearts live forever!
- ²⁷ All the ends of the earth will remember and turn to the LORD, and all the families of the nations will bow down before him,
- ²⁸ for dominion belongs to the LORD and he rules over the nations.
- ²⁹ All the rich of the earth will feast and worship; all who go down to the dust will kneel before him— those who cannot keep themselves alive.
- ³⁰ Posterity will serve him; future generations will be told about the Lord.
- ³¹ They will proclaim his righteousness, declaring to a people yet unborn: He has done it!

Prayer of the Day

Holy God, heavenly Father, in the waters of the flood you saved the chosen, and in the wilderness of temptation you protected your Son from sin. Renew us in the gift of baptism. May your holy angels be with us, that the wicked foe may have no power over us, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

First Reading “Genesis 17:1 – 7, 15 – 16”

1 When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to him and said, “I am God Almighty ; walk before me faithfully and be blameless. **2** Then I will make my covenant between me and you and will greatly increase your numbers.” **3** Abram fell facedown, and God said to him, **4** “As for me, this is my covenant with you: You will be the father of many nations. **5** No longer will you be called Abram ; your name will be Abraham, for I have made you a father of many nations. **6** I will make you very fruitful; I will make nations of you, and kings will come from you. **7** I will establish my covenant as an everlasting covenant between me and you and your descendants after you for the

generations to come, to be your God and the God of your descendants after you.

15 God also said to Abraham, “As for Sarai your wife, you are no longer to call her Sarai; her name will be Sarah. **16** I will bless her and will surely give you a son by her. I will bless her so that she will be the mother of nations; kings of peoples will come from her.”

Second Reading “Romans 4:13 – 25”

13 It was not through the law that Abraham and his offspring received the promise that he would be heir of the world, but through the righteousness that comes by faith. **14** For if those who depend on the law are heirs, faith means nothing and the promise is worthless, **15** because the law brings wrath. And where there is no law there is no transgression. **16** Therefore, the promise comes by faith, so that it may be by grace and may be guaranteed to all Abraham’s offspring—not only to those who are of the law but also to those who have the faith of Abraham. He is the father of us all. **17** As it is written: “I have made you a father of many nations.” He is our father in the sight of God, in whom he believed—the God who gives life to the dead and calls into being things that were not. **18** Against all hope, Abraham in hope believed and so became the father of many nations, just as it had been said to him, “So shall your offspring be.” **19** Without weakening in his faith, he faced the fact that his body was as good as dead—since he was about a hundred years old—and that Sarah’s womb was also dead. **20** Yet he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God, **21** being fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised. **22** This is why “it was credited to him as righteousness.” **23** The words “it was credited to him” were written not for him alone, **24** but also for us, to whom God will credit righteousness—for us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead. **25** He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification.

Gospel “Mark 8:31 – 38”

31 He then began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and after three days rise again. **32** He spoke plainly about this, and Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. **33** But when Jesus turned and looked at his disciples, he rebuked Peter. “Get behind me, Satan!” he said. “You do not have in

mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns.” **34** Then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said: “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. **35** For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me and for the gospel will save it. **36** What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? **37** Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul? **38** If anyone is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of them when he comes in his Father’s glory with the holy angels.”

Sermon
Deacon Scott Knarr

In 2017 I was privileged to represent the ELCIC at World DIAKONIA, the 22nd assembly of the DIAKONIA World Federation which gathered in Chicago. This event brought me face to face with deacons from every corner of the globe. I witnessed Lutherans, Anglicans, Presbyterians, United Methodists, Wesleyan Methodists and others working together across denominational lines to live out our calling as Christ’s hands and feet in the world. I heard women from Fiji sing and I listened to my sister from Jamaica preach. I learned that titles and dress for diaconal servants can be quite different from place to place, from street clothes to full traditional habits. The gathering opened up a community of deacons for me that was more colourful, more vibrant, and more connected to their diverse home communities than I could ever have possibly imagined.

Today is Diaconal Sunday in the ELCIC, a day when we uphold the ministries of deacons in our Church. While every baptized Christian carries out diaconal ministry in their daily life, sharing God’s love where they live and work, deacons have special responsibility for leading and equipping God’s people in their service. The ELCIC roster of deacons is modest in size and spread out across the country. Each deacon’s area of expertise is unique and I would encourage you to search out a deacon in your synod to ask them about their role.

Deacons are called to locate themselves at the edge-places or margins of church and society. This means they may hang out with individuals, or spend time networking in communities,

which are not usually at the centre of church life. Deacons could find themselves in unconventional settings as they create opportunities to serve in new ways. They invite others into relationship, nurturing contexts for healing as congregation members and community resource people accompany them to work alongside those whose voice is discounted or not able to be heard.

One shining example of this action – going out to meet people where their need is greatest – is found in the person of Jesus Christ. The Gospel narratives are full of stories of Jesus crossing social boundaries and eating with people, healing people, and telling people things they do not want to hear. In today’s Gospel reading Jesus, the prophetic deacon, says plainly that he will suffer, be rejected, killed and then after three days rise again. But the disciples don’t want to hear that news. It is not the kind of story they expect from the Son of God. It isn’t too difficult to believe that the thought of Jesus rising from the dead is beyond their understanding. And Jesus doesn’t even wait for them to catch up – he takes things to the next level. He insists that we deny our lives, take up the cross of Jesus as our own cross, so that in losing our life we will save it.

We should take a moment to remind ourselves that the cross is a horrific and dishonourable image in the Roman Empire. It is where criminals were hung to die in pain and agony along the roadway where all would witness their plight. This is not a pretty accessory to wear around one’s neck. It isn’t shiny, clean and polished but rather a gruesome symbol of the Roman Empire’s power. To follow in the way of the cross is to follow Jesus the criminal who was convicted of attempting to overthrow the civic leadership of Jerusalem. The consequences of following Jesus are no less than giving up your very life.

Sarah Henrich puts it this way: “To lose one’s life is to lose one’s whole way of thinking about the world, to revalue the whole experience we know as life – trusting that our valuing of life may be the blindness from which we need to be healed so that we can fully see and know the life that God gives us in God’s realm.”

We have experienced a great deal of loss over the past year. We’ve lost our ability to grieve together in person, sharing stories and eating together. We have lost opportunities to celebrate joyful occasions as well, no longer meeting in large

gatherings with plentiful banquets. We have lost a sense of certainty and control as we strive to find safe ways to gather in community. We have needed to modify our patterns and rituals and to change our whole way of thinking about community life.

This pandemic has pushed us to reevaluate how we do things. It’s prompted us to reimagine what ministry means for today’s context. Sacred moments mediated through zoom, livestream connections and telephone calls have brought the intimacy of spiritual conversation right into our living rooms. It has also renewed our awareness of disparities and privilege in our church and in our society.

This moment is a time to see differently. Since George Floyd’s tragic death, we are further sensitized to how we value systems which have benefited certain peoples to the detriment of others. I own a house on the Haldimand Tract, land which lies along the banks of the Grand River. This land was promised to Joseph Brant and the Haudenosaunee people who were loyal to the British Crown during the American Revolution. My ancestors were among those loyalists who arrived to farm the land and I have inherited the resulting benefits such as having a good education, living in a nice home with adequate heating, clean running water and a stable internet connection.

I want Jesus to walk with me – and I will take up the cross of racial justice, educating myself about how my assumptions are contributing to discrimination and privileged thinking.

I want Jesus to walk with me – and I will hear the cry of broken hearts, broken lives and broken communities and I will not look away.

I want Jesus to walk with me – and I call on the church to decolonize policies and systems which harm relationships with marginalized communities.

Abraham and Sarah were faithful to God, trusting that God will accomplish what God promises. In Romans, Paul writes that God’s gift of grace to Abraham is offered to all people and fulfilled in Christ’s death and resurrection. Through faith in Christ all may be made righteous. Douglas John Hall describes the righteous one as being “for real” or genuine; “being right for the vocation to which one is called.”

This action of God “making us right” is what enables each of us to become our true authentic selves.

When I began visiting Six Nations, it was my musical training and expertise that was seen as a valuable asset. But as I helped to facilitate the Music for the Spirit program, I quickly realized that the skills I have and the style of music I am most comfortable with, are really not what was needed. The youth of the community needed support to discover their voice, to make their own music and to create a sense of belonging and identity for themselves. As an outsider to the community, my best contribution is to help achieve those dreams by making available resources and a safe space. When I die to my own ego, as well as dying to my fear of making mistakes, then I can truly live into God’s grace and love my neighbour.

Clifton Black writes: “In the economy governed by the gospel, the only way to be made whole is to let go of everything society reckons most valuable. There is no benefit in gaining the entire world – values and aspirations as people define them – if in so doing one forfeits one’s deepest soul.”

Letting go of the benchmarks of success – like program finances, numbers of participants and profile within the community – is not easy. To be made whole, my soul needs God’s grace to be open to the other, open to doing things in ways that may rub up against empire, open to being transformed by the resilience of my Indigenous neighbours, and open to the inexhaustible promise of the Gospel.

Prayers

Relying on the promises of God, we pray boldly for the church, the world, and all in need.

Your gift of grace is for all people. Give confident faith to all the baptized, that they may follow you wholeheartedly. Give new believers joy in your promises; give hope and courage to those who suffer for their faith. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

All the ends of the earth worship you. From galaxies to micro-organisms, preserve your creation. Teach humanity to wonder at your works and to join you in tending to creation’s well-being. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

You rule over the nations. Raise up advocates for peace and justice within and between nations. Give life where hope seems dead; call into existence new realities we cannot even imagine. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

In Jesus you joined humanity in suffering and death. Reveal to all the depth of your love shown on the cross. Accompany all who suffer in body, mind, and spirit. Restore all who are sick or grieving. Bring vindication for victims of injustice, exploitation, and oppression. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

You made Abraham and Sarah the ancestors of a multitude of nations. Bless grandparents, parents, and foster parents, and the children who look to them for care and guidance. Console those who deal with infertility, parents who have entrusted their children to adoption, and children longing to be adopted. Equip ministries and services to families. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

We await the day of Christ’s coming in glory. Lead us by the example of all the saints whom you have called to take up their cross and follow you, that together we may find our lives in you. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

We entrust ourselves and all our prayers to you, O faithful God, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen/**

Hymn - Tree of Life and Awesome Mystery
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QoEITZ1_FJU