

New Hope Lutheran Church

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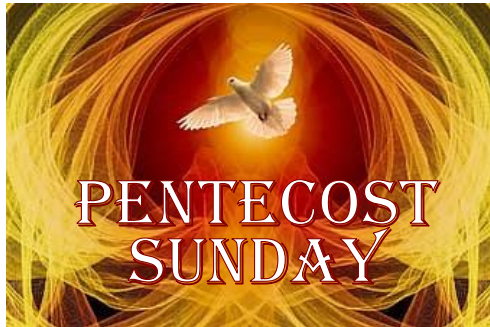
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May 23, 2021



Coming Events

All services have been cancelled.

May 25 3:30pm Zoom Worship & Music
6:30pm Zoom Raamatupiiri

In our prayers Ruth, Fred, Esme, Martha.

Father's Day bilingual zoom service

For Father's Day, June 20, 2021 at 10:00am, we are planning a bilingual service by **zoom only**. If you would like to take part, please send the office an email to let us know. Then on June 19, 2021 you will receive an invitation with instructions to join.

Opening Hymn – Spirit of Gentleness
<https://youtu.be/9q0ydibNHcs>

Prayer of the Day

Mighty God, you breathe life into our bones, and your Spirit brings truth to the world. Send us this Spirit, transform us by your truth, and give us language to proclaim your gospel, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Psalm 104:24 – 34, 35b

- 24** How many are your works, LORD! In wisdom you made them all; the earth is full of your creatures.
25 There is the sea, vast and spacious, teeming with creatures beyond number— living things both large and small.
26 There the ships go to and fro, and Leviathan, which you formed to frolic there.
27 All creatures look to you to give them their food at the proper time.
28 When you give it to them, they gather it up; when you open your hand, they are satisfied with good things.
29 When you hide your face, they are terrified; when you take away their breath, they die and return to the dust.
30 When you send your Spirit, they are created, and you renew the face of the ground.
31 May the glory of the LORD endure forever; may the LORD rejoice in his works—
32 he who looks at the earth, and it trembles, who touches the mountains, and they smoke.
33 I will sing to the LORD all my life; I will sing praise to my God as long as I live.
34 May my meditation be pleasing to him, as I rejoice in the LORD.
35b Praise the LORD, my soul. Praise the LORD.

First Reading “Acts 2:1 – 21”

1 When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. **2** Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. **3** They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. **4** All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them. **5** Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven. **6** When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard their own language being spoken. **7** Utterly amazed, they asked: “Aren’t all these

who are speaking Galileans? **8** Then how is it that each of us hears them in our native language? **9** Parthians, Medes and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, **10** Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from Rome **11** (both Jews and converts to Judaism); Cretans and Arabs—we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!” **12** Amazed and perplexed, they asked one another, “What does this mean?” **13** Some, however, made fun of them and said, “They have had too much wine.” **14** Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd: “Fellow Jews and all of you who live in Jerusalem, let me explain this to you; listen carefully to what I say. **15** These people are not drunk, as you suppose. It’s only nine in the morning! **16** No, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: **17** “ ‘In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams. **18** Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy. **19** I will show wonders in the heavens above and signs on the earth below, blood and fire and billows of smoke. **20** The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord. **21** And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.’

Second Reading “Romans 8:22 – 27”

22 We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. **23** Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption to sonship, the redemption of our bodies. **24** For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what they already have? **25** But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently. **26** In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans. **27** And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for God’s people in accordance with the will of God.

Gospel “John 15:26 – 27, 16:4 – 15”

15:26 “When the Advocate comes, whom I will send to you from the Father—the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father—he will testify about me. **27** And you also must testify, for you have been with me from the beginning.

16:4 I have told you this, so that when their time comes you will remember that I warned you about them. I did not tell you this from the beginning because I was with you, **5** but now I am going to him who sent me. None of you asks me, 'Where are you going?' **6** Rather, you are filled with grief because I have said these things. **7** But very truly I tell you, it is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Advocate will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. **8** When he comes, he will prove the world to be in the wrong about sin and righteousness and judgment: **9** about sin, because people do not believe in me; **10** about righteousness, because I am going to the Father, where you can see me no longer; **11** and about judgment, because the prince of this world now stands condemned. **12** "I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. **13** But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. **14** He will glorify me because it is from me that he will receive what he will make known to you. **15** All that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said the Spirit will receive from me what he will make known to you."

Sermon

"Where's the Fire?"

When the township we last lived in was in need of some sort of fire-rescue vehicle for the volunteer fire department, they came up with an answer that I suspect many cash-strapped small communities would be attracted to. The council purchased an old boxy cube van and with the help of a local high school shop teacher and students, they fixed it up for their fire-rescue vehicle. It looked sharp with its new red paint job and gleaming red emergency lights all ready to go and save lives. I'm pretty sure the council and fire department felt pretty good about what they had accomplished as they gathered together for their photo in the local newspaper.

One of my former parishioners, who was also a volunteer fire fighter, later told me the story of how one night they were called out to an emergency and he was to drive the newly restored fire-rescue van. He had the pedal to the metal with the lights on and siren screaming as he drove, when he noticed that cars would be lined up behind him, and passing him once the road straightened. Apparently the "new" van barely had enough horsepower left in it to travel the speed limit. In spite of all the

advancements, it still drove as if there was no rush to get to a fire. Needless to say, it was only used a few years before a replacement was sought out.

Today, being Pentecost Sunday, we are reminded of fire, especially in our first lesson from the book of Acts. The fire of the Holy Spirit gave the followers of Jesus a desire, a deep yearning, to tell the story of Jesus – how Jesus is the Son of God sent to earth to show us all God's caring love for all creation and especially all humans. This love is so deep that God's own Son gave his human life in order that the one thing that keeps humans from God (our sin) could be erased forever. In other words, we can be in a deep relationship to God!

For those early Christians there was an urgency in their message. They had been chosen to be messengers of the greatest news humans could ever hear. God loves us and God wants us to take Jesus' lead and live in a world of peace, forgiveness, justice, and love. There was a deep intense passion in their words. The Holy Spirit had set them on fire and they were in a rush to get the word out and spread that message of hope anywhere, and in any way they could.

As we celebrate another Pentecost Sunday, we might wonder just what happened to that fire sparked on that Pentecost day so long ago. There doesn't seem to be as much of the zealous urgency to be found. Why is that? Why would a fire like that die down? If those early Christians could time travel to this period of history, what might they think?

Initially they might think that there is no need for such a heated message anymore. I mean, after 2000 years of spreading the message, certainly the world has enough experience living in the style of the kingdom of God that gross injustices, economic inequity, widespread poverty and hunger, hatred, and greed have all been wiped out by now, right? After two millennia of practicing Jesus teachings, people by now must have realized the benefits of living by them, haven't they?

I'm afraid that any such time travellers would be sorely disappointed. How would we explain it to them? How would we explain that in spite of all that time passing with a Christian church constantly visible we still live in a violent and unpredictable world? How can we explain why there is still an incredible need for messages of love, kindness, peace,

compassion, healing, forgiveness, and reconciliation? And why aren't we doing more about it?

In an effort to explain ourselves, I suspect we would talk about how difficult life has been for Christians, all the temptations they've had to face through history, and perhaps even how difficult it is for us to do anything now that we are in the midst of a world-wide pandemic. In attempting to picture the looks on the faces of such time travellers, (this would make a great movie, wouldn't it?), I'm not sure if they would be more disappointed, surprised, or shocked. From their perspective, I feel they just might be asking; *"what happened to the fiery intensity of the Holy Spirit? Why are you travelling so slowly when there is so much to be done?"*

I think our mindset is a problem for us today. We may feel that the pandemic keeps us cooped up to the extent that we have pretty much froze up when it comes to spreading this intense message of love to others. Some of us may feel that we're just too old and worn out (like that fire-rescue vehicle) and have nothing to offer.

What we forget though is that so much of today's population has little or no church background, something we have a lot of. So much of today's population have no basic knowledge of the Bible, something we have in spades. So much of today's population has no idea of the joys of being part of a church community and the ability to reach out to the almighty God of all, something so many of us have been doing all our lives. We have so much to share with only so much time left in our lives, so why aren't we sharing what we do know?

We actually have a valuable story to tell people. We don't have to be scholars to tell our story, and we don't have to cram it down others' throats. We only need to be willing to share with others what our faith means to us, and see our stories as gifts we can share with others. We have the opportunity and privilege of introducing others to the God of love and light and life that gives our own life meaning and purpose.

And even if we are in a time of being locked down, we need to remember that there has never, in the history of the world, been a time when information is so easily shared. Make use of the telephone, the internet, or even yelling over your neighbor's fence. Don't be afraid to spend your time speaking this

message that is just as needed today as it was 2000 years ago.
Amen.

Hymn – Gracious Spirit, Heed Our Pleading
<https://youtu.be/2m0QkYctaFo>

Prayers

Alive in the risen Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit, we bring our prayers before God who promises to hear us and answer in steadfast love.

Gracious God, you give the Holy Spirit to your church, filling it with many and varied gifts. In the church throughout the world, strengthen us in our visioning and dreaming, that it may discover anew the Spirit's creative work. Hear us, O God.
Your mercy is great.

God of life, your mighty works are too numerous to count. The earth is full of your creatures, living things both great and small. Open your hand and give them the necessities of this life. Send your fresh Spirit over the face of the earth. Hear us, O God.
Your mercy is great.

God of the nations, at the sound of the rushing wind, people speaking different languages proclaimed and heard together your deeds of power. Fill the leaders of nations with your Holy Spirit, so that they exercise your gracious will in the lives of people. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

God of faithfulness, you tend to the needs of your people, even the sighs of our hearts. Hear those who cry out to you in distress. Restore to wholeness all who are in any need this day. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

God of love, fill this congregation with gratitude for the gifts we have received from you. Renew our ministries, heal our divisions, and open us to the needs of our neighbors. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Lord Jesus, during this season of spiritual renewal, we remember that the land where you walked is today a place of conflict and oppression. We pray for peace for all people in the Holy Land. Transform hearts that are inclined to violence. Strengthen hearts that are committed to respect and rights. Lift

up the voices and the visions that are committed to peace. We pray for the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land, and ask you to bless their efforts to increase hope through education, development and opportunity for Palestinian society. Join our prayers with those who live in the Holy Land, that we might be drawn more deeply into your story of salvation and your way of truth and life. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

God of hope, those who have died in you raise their eternal song of praise. We give you thanks for the many gifts of your people and rejoice in the witness of your saints. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

In the hope of new life in Christ, O Lord, we raise our prayers to you, trusting in your never-ending goodness and mercy; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who taught us to pray...

Lord's Prayer

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.

Hymn – We Are All One in Christ
<https://youtu.be/iHh997IDz4I>