

# New Hope Lutheran Church

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July 4, 2021

6<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost

## Coming Events

**All services have been cancelled.**

July 11 Sermon emailed

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

## Remembering

Martha Tapanila 105 yrs.  
Esko Korhikoski 69 yrs.  
Taisto Eilomaa 91 yrs.



Almighty God, we pray today for those who mourn the loss of loved ones in their lives. Today we especially remember before you the friends and families of Martha Tapanila, Esko Korhikoski and Taisto Eilomaa as they struggle with their losses. Be with them in this time of sorrow, and may they know the presence of your holy comfort; we pray in Jesus name. Amen.

## Announcement

Tentatively we are planning to re-open both Finnish and English worship services on Sunday August 15 in their respective worship locations; Finnish worship at Voima Hall at 10:00 a.m., and English worship at Regent St. beginning at 2:00 p.m. We do expect to have restrictions in place such as wearing a mask and social distancing, as well as receiving the communion wine "in kind", as we did last fall.

We are also tentatively planning a Bilingual Rally Sunday service for Sunday September 12, 10:00 a.m. at Voima Hall so please mark your calendars for this special service.

As we prepare to come together once again, we are reminded that our worship services require worship assistants, beginning in August, and a growing need as restrictions increase. Please consider being a part of this important ministry and let Hilikka know of your interest by calling the office at 705-673-2933 or email [office@nhlc.ca](mailto:office@nhlc.ca)

Opening Hymn – How Firm a Foundation – (796)  
<https://youtu.be/cY6k2QhdCn0>

## Prayer of the Day

God of the covenant, in our baptism you call us to proclaim the coming of your kingdom. Give us the courage you gave the apostles, that we may faithfully witness to your love and peace in every circumstance of life, in the name of Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.

## Psalm 123

- 1 I lift up my eyes to you, to you who sit enthroned in heaven.
- 2 As the eyes of slaves look to the hand of their master, as the eyes of a female slave look to the hand of her mistress, so our eyes look to the LORD our God, till he shows us his mercy.
- 3 Have mercy on us, LORD, have mercy on us, for we have endured no end of contempt.
- 4 We have endured no end of ridicule from the arrogant, of contempt from the proud.

## First Reading "Ezekiel 2:1 – 5"

1 He said to me, "Son of man, stand up on your feet and I will speak to you." 2 As he spoke, the Spirit came into me and raised me to my feet, and I heard him speaking to me. 3 He said: "Son of man, I am sending you to the Israelites, to a rebellious nation that has rebelled against me; they and their ancestors have been in revolt against me to this very day. 4

The people to whom I am sending you are obstinate and stubborn. Say to them, 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says.' 5 And whether they listen or fail to listen—for they are a rebellious people—they will know that a prophet has been among them.

## Second Reading "2 Corinthians 12:2 – 10"

2 I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven. Whether it was in the body or out of the body I do not know—God knows. 3 And I know that this man—whether in the body or apart from the body I do not know, but God knows— 4 was caught up to paradise and heard inexpressible things, things that no one is permitted to tell. 5 I will boast about a man like that, but I will not boast about myself, except about my weaknesses. 6 Even if I should choose to boast, I would not be a fool, because I would be speaking the truth. But I refrain, so no one will think more of me than is warranted by what I do or say, 7 or because of these surpassingly great revelations. Therefore, in order to keep me from becoming conceited, I was given a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. 8 Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. 9 But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. 10 That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

## Gospel "Mark 6:1 – 13"

1 Jesus left there and went to his hometown, accompanied by his disciples. 2 When the Sabbath came, he began to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard him were amazed. "Where did this man get these things?" they asked. "What's this wisdom that has been given him? What are these remarkable miracles he is performing? 3 Isn't this the carpenter? Isn't this Mary's son and the brother of James, Joseph, Judas and Simon? Aren't his sisters here with us?" And they took offense at him. 4 Jesus said to them, "A prophet is not without honor except in his own town, among his relatives and in his own home." 5 He could not do any miracles there, except lay his hands on a few sick people and heal them. 6 He was amazed at their lack of faith. Then Jesus went around teaching from village to village. 7 Calling the Twelve to him, he began to send them out two by two and gave them authority over impure spirits. 8 These were his instructions: "Take nothing for the journey except a staff—no bread, no bag, no money in your

belts. **9** Wear sandals but not an extra shirt. **10** Whenever you enter a house, stay there until you leave that town. **11** And if any place will not welcome you or listen to you, leave that place and shake the dust off your feet as a testimony against them.” **12** They went out and preached that people should repent. **13** They drove out many demons and anointed many sick people with oil and healed them.

## Sermon

*By Bishop Larry Kochendorfer  
Synod of Alberta and the Territories*

Welcome to this summer sermon series that our Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada is providing for congregations. I am Larry Kochendorfer and I serve as the Bishop of the Synod of Alberta and the Territories. It is great to be with you this Sunday and to be able to give your dear pastor or deacon and lay leaders some much welcomed relief. Our rostered and lay leaders have been offering an incredible ministry over the course of the past year. But it's hard work and we need to do everything we can to give them our encouragement and support!

As I prepared today's sermon, I want to acknowledge my appreciation for the writings of Karoline Lewis, Bradley Schmeling and Barbara Brown Taylor and, the preaching resource, *Feasting on the Word*. I have significantly borrowed their wisdom and insights, and their words, in the shaping of today's sermon.

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*Let us pray: (Evangelical Lutheran Worship: Additional Prayers – Commitment. ©2006 Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Augsburg Fortress, p. 86.)*

*Into your hands, almighty God, we place ourselves: our minds to know you, our hearts to love you, our wills to serve you, for we are yours.*

*Into your hands, incarnate Savior, we place ourselves: receive us and draw us after you, that we may follow your steps; abide in us and enliven us by the power of your indwelling.*

*Into your hands, O hovering Spirit, we place ourselves: take us and fashion us after your image; let your comfort strengthen, your grace renew, and your fire cleanse us, soul and body, in*

*life and in death, in this world of shadows and in your changeless world of light eternal, now and forever. Amen.*

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When our family moved to Edmonton, Alberta in 2002 I recall getting stuck in a traffic circle near our home and the congregation to which I had been called. This was a traffic circle with five entrances, and of course, five exits, and I would get stuck in the inside lane, going round and around, passing my exit several times.

Our minds can be like that. Or, at least, mine can. I can get stuck in a loop. I revisit conversations in my mind wishing that I had said something different, or at least in a different way, practicing in my head what I wished I had said.

I revisit arguments, and I make my case, point by point to my invisible and absent antagonist. Sometimes I just stew, usually over something ridiculous. Or, lately, I seem fixated on a theme: politics, or COVID, or details for our son's wedding service which took place recently.

At times, my mind is like a dog with a bone. I can hardly let go.

I suspect that some of you may understand. There are times, even during a ZOOM meeting, that I see a participant's lips moving I check to see if the individual is unmuted. Sometimes their lips are moving even though nothing is being said. And sometimes there's just a look in someone's eyes on ZOOM and I know that something is going on; that something is going round and around in their mind.

There's huge energy in stewing. It is circular energy. It moves round and round, with no exit ramp. No entrance ramp for anyone else, either. Just round and round.

I wonder if this kind of circular energy gives us a way of considering the two brief stories that appear as our gospel text for today.

In the first, Jesus comes home and on the sabbath preaches in the synagogue. What strikes me is not that the people are upset about his preaching. People have always gotten upset about preaching. What surprises me is that, as a result, Jesus is not able to do any deeds of power – except for the few sick people that he laid his hands on and healed. Something happens in that synagogue that keeps the energy of God's reign – already drawing near – from getting in. There is no entrance ramp. Even Jesus is shocked at its strength.

The gospel writer does not actually tell us what Jesus said in his sermon. He only tells us their reaction to the message. The energy in the synagogue turns – they were astounded, and they become critical. Their comments turn to insults. Jesus is mentioned as “son of Mary,” a strange construction in the first century when the father would have been mentioned.

Are they saying something about this “fatherless” child? This illegitimate voice? And they say that he is nothing but a carpenter. We hear “carpenter” as a skilled and prized trade. However, the actual meaning here is more like, “manual laborer.” Who does this illegitimate, laborer think he is? He was familiar to them. They knew him as the eldest child of a large clan, a child like their own children, none of whom was traipsing around the countryside cleansing lepers and casting out demons. Who does he think he is?

I suspect that all of these comments and more, you know how it happens, were made at the coffee hour. You can almost picture the crowd turning from Jesus toward one another, whispering in each other's ears, their communal connection closing off this outside influence.

As a community, they draw the circle closer, their connection becomes a kind of centripetal force pulling them harder and tighter together.

Is it any wonder that a community that uses insecurity and anxiety and suspicion as its connection is impervious to the reign of God? It is no wonder that Jesus cannot break through. It is no wonder that this community cannot experience deeds of liberating power. It has closed itself off.

This is a warning to any community of faith that it should evaluate what it is that connects the community. Is it this kind of narcissistic energy, always turned inward? Does it spin so strongly round and around that there are no longer any entrance ramps for new voices, new energy, new ideas? No exits ramps to get away from the fear and anger? Is it a closed system, unopen to change, to possibility, to opportunity, facing only inside the circle?

This happens so easily in communities because almost by nature we use our deep insecurity or our prejudice, our anxiety and suspicion to keep connected. As church we will even couch it all in God language.

We want to belong, but we organize around judgment of the other – the stranger, the enemy, the wounded, the voiceless.

We create a community that looks and sounds just like we do. God help the prophet who comes to announce a different perspective!

You can see this in churches that become rigid and hardened theologically; no questions allowed. You see this in politics where there is only win or lose. You see this in family systems that assign members to particular roles that are not allowed to change. You see this in congregations that are organized around the past or one personality or a particular cultural expression. It happens in just about every community.

In the second brief story in today's gospel we see what is instructive for us through Jesus' reaction. He is amazed by the power of their unbelief. He is amazed at how it can stop even the grace of God.

And, instead of stewing, or arguing his case, or justifying his perspective, or just getting stuck in the traffic circle, he moves on to another village. He sends the disciples out two by two to find places that will come alive with a new Spirit. Strap on your sandals, take your staff, and find the households that are open to you. Find the places, the communities, where connections are open and wide and welcoming of the message, places where the circle of the people will welcome this new way of love, compassion, healing, and justice to enter.

And, when you are rejected, pick yourself back up, dust yourself off, and move on. Do not do what everyone else does: fight about it or stand your ground or prove that you are right or just lay in bed terrified of being terrified. This is the grace of Jesus' action here: deep within his own being is love, compassion, healing, and justice, and he moves on.

The crucifixion is symbol of the world stuck in this loop – this circle. Organized around fear, it marshals the weapons of power to kill the messenger; to demean the opponent; to silence the prophet. It is terrified of forgiveness and weakness, scared to death of losing, and it cannot trust vulnerability, love, or compassion.

And here is the good news for us today: Easter is God's answer to the loop – to the circle. Jesus suddenly appears on the inside of the locked doors; on the other side of our walls; inside our circles.

Easter life provides a way out, even as it lets the new voice in. Instead of limits, this Easter life is one of possibility and of opportunity. This Easter life enriches deeds of healing and

peacemaking. This Easter life brings people together. This Easter life spins the circle toward openness, where each of us find, and our faith communities find ourselves turning outward to the world with a kind of grace and generosity that is truly prophetic, and truly good news for all.

The Spirit of Jesus leads us, pulls us together, makes us a new community, and then sends us out two by two, three by three into the neighborhood where the love of God is already flowing, where God's presence is known in the eyes of the other – the stranger, the enemy, the wounded, the voiceless. Where we too will discover that Jesus is enough. That the good news is sufficient. That God's love and forgiveness is enough. That the Word and the water of baptism is enough. That the meal of bread and wine, Christ's own body and blood, is enough.

Where the circle of our lives spins toward openness, and we find ourselves turning to the world with a kind of grace and generosity that is truly prophetic, and truly good news for all.

May it be so among us.

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*Prayer:* (adapted from The Rev. Susan R. Briehl. Day 1, April 30, 2000.)

*Come to us, risen Lord Jesus,  
and grant us faith enough to share the good news.*

*Send us, filled with the breath of your Holy Spirit,  
To breathe peace into fearful lives,  
To love one another as we have been loved,  
To welcome the stranger and make friends of enemies,  
To forgive the sins that bind others to the past,  
To serve, on bended knee, all in need of care;  
To be your wounded and risen Body in the world  
And to enter with joy God's in-breaking, startling future. Amen*

Hymn – Lord, You Give the Great Commission – (579)  
<https://youtu.be/ZQ8J34NsZYY>

### Prayers

Let us come before the triune God in prayer.

God of all, through the waters of baptism you claim people of all races, ethnicities, and languages as your beloved children. Sustain the baptized and increase their faith, that your gospel

may be proclaimed throughout the earth. Lord, in your mercy. **Hear our prayer.**

God of the heavens, your creating Spirit animates the universe. We give you thanks for the moon and stars, for the planets and the Milky Way Galaxy, and for all of the mysteries of the cosmos that remain unknown to us. Lord, in your mercy. **Hear our prayer.**

God of freedom, you have liberated us from sin and death and rescue us from all forms of spiritual, social, and political oppression. Defend us from tyrants in our midst and deliver us from all forms of slavery or corruption. Direct our freedom for works of liberation and wholeness. Lord, in your mercy. **Hear our prayer.**

God of compassion, you became vulnerable in the person of Jesus Christ in solidarity with the disempowered. Strengthen those who feel faint, give courage to those who fear, and bring wholeness to those in need. Lord, in your mercy. **Hear our prayer.**

God of holiness, you send us out into the world to proclaim your love. We pray for our outreach ministries. Equip us to witness and serve our neighbors. Lord, in your mercy. **Hear our prayer.**

We give you thanks that in every time and place you call forth prophets who move us towards freedom. Thank you for those who work for human rights, community organizers, and all who strive for liberty for all. Lord, in your mercy. **Hear our prayer.**

We lift our prayers to you, O God, trusting in your abiding grace.

### 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 All Are One in Mission – (576)  
<https://youtu.be/3VLcYBcRMxU>