

# New Hope Lutheran Church

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## Pastors:

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*August 8, 2021*

*11<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost*

## Coming Events

**All services have been cancelled.**

### Aug 11

10 – 1 Wednesday Café **Regent St. (outside only)**  
6:30 Council mtg **Regent St.**

### Aug 15

10:00 Finn. Worship Service † **Voima Hall**  
2:00 Eng. Worship Service † **Regent St.**

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

We are 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 Hilka know of your interest by calling the office at 705-673-2933 or email [office@nhlc.ca](mailto:office@nhlc.ca)

Opening Hymn – God of Tempest, God of Whirlwind (400)  
<https://youtu.be/gphSbqIW7x8>

## Prayer of the Day

Gracious God, your blessed Son came down from heaven to be the true bread that gives life to the world. Give us this bread always, that he may live in us and we in him, and that, strengthened by this food, we may live as his body in the world, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.

## Psalms 34:1 – 8

- 1 I will extol the LORD at all times; his praise will always be on my lips.
- 2 I will glory in the LORD; let the afflicted hear and rejoice.
- 3 Glorify the LORD with me; let us exalt his name together.
- 4 I sought the LORD, and he answered me; he delivered me from all my fears.
- 5 Those who look to him are radiant; their faces are never covered with shame.
- 6 This poor man called, and the LORD heard him; he saved him out of all his troubles.
- 7 The angel of the LORD encamps around those who fear him, and he delivers them.
- 8 Taste and see that the LORD is good; blessed is the one who takes refuge in him.

## First Reading “1 Kings 19:4 – 8”

4 while he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness. He came to a broom bush, sat down under it and prayed that he might die. "I have had enough, LORD," he said. "Take my life; I am no better than my ancestors." 5 Then he lay down under the bush and fell asleep. All at once an angel touched him and said, "Get up and eat." 6 He looked around, and there by his head was some bread baked over hot coals, and a jar of water. He ate and drank and then lay down again. 7 The angel of the LORD came back a second time and touched him and said, "Get up and eat, for the journey is too much for you." 8 So he got up and ate and drank. Strengthened by that food, he traveled forty days and forty nights until he reached Horeb, the mountain of God.

## Second Reading “Ephesians 4:25 – 5:2”

25 Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to your neighbor, for we are all members of one body. 26 "In your anger do not sin": Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, 27 and do not give the devil a foothold. 28 Anyone who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must

work, doing something useful with their own hands, that they may have something to share with those in need. 29 Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. 30 And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. 31 Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. 32 Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.

5:1 Follow God's example, therefore, as dearly loved children 2 and walk in the way of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

## Gospel “John 6:35, 41 – 51”

35 Then Jesus declared, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.

41 At this the Jews there began to grumble about him because he said, "I am the bread that came down from heaven." 42 They said, "Is this not Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How can he now say, 'I came down from heaven'?" 43 "Stop grumbling among yourselves," Jesus answered. 44 "No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws them, and I will raise them up at the last day. 45 It is written in the Prophets: 'They will all be taught by God.' Everyone who has heard the Father and learned from him comes to me. 46 No one has seen the Father except the one who is from God; only he has seen the Father. 47 Very truly I tell you, the one who believes has eternal life. 48 I am the bread of life. 49 Your ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness, yet they died. 50 But here is the bread that comes down from heaven, which anyone may eat and not die. 51 I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats this bread will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world."

## Sermon

*By Rev. Paul Gehrs*

*Assistant to the National Bishop, Justice and Leadership*

I live on Treaty One Territory: the land of Anishinaabeg, Cree, Oji-Cree, Dakota, and Dene Peoples, and the homeland of the Métis Nation. I am grateful for the historic and ongoing stewardship of water, land, community and spirituality offered

by Indigenous Elders and leaders. Many harms have happened and much healing needs to happen. The ongoing research and announcements regarding unmarked graves at former residential schools means that this a particularly significant time of grieving, trauma, reckoning with history and soul-searching. On June 1, 2021, the ELCIC Bishops issued a letter entitled *A Renewed Call to Reconciliation*. I receive these words as wise counsel and a calling.

Acknowledging traditional territory is important to me. It is meaningful, prayerful and liturgical every time. It grounds me in my current place and context, keeps me mindful of how I got here, and amplifies my gratitude for the ones who helped me get here.

My name is Paul Gehrs and my pronouns are he/him.

I serve as Assistant to the Bishop for Justice and Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations with the ELCIC National Office. I am grateful for all the members of the ELCIC who help me live as a Christian, and I honour the gifts and witness you share with the world on a daily basis.

Jesus said “I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.”

Then the people began to complain...

In this story, the people who *know Jesus best* fail to recognize Jesus as the bread of life. The ones who complain are neighbours and friends who knew his family, watched him grow up and lived in the same hometown.

It seems to me that today, the ones most likely to claim to know Jesus best are those most connected to the church. The power I see in this text is that it highlights any temptations I may have to underestimate the gift of the bread of life. God’s love is constant, God’s desire to feed the hungry is eternal, God’s people are diverse and abundant.

The motivation for the complaining is open to interpretation.

Perhaps Jesus is too familiar.

I miss a lot when I do not pay attention to God’s activity in the ordinary and the everyday.

Perhaps there is jealousy that someone else is getting ahead. A bitter feeling of *What makes you better than me?*

A lot of damage has been done in the name of trying to prevent someone else from becoming the person God calls them to be. Not everything in life is a competition; especially in matters of spirituality.

Or perhaps it is fear. If Jesus is speaking truth, then I might have to change my ways. A new path can be scary; even one full of grace.

Partaking in the bread of life begets a journey of discipleship and transformation.

Perhaps complaining is a way of avoiding change or...truth.

As one response to the complaining, Jesus points to the Story of God providing mana in the wilderness. God’s people were in the wilderness as part of a journey of liberation – from slavery to a new life in a promised land. In the daily collecting of mana, the community learned many lessons: lessons about utter reliance on God, the futility of hoarding, and the consequences of complaining. The journey to liberation is not always easy; but God is with us.

In the course of a lifetime, most people experience some time in a metaphorical wilderness. Every person has a life-story. Lessons about utter reliance on God are personal and sacred. It is a hard truth that some people have more and longer wilderness experiences than others do. It is also a hard truth that some people experience much more oppression than others do. The mana story reminds us that it is God’s desire to liberate people and establish justice.

Seeking justice and reconciliation are essential elements in the life of every disciple. Personally, I describe this as *a calling to value persons, respect creation and build community by seeking peace, justice and dignity for all; and a calling to live with integrity, creativity, and a deep sense of the holy.*

In recent years, I have been growing more conscious of how much my own privilege influences how I perceive the world. The more I listen, the more I hear stories of how systemic racism and other forms of oppression continue to inflict harm in individuals, in communities, in societies and in the church. I feel a deeper calling to self-awareness and a desire to create safe spaces for listening. At the same time, I have a growing sense of my own need to be transformed by God in order for God’s mission of liberation to be fully achieved. Regularly, Jesus and I have frank discussions about whether I am part of the problem or part of the solution.

Experiences that create meaningful transformation commonly include moments of discomfort, especially if I am hearing that my own actions have had a negative effect on other people. It requires commitment, hard work and prayer to be present and engaged in the midst of discomfort.

I remember the first time I took anti-racism training. It was required training because I was serving as an ecumenical partner on an Anglican Committee. I felt upset and indignant by one of the exercises. I began to complain. As we debriefed this in a small group, one person in my group, who is a black man and a priest, looked me in the eye and, with abundance of grace, asked me: “Paul, how often do you think about the colour of your skin?”

“Almost never,” I had to admit.

He replied, “I think about it every day.”

It was, for me, a transformative moment that marked the beginning of a long and ongoing journey. His words continue to sustain me in multiple ways.

In 2015, the ELCIC National Convention repudiated the Doctrine of Discovery. As a church, we confessed that this doctrine encourages patterns of domination and oppression that continue to afflict Indigenous peoples and the land today. And we committed to reflecting on history, seeking a deeper understanding of issues, upholding human rights and working for reconciliation.

On the last day of 2015 convention, I asked a youth delegate “what was a convention highlight for you?”

She said “the Resolution on the Doctrine of Discovery. We took that doctrine, and flushed it down the toilet!”

If only it were that easy. The journey for reconciliation and healing requires commitment, listening, hard work and prayer.

The work is both urgent and long term.

Jesus said “I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.”

Then the people began to complain...

But Jesus did not stop: he continued to feed, to heal, to teach and to love.

He continued all the way to the cross, where he himself said, *I am thirsty.*

And to the resurrection where he said:

*Peace be with you.*

*Feed my sheep.*

*and Follow me.*

We live with parallel realities:

On the one hand, God claims us, loves us, holds us and honours us for who we are. We never need to doubt this. We spend our lives learning the depths of this truth.

On the other hand, God desires a world without hunger and thirst. As long as there is hunger and thirst, there is more work to do. We spend our lives being transformed and working for transformation.

Radically loved and affirmed. Radically called to transformation.

Thanks be to God who gives us a faithful community, so we never journey alone.

Thanks be to God who gives us the bread of life in order to sustain us on journeys of discipleship, transformation and liberation.

Thank be to God who so loves the world.

Hymn – O Living Bread from Heaven (542)  
<https://youtu.be/UqUpkoTBGSU>

### **Prayers**

Rooted in Christ and sustained by the Spirit, we offer our prayers for the church, the world, and all of creation.

For the church of Christ in all its diverse forms. For mission developers, new mission starts, and all communities of faith exploring new models of ministry for the sake of the gospel. For congregations facing difficult decisions about their future. God in your mercy. **Hear our prayer.**

For the health and well-being of creation. For shade trees that provide refuge from the hot summer sun. For lakes, rivers, and oceans contaminated by pollution and all who lack clean water. God, in your mercy. **Hear our prayer.**

For those called to positions of authority in our legal system, we pray. For judges, lawyers, law clerks, and court employees who ensure the fair administration of justice. For corrections officers and prison chaplains, that they would deal mercifully

with those who are incarcerated. God, in your mercy. **Hear our prayer.**

For all who cry out to you in their affliction. For exiles, refugees, and others who face long and difficult journeys, uncertain about the future. For all who mourn the death of a loved one. For all who are sick. God, in your mercy. **Hear our prayer.**

We pray for those who are facing disasters in all the shapes and forms they take. Be with victims in their trials and grief, and we pray that your presence and your people will be with them to give them comfort and the necessities of life. Look over them as they wait in these uncertain times. God, in your mercy. **Hear our prayer.**

For those who have been raised to eternal life, we give thanks. With all the saints we praise you for the bread of life that keeps us in your love forever. God, in your mercy. **Hear our prayer.**

We lift these and all our prayers to you, O God, confident in the promise of your saving love; through 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.

Hymn – Be Thou My Vision (793)  
<https://youtu.be/Optrm7IF16s>