

# New Hope Lutheran Church

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## Pastors:

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**December 19, 2021**

*The 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Advent*

## Coming Events

Offices closed Dec 24, 2021 – Jan 7, 2022

- Dec 24 4:00 Candle Light Worship † **Regent St.**  
9:00 Candle Light Worship † **Regent St.**
- Dec 25 1:00 Finnish Worship Service † **Regent St.**  
No English Worship Service
- Jan 2 2:00 English Worship Service † **Regent St.**
- Jan 9 10:00 Finnish Worship Service † **Voima Hall**  
2:00 English Worship Service † **Regent St.**

**In our prayers** Ruth, Esme.

**Notice:** As of January 1, 2022 the sermons will no longer be emailed. You can find them on our webpage [nhlc.ca](http://nhlc.ca)

## Lighting of Advent Candles



We praise you, O God, for this circle of light that marks our days of preparation for Christ's advent. As we light the candles on this wreath, kindle within us the fire of your Spirit, that we may be light shining in the darkness. Enlighten us with your grace, that we may welcome others as you have welcomed us. Grant this through Christ our Lord, whose coming is certain and whose day draws near. **Amen.**

Opening Hymn – O Come, O Come, Emmanuel (257)  
<https://youtu.be/zshzkkD-NYA>

## Prayer of the Day

Stir up your power, Lord Christ, and come. With your abundant grace and might, free us from the sin that binds us, that we may receive you in joy and serve you always, for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

## Luke 1:46b – 55

<sup>46</sup> "My soul glorifies the Lord  
<sup>47</sup> and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,  
<sup>48</sup> for he has been mindful of the humble state of his servant.  
From now on all generations will call me blessed,  
<sup>49</sup> for the Mighty One has done great things for me—holy is his name.  
<sup>50</sup> His mercy extends to those who fear him, from generation to generation.  
<sup>51</sup> He has performed mighty deeds with his arm; he has scattered those who are proud in their inmost thoughts.  
<sup>52</sup> He has brought down rulers from their thrones but has lifted up the humble.  
<sup>53</sup> He has filled the hungry with good things but has sent the rich away empty.  
<sup>54</sup> He has helped his servant Israel, remembering to be merciful  
<sup>55</sup> to Abraham and his descendants forever, just as he promised our ancestors."

## First Reading "Micah 5:2 – 5a"

**2** "But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times." **3** Therefore Israel will be abandoned until the time when she who is in labor bears a son, and the rest of his brothers return to join the Israelites. **4** He will stand and shepherd his flock in the strength of the LORD, in the majesty of the name of

the LORD his God. And they will live securely, for then his greatness will reach to the ends of the earth. **5** And he will be our peace when the Assyrians invade our land and march through our fortresses.

## Second Reading "Hebrews 10:5 – 10"

**5** Therefore, when Christ came into the world, he said: "Sacrifice and offering you did not desire, but a body you prepared for me; **6** with burnt offerings and sin offerings you were not pleased. **7** Then I said, 'Here I am—it is written about me in the scroll—I have come to do your will, my God.'" **8** First he said, "Sacrifices and offerings, burnt offerings and sin offerings you did not desire, nor were you pleased with them"—though they were offered in accordance with the law. **9** Then he said, "Here I am, I have come to do your will." He sets aside the first to establish the second. **10** And by that will, we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

The Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

## Gospel "Luke 1:39 – 56"

### Glory to you, O Lord.

*At that time Mary got ready and hurried to a town in the hill country of Judea, where she entered Zechariah's home and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. In a loud voice she exclaimed: "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child you will bear! But why am I so favored, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? As soon as the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy. Blessed is she who has believed that the Lord would fulfill his promises to her!" And Mary said: "My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has been mindful of the humble state of his servant. From now on all generations will call me blessed, for the Mighty One has done great things for me— holy is his name. His mercy extends to those who fear him, from generation to generation. He has performed mighty deeds with his arm; he has scattered those who are proud in their inmost thoughts. He has brought down rulers from their thrones but has lifted up the humble. He has filled the hungry with good things but has sent the rich away empty. He has helped his servant Israel, remembering to be merciful to Abraham and his descendants forever, just as he promised our ancestors." Mary stayed with Elizabeth for about three months and then returned home.*

The Gospel of the Lord. **Praise to you, O Christ.**

## Sermon

By Rev. Charles Nolting  
“Are You Ready for Jesus?”

I’m sure we’re all aware that Mary is revered around the world. There are numerous statues of her as well as places and buildings named after her. But do we know what makes Mary so special? It has to do with her unwavering faith, her deeply held belief that God had blessed her with a special job amongst all humans.

It would not be an easy job, and her journey would be filled with difficulties. She would be a teenage mother. She and her little family would become refugees in Egypt. She would face all kinds of bewildering questions as to where her life was going, and what kind of a son she was raising. And she would witness the brutal torture and death of that son.

Not that she was aware of this from the beginning. She had little idea of what was to come and that’s what makes her special. Mary said “yes” to God. She willingly entered into God’s plan. When first informed by an angel, she didn’t have to take some time to think about it. She didn’t have to consult with her therapist. She didn’t need to look at her horoscope. Her immediate response to the angel was recorded as: “*Here I am, a servant...*” She may not have been prepared for this, but she was ready. She didn’t ask for this, yet she accepted it. God’s choice became Mary’s choice.

Mary isn’t the only one chosen though, as God also chooses us. God chooses us to receive the gift of life. God chooses us to grow in our faith, to witness to others, and to serve those in need. We may know how hard it can be to say “yes” to God’s requests – even the small ones. Now imagine how difficult it was to answer “yes” to being a young, poor, unmarried, and responsible for the pregnancy and birth of God’s promised Messiah! That is why Mary is held in such high esteem. She chose to answer YES. Her soul magnified the Lord!

The question for us today is: are we as willing to follow her example? Faith has been defined as “*the quiet surrender of the self to the spirit of God*”. It’s actually very simple, but the urgings of the world unfortunately make it appear very complex. And this is why it is helpful to look to Mary as a wonderful example of faith and how simply trusting allows us to be led by God in a life filled with meaning and purpose.

We have now been located on Regent St. for over a year and a half. And it’s been a tough period of time, with in-person worship being an on-again, off-again process. And in those times we can worship in-person, we have to sign in, wear masks the whole time, stay distanced apart, omit singing, and worst of all, no coffee time after worship! We are struggling as a congregation through a time without an end in sight.

That’s why we need Mary and Mary’s example to be put before us. We need to have someone to compare our lives to in order that we may see that saying “yes” to God is a matter of faith, and that this struggle – similar to Mary’s struggles – will actually increase our faith if we continue to trust that God will guide us. Faith isn’t about avoiding struggles, but rather trusting that we can get through them with God’s help and guidance.

But saying “yes” to God isn’t always easy. It is so much easier for us humans to simply say “no” to God when approached. It’s easy to say: “*no, I’d rather go about my business in ways that make me comfortable. I feel better focusing on myself. Sorry Lord, but I would rather have absolute control of my life than let you take me somewhere I’d be uncomfortable.*”

Another way we say “no” is to easily slip into excuses. “*I’m too old.*” “*I don’t have the time.*” “*I don’t have experience.*” Some may find it ironic that in our lesson today, Mary may be considered inexperienced, and Elizabeth far too old!

Saying “no” to God may seem to be a good plan when life is going well. But what happens when all we’ve built, and all we’ve planned goes to pieces? If we depend only on ourselves and our human limitations, how does that help us when life throws us chaos and disruptions?

And this is why we are encouraged to live in faith and follow Mary in saying “yes” to God’s plan for us. While a part of us may feel that we are somehow throwing something away, faith tells us that we only have so much more to gain. It is by working through our current struggles that faith can grow.

It may help to give you an illustration of what strong faith looks like. There is a story about a community suffering from drought. The fields were parched and brown. The crops lay wilting from thirst. Local ministers called for an hour of prayer on the town square, asking everyone to bring an object of faith for inspiration. The townspeople filled the square with anxious faces and hopeful hearts, a variety of objects clutched in prayerful hands--holy books, crosses, rosaries. When the hour had ended, as if on magical command, a soft rain began to fall.

Cheers swept the crowd as they held their treasured objects high in gratitude and praise. One faith symbol seemed to overshadow all the others: A 9-year-old child had brought an umbrella.

It is well to move ahead in faith, but faith also means moving ahead in practical ways. May God be with us to grow in this time of struggle, and to make our faith of use to others. Who knows how far we can go when we say “yes” to God? Amen.

Hymn – Canticle of the Turning (723)  
<https://youtu.be/3IASxb4QH1s>

## Prayers

In this season of watching and waiting, let us pray for all people and places that yearn for God’s presence.

Nurturing God, you give us life and care for our every need. Use the church’s gifts and ministries for your service, bringing your word to all who seek your transforming grace. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Creator God, you proclaim your boundless love for all that you have made. Renew barren lands, polluted waters, and melting ice caps. Make us servants of your creation that brings forth abundant life. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Righteous God, you bring down the mighty and lift up the lowly. Strengthen those who seek justice. Bless the work of community organizers, activists, journalists, and all who call our attention to imbalances of power. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Seeking God, we pray for those who have strayed from your fellowship. Give us the wisdom to understand and address their situation in life so they will once again seek your presence in their lives. Give them eyes to see your hand working around them and ears to hear your word with newness and life. Bless our efforts to spread your message to them. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Gracious God, you fill the hungry with good things. Bless the feeding ministries of this community. Guide us to share your bounty with those who hunger or live in poverty. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Faithful God, you stir up the hearts of those who love you. We give you thanks for those who, like Mary, were courageous in

their witness. Give us such courage until that day when you fulfill all things. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

God of new life, you come among us in the places we least expect. Receive these prayers and those of our hearts, in the name of Jesus, 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 – All Earth Is Hopeful (266)

<https://youtu.be/3IASxb4QH1s>