

# New Hope Lutheran Church

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## Pastors:

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*February 27, 2022*

*Transfiguration Sunday*

## Coming Events

Mar 1 7:00 English Bible Study **Zoom**  
Contact Pastor Charlie if you  
wish to participate

Mar 2 **Ash Wednesday**  
10 – 1 Kahvi Time **Regent St**  
12:00 Finnish Lenten Service **Regent St**  
7:00 English Lenten Service **Regent St**  
(joint with Trinity)

Mar 3 6:30 Finnish Bible Study **Zoom**  
Contact Pastor Johanna if you  
wish to participate

Mar 6 10:00 Messu † **Voima Hall**  
2:00 English Worship † **Regent St**

Mar 7 1:00 Worship & Music **Zoom**

Mar 8 6:30 Council meeting **Regent St & Zoom**

Mar 9 **Lenten Services at 6:30pm at Regent St**  
English (upstairs) and Finnish (downstairs)

**In our prayers** Ruth, Marilyn.

Opening Hymn – O Beauty Ever Ancient  
<https://youtu.be/72q0E7SXfDg>

## Prayer of the Day

Holy God, mighty and immortal, you are beyond our knowing, yet we see your glory in the face of Jesus Christ. Transform us into the likeness of your Son, who renewed our humanity so that we may share in his divinity, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

## Psalm 99

- <sup>1</sup> The LORD reigns, let the nations tremble; he sits enthroned between the cherubim, let the earth shake.
- <sup>2</sup> Great is the LORD in Zion; he is exalted over all the nations.
- <sup>3</sup> Let them praise your great and awesome name— he is holy.
- <sup>4</sup> The King is mighty, he loves justice— you have established equity; in Jacob you have done what is just and right.
- <sup>5</sup> Exalt the LORD our God and worship at his footstool; he is holy.
- <sup>6</sup> Moses and Aaron were among his priests, Samuel was among those who called on his name; they called on the LORD and he answered them.
- <sup>7</sup> He spoke to them from the pillar of cloud; they kept his statutes and the decrees he gave them.
- <sup>8</sup> LORD our God, you answered them; you were to Israel a forgiving God, though you punished their misdeeds.
- <sup>9</sup> Exalt the LORD our God and worship at his holy mountain, for the LORD our God is holy.

## First Reading “Exodus 34:29 – 35”

**29** When Moses came down from Mount Sinai with the two tablets of the covenant law in his hands, he was not aware that his face was radiant because he had spoken with the LORD. **30** When Aaron and all the Israelites saw Moses, his face was radiant, and they were afraid to come near him. **31** But Moses called to them; so

Aaron and all the leaders of the community came back to him, and he spoke to them. **32** Afterward all the Israelites came near him, and he gave them all the commands the LORD had given him on Mount Sinai. **33** When Moses finished speaking to them, he put a veil over his face. **34** But whenever he entered the LORD’s presence to speak with him, he removed the veil until he came out. And when he came out and told the Israelites what he had been commanded, **35** they saw that his face was radiant. Then Moses would put the veil back over his face until he went in to speak with the LORD.

## Second Reading “2 Corinthians 3:12 – 4:2”

**12** Therefore, since we have such a hope, we are very bold. **13** We are not like Moses, who would put a veil over his face to prevent the Israelites from seeing the end of what was passing away. **14** But their minds were made dull, for to this day the same veil remains when the old covenant is read. It has not been removed, because only in Christ is it taken away. **15** Even to this day when Moses is read, a veil covers their hearts. **16** But whenever anyone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. **17** Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. **18** And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord’s glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.

**4:1** Therefore, since through God’s mercy we have this ministry, we do not lose heart. **2** Rather, we have renounced secret and shameful ways; we do not use deception, nor do we distort the word of God. On the contrary, by setting forth the truth plainly we commend ourselves to everyone’s conscience in the sight of God. The Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

## Gospel “Luke 9:28 – 36”

**Glorify to you, O Lord.**

*About eight days after Jesus said this, he took Peter, John and James with him and went up onto a mountain*

*to pray. As he was praying, the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became as bright as a flash of lightning. Two men, Moses and Elijah, appeared in glorious splendor, talking with Jesus. They spoke about his departure, which he was about to bring to fulfillment at Jerusalem. Peter and his companions were very sleepy, but when they became fully awake, they saw his glory and the two men standing with him. As the men were leaving Jesus, Peter said to him, "Master, it is good for us to be here. Let us put up three shelters—one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah." (He did not know what he was saying.) While he was speaking, a cloud appeared and covered them, and they were afraid as they entered the cloud. A voice came from the cloud, saying, "This is my Son, whom I have chosen; listen to him." When the voice had spoken, they found that Jesus was alone. The disciples kept this to themselves and did not tell anyone at that time what they had seen.*

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

### **Sermon**

*By Rev. Charles Nolting  
"Mountaintop Experience"*

The news has been unfortunate this week. Russian troops that were amassed at the border of Ukraine have proceeded with an invasion. For months now, we have been assured that it was all *just part of a military exercise*. We have been told that *a country is allowed to move troops wherever it wants to within its own territory*. We have been told that *there is little to worry about*.

And then this invasion happened. I doubt we are surprised. We have seen enough of Mr. Putin's tactics over the many years he has been in power to know that we really can't trust him. When his popularity was flagging in 2014, he annexed Crimea, in part to demonstrate that he was someone who would make

Russia great again. Apparently his popularity has been dropping again recently, so another show of force may be the way to become a popular Russian leader.

I realize these things worry us, and they probably should. We may be aware that, in the past, military minded leaders didn't always stop at one country when expanding their territory. Mr. Putin appears to like to claim that traditional Russian lands should be under the Russian sphere of influence. Countries like Finland may come to mind. If you want to go further back in history, you might recall that at one time Russia also owned Alaska.

Such things however, may be much further down the road, if they happen at all. What concerns me is that the future days and months may become difficult for all nations. While we may feel that the cost of various fuels are high now, they may climb even more, along with so many other items. Russia, after all, supplies 10% of the world's oil and gas. Between Russia and the Ukraine, they supply 25 to 30% of the world's wheat. What will happen if some items are rationed? How are we prepared to deal with such shortages?

Will we be able to handle such a scenario? I think that's a valid question considering that there are people in this country who have been unable to handle 2 years of pandemic restrictions where the challenge for many is being asked to stay home, wear masks when we do go out, and get some free vaccinations.

I do realize it hasn't been that simple for everyone. It's been difficult for those whose jobs were cut back or dropped. It's been difficult for those who have been working from home while at the same time attempting to teach their children. It's been difficult for those who have had to be alone all this time. And yet, while we've had to learn how to do things differently, many have grown in the process, while others resist such change with the vocal support of many others.

What I question then, is if we are ready for the effects that this invasion may bring to us. If pandemic restrictions are causing people to feel such hardship that open occupations can happen, how are we going to handle the possibility of becoming affected by a war and all that may entail?

Now that I've totally destroyed all optimism in the room, I'd like to suggest that what we may need is something like the disciples experienced in our gospel lesson today - a mountaintop experience, confirming that they were on the right track in following Jesus. For some time they had been following along, taking in his teachings, witnessing the miracles, living off the generosity of others, and observing so many who liked what they saw, but weren't ready to commit. They must have at times wondered where this movement was going, or even if it was going anywhere.

I suspect that at the back of their minds they may have had some doubts. Was Jesus everything he claimed to be? But then a select few climbed a mountain with him and were first-hand witnesses to the scene we heard about in our gospel. The end result was the transfiguration (or transformation) of Jesus, a confirmation of all they had hoped for, and a voice from the cloud - that also contained Moses and Elijah - affirmed for them that yes, Jesus was the one they had hoped he was.

We often refer to such an event as a "mountaintop experience", an event we came away from filled with hope and optimism about the future. It was simply awesome, maybe even life-changing. Something like that could happen at a family event, or a retreat of sorts, or on a special vacation. And the beautiful memory of that point in time becomes something that carries us through our difficult times in life. When our lives reach points that are incredibly difficult, it can be helpful to look back on those mountaintop events and re-live the feelings we had and how they made us feel.

Certainly this was a memory that Peter, James, and John would need in the weeks to come. Their days ahead would become stressful, filled with joy, as well as life or death experiences. They would see Jesus praised by crowds before being cursed by crowds. They would go from being “*those close to him*”, to accomplices of a law-breaker, hiding away from the authorities. They would need to remember this mountaintop experience, and remember that they knew exactly who Jesus is.

In the days and months to come, I suspect we too will need to relive mountaintop experiences in order to carry us through some difficult times – whatever they may happen to be.

Along with that, as fellow followers of Christ, we will want to find ways to assist others in need, and perhaps especially those who have been hardest hit in the past week. Rather than wait, let's begin now to ask ourselves; what can we do to assist in Ukraine? The immediate answer is that prayers are needed. The long term answer is that food, shelter, and emergency supplies may well be needed. When the call goes out, will we be ready to respond with Christian love, remembering how God's presence has helped us in our lives?

Today we are reminded of two things. First of all, we are reminded that Jesus is God's Chosen One; and to have access to this chosen one is to have hope and fulfillment and healing and joy and laughter and new life and fresh starts and forgiveness and love and God's abiding presence. Secondly, we are reminded that following Jesus will not always take us down a smooth highway, riding on cruise control, but will also take us down the backroads that lead through suffering, pain, rejection, death, and always to resurrection. On our life journey then, because of the things we might rather not endure, we ourselves have the opportunity to also

become transformed in ways that allow us greater opportunities to serve. Amen.

Hymn – Shine, Jesus, Shine (671)  
<https://youtu.be/J3iB30gCqAc>

### Prayers

The Spirit of the Lord is poured out upon us in abundance; so we are bold to pray for the church, the world, and all that God has made.

Transform us by your greatness, O God. Send us down the mountain to share joy with all people. Make us agents of change, confident that your hope will vanquish despair and your goodness will conquer evil. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

The mountains and valleys sing your praise. Dazzle us with your presence in every landscape: bluffs built by ancient glaciers, canyons carved by flowing rivers, flat horizons with uninterrupted views, and sands shaped by ocean tides. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

You love justice and establish equity. Strengthen leaders of local governments, community nonprofits, and grassroots campaigns. Bless them with gifts of integrity, creativity, and sound conscience. Build up safe and joyful communities where all people may thrive. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

Heal those who are in distress. Give patience to those waiting for answers. Grant hope to those who have reached the limits of treatment. Give compassionate hearts to those who accompany loved ones through illness and uncertainty. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

Today we shout alleluia from the mountaintop; this week we enter the wilderness of Lent. Bless all who prepare and lead us in worship during this change of season: pastors, deacons, musicians and all who contribute to our worship life. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

Blessed are they who listened to Christ's voice in this life and now rest with him. Transform us from glory into glory, and give us your peace, that we do not lose heart. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

Since we have such great hope in your promises, O God, we lift these and all our prayers to you in confidence and faith; through Jesus Christ our Savior, 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 – We Are Marching In the Light (866)  
[https://youtu.be/gl24\\_27wW1E](https://youtu.be/gl24_27wW1E)