

# New Hope Lutheran Church

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May 29, 2022

*The 7<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter*

## Coming Events

May 31 7:30 English Bible Study **Zoom**

June 1 10 - 1 Kahvi Time **Regent St**

June 5 11:00 Finnish Worship † **Hannah Lake**  
12:00 Lunch **Hannah Lake**  
1:00 English Worship † **Hannah Lake**

**In our prayers** Ruth, Marilyn.

**Remembering** Helena Kerola 91yrs



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 Helena Kerola 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.

## Prayer of the Day

O God, form the minds of your faithful people into your one will. Make us love what you command and desire what you promise, that, amid all the changes of this world, our hearts may be fixed where true joy is found, in your Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

## Psalm 97

- <sup>1</sup> The Lord reigns, let the earth be glad; let the distant shores rejoice.
- <sup>2</sup> Clouds and thick darkness surround him; righteousness and justice are the foundation of his throne.
- <sup>3</sup> Fire goes before him and consumes his foes on every side.
- <sup>4</sup> His lightning lights up the world; the earth sees and trembles.
- <sup>5</sup> The mountains melt like wax before the Lord, before the Lord of all the earth.
- <sup>6</sup> The heavens proclaim his righteousness, and all peoples see his glory.
- <sup>7</sup> All who worship images are put to shame, those who boast in idols— worship him, all you gods!
- <sup>8</sup> Zion hears and rejoices and the villages of Judah are glad because of your judgments, Lord.
- <sup>9</sup> For you, Lord, are the Most High over all the earth; you are exalted far above all gods.
- <sup>10</sup> Let those who love the Lord hate evil, for he guards \ the lives of his faithful ones and delivers them from the hand of the wicked.
- <sup>11</sup> Light shines<sup>[a]</sup> on the righteous and joy on the upright in heart.
- <sup>12</sup> Rejoice in the Lord, you who are righteous, and praise his holy name.

## First Reading “**Acts 16:16 – 34**”

<sup>16</sup> Once when we were going to the place of prayer, we were met by a female slave who had a spirit by which she predicted the future. She earned a great deal of

money for her owners by fortune-telling. <sup>17</sup> She followed Paul and the rest of us, shouting, “These men are servants of the Most High God, who are telling you the way to be saved.” <sup>18</sup> She kept this up for many days. Finally Paul became so annoyed that he turned around and said to the spirit, “In the name of Jesus Christ I command you to come out of her!” At that moment the spirit left her. <sup>19</sup> When her owners realized that their hope of making money was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the marketplace to face the authorities. <sup>20</sup> They brought them before the magistrates and said, “These men are Jews, and are throwing our city into an uproar <sup>21</sup> by advocating customs unlawful for us Romans to accept or practice.” <sup>22</sup> The crowd joined in the attack against Paul and Silas, and the magistrates ordered them to be stripped and beaten with rods. <sup>23</sup> After they had been severely flogged, they were thrown into prison, and the jailer was commanded to guard them carefully. <sup>24</sup> When he received these orders, he put them in the inner cell and fastened their feet in the stocks. <sup>25</sup> About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them. <sup>26</sup> Suddenly there was such a violent earthquake that the foundations of the prison were shaken. At once all the prison doors flew open, and everyone’s chains came loose. <sup>27</sup> The jailer woke up, and when he saw the prison doors open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself because he thought the prisoners had escaped. <sup>28</sup> But Paul shouted, “Don’t harm yourself! We are all here!” <sup>29</sup> The jailer called for lights, rushed in and fell trembling before Paul and Silas. <sup>30</sup> He then brought them out and asked, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” <sup>31</sup> They replied, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved—you and your household.” <sup>32</sup> Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all the others in his house. <sup>33</sup> At that hour of the night the jailer took them and washed their wounds; then immediately he and all his household were baptized. <sup>34</sup> The jailer brought them into his house and set a meal before

them; he was filled with joy because he had come to believe in God—he and his whole household.

### Second Reading

#### **“Revelation 22:12 – 14, 16 – 17, 20 – 21”**

<sup>12</sup> “Look, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to each person according to what they have done. <sup>13</sup> I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End. <sup>14</sup> “Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life and may go through the gates into the city.

<sup>16</sup> “I, Jesus, have sent my angel to give you this testimony for the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David, and the bright Morning Star.” <sup>17</sup> The Spirit and the bride say, “Come!” And let the one who hears say, “Come!” Let the one who is thirsty come; and let the one who wishes take the free gift of the water of life.

<sup>20</sup> He who testifies to these things says, “Yes, I am coming soon.” Amen. Come, Lord Jesus. <sup>21</sup> The grace of the Lord Jesus be with God’s people. Amen. The Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

### Gospel **“John 15:26 – 16:4”**

*“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. And you also must testify, for you have been with me from the beginning. “All this I have told you so that you will not fall away. They will put you out of the synagogue; in fact, the time is coming when anyone who kills you will think they are offering a service to God. They will do such things because they have not known the Father or me. 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. The Gospel of the Lord. **Praise to you, O Christ.***

## **Sermon**

*By Rev. Johanna Porkola*

*In these moods of the Holy Spirit’s expectation, John will not let us off lightly. The speeches are long and sometimes heavy. Thoughts of martyrdom seem distant, not part of one’s own life. I was supposed to share a story about a Chinese Christian pastor, but I dare not. The story is so horrible and depressing. We’ve had quite a lot of depressing news already. I’ll read another one later, so you are going to have to be prepared. It is not a nice story, but we need to hear it: these are fellow Christians, sisters and brothers. I will simply say in general terms that in China the practice of religion, especially practice of Christianity, is extremely dangerous, torture, job loss, prison time and the threat of killing a family is commonplace. These stories can be read online on the Voice of Martyr’s -website. This pastor in question was forced to flee his country with his family precisely because the family was threatened. So, this is happening during our time. Not only in history. Deaths, murders, because of Christian belief, happens all over the world, all the time.*

*A phenomenon occurred close to me in Finland, when Muslim immigrants who had emigrated to Finland and converted to Christianity, were threatened and demanded to deny their faith. This becomes a very possible idea when, for example, relatives at home, in Irak, are threatened, even their lives.*

*What makes these people so brave? How can they risk their lives in the midst of such threats? It’s the Defender, Advocate who does it. Spirit gives the power. The Holy Spirit testifies about Jesus. He is the one sent by Jesus, the Defender. The Holy Spirit is the “Spirit of Truth.” What is the truth? I’m thinking, if there is some kind of goal and motive in this life to look for, the truth could be number one? Isn’t it important that what you do and what you are and what you say and find, is*

*true? To my young self, I would say: Look for what is real, what is true: In friendships, love, work, hobbies, hold on to things that are true. You may be left a little alone, but Jesus is there, he is the truth. And that’s the reward for all that trouble.*

*In this gospel text, truth means the Creator’s revelation to the world, and “Spirit” is a mandate for the declaration of the church’s word. The Spirit can only be understood after Jesus’ passing, so we should understand what the Spirit is. The church proclamation should be the same as the testimony of the Spirit/Defender/Advocate, which comes from Jesus. The proclamation that comes past Jesus’ teaching must be judged and perhaps found to be suspicious, set aside. The teaching of the Holy Spirit comes from Jesus, directly. The sermon of the Church, not only this sermon, but all the preaching, all the ministry that the Church does, proclaims, and delivers, should be the testimony of the Spirit of Truth. The testimony of Jesus is not just remembering of the old, or an empty repetition, but it should be a living faith in the present, connected to the heavenly world, in its light.*

*All that Jesus has spoken and prayed for the duration of Chapters 14-17 in Gospel of John, all this has been intended to encourage the disciples, to encourage us. The world views Jesus’ followers with hatred and persecution. John tells how disciples are excluded from the synagogue community, but this is only the beginning of future martyrdom. And the horrible thing is, that the persecutors think they’re doing the right thing, they think they’re doing what God will. In the name of God, many have lost their lives. God is not like this. Killing in the name of God is the greatest tragedy of a religious person, and his most dangerous and terrible idea of madness. Killing in the name of God, is also one of the worst lies and shames in the history of the Church. One closest to us here, are the residential schools designated to native children. Although they were usually made by the Roman-Catholic Church, I*

*must say that as a Christian and as a pastor, I experience great shame and anger about it. We bear this and other kind of shame, although we probably represent a different Christianity from previous generations. We cannot help it.*

*The bloodshed and persecutions of the church in the present must remind the church of Jesus, who not only predicted the necessity of suffering for it, but also experienced it himself with his death on the cross. Many Christians, whether they like it or not, have had to follow Jesus' example.*

*I'm going to tell you that story about a modern-day martyr. I think this young woman's story, her courage in a little is worth remembering. Deborah Emmanuel was a 25-year-old Christian student at Shehu Shagar School of Education in Sokoto, in the northwestern of Nigeria. She was stoned and beaten to death on Thursday 12. May, after which her body was set on fire. She was accused to being slandered Islam in her faculty's WhatsApp group. She had only expressed frustration at the way Christian students were discriminated in the assignments and exams. She had also refused to date a Muslim boy, who then set in motion a claim that Islam was slandered. Deborah knew she was in danger, so she took refuge in a campus safe room. Meanwhile, her friends tried to find a taxi to take Deborah to the police station. However, a group of students and young men outside the school managed to enter the safe room and drag Deborah out of the safe room. School security called the police for help, but they couldn't control the furious crowd. A video of the incident went viral of an unidentified man raging in front of a sea of flames in the background with a matchbox in his hand and saying he killed Deborah.*

*The two accused appeared in court on Monday, May 16, claiming their innocence. They were only accused of incitement to violence and disturbing the general peace. Both are crimes that can be released on bail.*

*Deborah was laid to rest in the evening of May 14., in her home state of Niger. Her father had picked up her daughter's remains himself. Deborah's death has horrified Christians of Nigeria and it has been condemned by various Christians. They have called for the guilty parties to be brought to justice again.*

*Personally, I don't think that's going to happen. There are several, hundreds of stories like this. We never hear about the in the News, it doesn't really interest anybody. But still, it is unthinkable that the same thing should happen here or to us in here. It would feel almost absurd to think that we should not complete our worship in peace and have fellowship afterwards. That we would need to run away of some group of people who doesn't share our belief. We have the freedom to come or not to come to church. We also have the freedom to express our various opinions about the church, the teaching and the persons who are preaching it. We don't need to like everything and we don't need to think the same. And nothing bad is going to happen. Just think, what a blessing it is. Let us Pray: Thank you Lord for allowing us to gather in peace and security. We thank God that forgiveness of sins for Christ's sake can be still freely proclaimed in this country and several others. May Jesus grant us the Spirit of peace and respect for other people and their different believes. Amen*

### **Prayers**

Set free from captivity to sin and death, we pray to the God of resurrection for the church, people in need, and all of creation.

Holy God, make your people one as you and your Son are one. Extend the gifts we have been given by your Spirit to all people, especially those experiencing division or questioning your love. God, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Make worthy the work of scientist who look to the stars and planets, as well as scientists who look to atoms and molecules. Bring innovation and well-being to humanity through their discoveries. God, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Keep in our minds those who have died in war, both military and civilians. May we honor them by seeking peaceful solutions to the conflicts that arise among nations and peoples. God, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Grant freedom to all who are overwhelmed by chronic illness, depression, or constant worry. Open them to receive health and salvation in Christ Jesus through the Spirit's gift of faith. God, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Stir imagination and understanding throughout the church in the work of poets, theologians, and hymnwriters. Lead us into new visions and fresh expressions of your presence. God, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Unite us with the saints who have died and been raised in Jesus. Train us to wait with eager longing for Christ to come again, even as we sense his presence with us now. God, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

In your mercy, O God, respond to these prayers, and renew us by your life-giving Spirit; 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.**