

# New Hope Lutheran Church

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*January 22, 2023*

*The 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday after Epiphany*

## Coming Events

- |        |        |   |
|--------|--------|---|
| Jan 24 | 2:00   | Kammari <b>Impola</b>                     |
|        | 7:00   | Eng Bible Study <b>Zoom</b>               |
| Jan 25 | 10 – 1 | Kahvi Time <b>Regent St.</b>              |
| Jan 26 | 6:30   | Finnish Bible Study <b>Zoom</b>           |
| Jan 29 | 10:00  | Finnish Worship Service <b>Voima Hall</b> |
|        | 11:30  | English Worship Service <b>Regent St.</b> |

**In our prayers** Eero, Ron, Ruth, Marilyn.

## Prayer of the Day

Lord God, your lovingkindness always goes before us and follows after us. Summon us into your light, and direct our steps in the ways of goodness that come through the cross of your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.

## First Reading “**Isaiah 9:1 – 4**”

<sup>1</sup> There will be no gloom for those who were in anguish. In the former time [the Lord] brought into contempt the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the latter time he will make glorious the way of the sea, the land beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the nations. <sup>2</sup>The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness—on them light has shined. <sup>3</sup>You have multiplied the nation, you have increased its joy; they rejoice before you as with joy at the harvest, as people exult when dividing plunder. <sup>4</sup>For the yoke of their burden, and the bar across their shoulders, the rod of their oppressor, you have broken as on the day of Midian.

## Psalms 27:1, 4 – 9

- <sup>1</sup> The Lord is my light and my salvation—whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life—of whom shall I be afraid?
- <sup>4</sup> One thing I ask from the Lord, this only do I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to gaze on the beauty of the Lord and to seek him in his temple.
- <sup>5</sup> For in the day of trouble he will keep me safe in his dwelling; he will hide me in the shelter of his sacred tent and set me high upon a rock.
- <sup>6</sup> Then my head will be exalted above the enemies who surround me; at his sacred tent I will sacrifice with shouts of joy; I will sing and make music to the Lord.
- <sup>7</sup> Hear my voice when I call, Lord; be merciful to me and answer me.
- <sup>8</sup> My heart says of you, “Seek his face!” Your face, Lord, I will seek.
- <sup>9</sup> Do not hide your face from me, do not turn your

servant away in anger; you have been my helper. Do not reject me or forsake me, God my Savior.

## Second Reading “**1 Corinthians 1:10 – 18**”

<sup>10</sup> Now I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you be in agreement and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same purpose. <sup>11</sup>For it has been reported to me by Chloe’s people that there are quarrels among you, my brothers and sisters. <sup>12</sup>What I mean is that each of you says, “I belong to Paul,” or “I belong to Apollos,” or “I belong to Cephas,” or “I belong to Christ.” <sup>13</sup>Has Christ been divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul? <sup>14</sup>I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius, <sup>15</sup>so that no one can say that you were baptized in my name. <sup>16</sup>(I did baptize also the household of Stephanas; beyond that, I do not know whether I baptized anyone else.) <sup>17</sup>For Christ did not send me to baptize but to proclaim the gospel, and not with eloquent wisdom, so that the cross of Christ might not be emptied of its power. <sup>18</sup>For the message about the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. The Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

## Gospel “**Matthew 4:12 – 23**”

### **Glory to you, O Lord.**

*Now when Jesus heard that John had been arrested, he withdrew to Galilee. He left Nazareth and made his home in Capernaum by the sea, in the territory of Zebulun and Naphtali, so that what had been spoken through the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled: “Land of Zebulun, land of Naphtali, on the road by the sea, across the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles—the people who sat in darkness have seen a great light, and for those who sat in the region and shadow of death light has dawned.” From that time Jesus began to proclaim, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.” As he walked by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers,*

*Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea—for they were fishermen. And he said to them, “Follow me, and I will make you fish for people.” Immediately they left their nets and followed him. As he went from there, he saw two other brothers, James son of Zebedee and his brother John, in the boat with their father Zebedee, mending their nets, and he called them. Immediately they left the boat and their father, and followed him. Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and curing every disease and every sickness among the people. The Gospel of the Lord. **Praise to you, O Christ.***

### Sermon

*By Rev. Charles Nolting  
“Let God Lead”*

Our gospel lesson for today got me thinking about the time I explained to one of our confirmation classes that God has a way of fulfilling our deepest hopes and dreams because God knows what we are good at, and what we really enjoy doing. The problem of course, comes when we fall into the habit of planning our own course without consulting God on the matter.

And to show what I meant, I spoke of how – as a child - I had a lot of dreams of what I wanted to become in the future. I liked to work with animals. I wanted to sow and harvest. I wanted to be around water. I wanted to use my imagination. But most of all, because I loved books, I wanted to write. I often marvelled at how an author can touch so many people, spark imaginations, and influence conversations. I wanted to do that.

As the years went by however, that all seemed like kind of a pipe dream. Other than a few famous authors, who ever heard of a writer that was able to make a decent living? Those were the days when our country’s art scene was so overwhelmed from all that was coming

here from south of the border, that our own government felt they had to financially encourage most artists so that we could have Canadian content in society. How else do you think we ended up with Bob and Doug Mackenzie and the Great White North?

So, then my plan was to move into the fame and fortune that is the construction industry. We may want to note here that was my plan for myself, and not God’s plan for me. Unfortunately, it took me a dozen years to figure that out. In the meantime, I still tried my hand at writing from time to time, but nobody was interested.

What changed for me was what I considered to be a sign, even though it was the simplest of actions. I was attending a synod convention, had a short conversation with the national bishop of the time, and the next day he approached, and handed me a little ELCIC lapel pin, you know, one of those cheap things they have as giveaways. Yet that one action hit me harder than anything, and started my consideration of ministry as a next step. I’m sure that man never even realized what he had done, (or perhaps what mayhem he may have unleashed!).

We find something like that in our gospel today. It appears that Jesus was looking for a sign that it was time to begin his ministry, and that sign was the arrest of John the Baptist. This was the point that Jesus left Nazareth, moved to Capernaum by the Sea of Galilee, and began his ministry.

That wasn’t the only sign in our gospel. For the disciples, Jesus arrival and call to them was a sign. They moved with Jesus, leaving what they had known behind. Today’s gospel reading tells us that James and John simply left their father mending fishing nets - which makes me wonder what kind of a look Zebedee had on his face! *“Hey! Where are you going? We’ve got work to do!”*

But that’s the thing about feeling sure about a sign, and following up on it. It can mean you move on from what

you have known to something totally different. In my case, we packed up everything and moved from a rented house in the country to a small student apartment in the city of Waterloo. I left behind carpentry and became a university student, something I had earlier thought would be impossible.

Once I finished my required university courses (several of them in writing and professional rhetoric) and entered seminary, I was expected each year to be part of a different congregation and do the kinds of things pastor’s do: lead worship, preach, counsel, and teach. After graduating seminary, I was ordained and began in my first parish, and later came here.

What hit me over the past years is that, by following God’s plan for me rather than my own, one of the things that happened is that I had become a writer, the very thing I had thought of becoming while still a child. I was also using my imagination, sowing seeds of the gospel, and through camp ministries, being around water. All the things I had wanted to be originally, I now have become.

What’s different is that I know that it’s not exactly how I had pictured it. I’m not some renowned author, yet I’m quite happy just being known for some of the work I have done with articles in the Sudbury Star, Isien Usko, and Eternity for Today devotions. You see, when God called me, it wasn’t in order that I might be glorified, but rather that God is the one who is glorified. I became better and succeeded once I learned to let God lead the way and toss my own plans aside.

And that’s how a call should be for all of us. Let God lead. I’m not saying you need to be called to something astounding – although you might. I’m not saying all your hopes and dreams will be answered – although it’s possible. I’m not even saying that you will even comprehend your calling at first. When you follow God’s lead, you still have to make decisions, and you

may not quite understand why you are going in a certain direction.

What I am saying though, is that by following the lead of God who knows you better than you know yourself – you will discover amazing and wonderful things about yourself. My experience is that, while your calling may not be quite like you envisioned, it will be based on your interests and abilities; and will be fulfilling.

If you are indeed curious as to what your next calling is, I encourage you to look for signs. They aren't likely to be awe-inspiring, but you will know when it hits you. Something will click, and you will have a decision to make.

Lastly, we should all realize that we also can be the bearer of a needed sign for someone else. It just needs to be an inviting gesture, a vocal request, or giving someone the opportunity to do something they have a talent for, and find fulfilling. We do not know when or how we might inspire others, so take every chance you get to do so. This is how Jesus began, we need to continue that tradition.

May you know your calling, whether it be long or short term, may you be fulfilled in it, and may you have the strength and courage to invite others to let God lead them in their callings as well. Amen.

### **Prayers**

Called together to follow Jesus, we pray for the church, the world, and all in need.

Make your church one in purpose, proclaiming the message of the cross. Help us to work together across differences. Energize ecumenical partnerships, including the World Council of Churches and Lutheran World Federation. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

We rejoice at the bounty of your creation. Fill the land and sea with your abundance. Bless harvests in the southern hemisphere and fallow fields in the northern

hemisphere. Equip farmers to till and keep the earth sustainably. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

In Christ your reign comes near and calls all to repentance. Break the rod of the oppressor in every nation. Dispel the shadow of death in places of war and persecution. Grant us leaders who lift the yokes that burden those in need. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

Be a stronghold for those in trouble and a rock for all who are afraid. Rouse communities to care for neighbors who need shelter, are facing maltreatment, or are isolated and lonely. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

Sustain the ministries of this congregation and all churches in this community. Nurture each congregation's unique witness to your presence; foster mutual respect; inspire our cooperation in loving our neighbors. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

We praise you for the faithful who have gone ahead of us, both famous and unknown. Help us to leave our nets and follow, and bring us with them to the fullness of your promise of eternal life. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

We bring to you our needs and hopes, O God, trusting your wisdom and power revealed in Christ crucified.

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.**