

New Hope Lutheran Church

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April 12, 2020
Easter Sunday

ALL EVENTS FOR THE COMING WEEK HAVE BEEN CANCELLED

Please remember to send in your offering.
*We now have a **donate button** on our web site nhlc.ca*

*The office is closed, but phone messages and email are
being checked regularly.*

Prayer of the Day

God of mercy, we no longer look for Jesus among the dead, for he is alive and has become the Lord of life. Increase in our minds and hearts the risen life we share with Christ, and help us to grow as your people toward the fullness of eternal life with you, we pray through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

IN OUR PRAYERS

Aline, Fred, Pentti, Esme, Martha, Derek, Maria and Kai.

First Reading Acts 10:34 – 43

34 Then Peter began to speak: "I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism **35** but accepts from every nation the one who fears him and does what is right. **36** You know the message God sent to the people of Israel, announcing the good news of peace through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all. **37** You know what has happened throughout the province of Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John preached— **38** how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power, and how he went around doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil, because God was with him. **39** "We are witnesses of everything he did in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They killed him by hanging him on a cross, **40** but God raised him from the dead on the third day and caused him to be seen. **41** He was not seen by all the people, but by witnesses whom God had already chosen—by us who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. **42** He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one whom God appointed as judge of the living and the dead. **43** All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name."

Psalm 118:14 – 24

14 The LORD is my strength and my defense; he has become my salvation. **15** Shouts of joy and victory resound in the tents of the righteous: "The LORD's right hand has done mighty things! **16** The LORD's right hand is lifted high; the LORD's right hand has done mighty things!" **17** I will not die but live, and will proclaim what the LORD has done. **18** The LORD has chastened me severely, but he has not given me over to death. **19** Open for me the gates of the righteous; I will enter and give thanks to the LORD. **20** This is the gate of the LORD through which the righteous may enter. **21** I will give you thanks, for you answered me; you have become my salvation. **22** The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; **23** the LORD has done this, and it is marvelous in our eyes. **24** The LORD has done it this very day; let us rejoice today and be glad.

Second Reading Colossians 3:1 – 4

1 Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. **2** Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. **3** For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. **4**

When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

Gospel John 20:1 – 18

1 Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the entrance. **2** So she came running to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one Jesus loved, and said, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don't know where they have put him!" **3** So Peter and the other disciple started for the tomb. **4** Both were running, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. **5** He bent over and looked in at the strips of linen lying there but did not go in. **6** Then Simon Peter came along behind him and went straight into the tomb. He saw the strips of linen lying there, **7** as well as the cloth that had been wrapped around Jesus' head. The cloth was still lying in its place, separate from the linen. **8** Finally the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went inside. He saw and believed. **9** (They still did not understand from Scripture that Jesus had to rise from the dead.) **10** Then the disciples went back to where they were staying. **11** Now Mary stood outside the tomb crying. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb **12** and saw two angels in white, seated where Jesus' body had been, one at the head and the other at the foot. **13** They asked her, "Woman, why are you crying?" "They have taken my Lord away," she said, "and I don't know where they have put him." **14** At this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not realize that it was Jesus. **15** He asked her, "Woman, why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for?" Thinking he was the gardener, she said, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will get him." **16** Jesus said to her, "Mary." She turned toward him and cried out in Aramaic, "Rabboni!" (which means "Teacher"). **17** Jesus said, "Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father. Go instead to my brothers and tell them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'" **18** Mary Magdalene went to the disciples with the news: "I have seen the Lord!" And she told them that he had said these things to her.

April 12,2020 – Easter Sunday
“The Most Important Thing”

First of all, I need to begin with some amazing news: CHRIST IS RISEN! (*He is risen indeed!*) It was Mary Magdalene who first discovered this, the stone rolled away from the empty tomb. It was also Mary who first saw the resurrected Jesus, although he did tell her not to cling to him (social distancing perhaps?), but rather to do one of the most important things each one of us can do as Christians: go and tell others. On the day of resurrection, this is the most important thing.

With our lives going through the turmoil we live in today, perhaps we may feel as if we should be excused from doing this very important thing as Christians. How can I tell someone else about how this resurrection has affected my life in so many wonderful ways when I'm supposed to sit at home? Maybe the resurrection doesn't feel all that real this year when we can't even worship together as a congregation. How can I feel the joy and meaning of this event with all I'm going through right now?

On top of that, we're getting to a worrying point in this pandemic where countries are starting to argue over scarce resources, most recently personal protective equipment for front line workers. Things like face masks, gowns, and gloves that protect these people from getting the virus and becoming ill themselves, are running in short supply around the world. Except in Finland, where they apparently have been keeping stores of emergency supplies updated since World War II. While others have let supplies dwindle over the decades due to budget cuts, the Finnish have kept alert by being prepared.

So there are a lot of things to be concerned about, especially with the events of this year. So how to spread this good news? The problem for us can be that we don't really know how to spread this good news in a way that others can understand it. It may come out sounding like; “*Jesus died, now he lives. This is a good thing!*” Unfortunately it doesn't always satisfactorily answer the return question; “*That's nice, but what does it mean?*” For us, it means that because Jesus beat death, we too can beat death! And with God's help we can survive the obstacles we now encounter. Of course, what we may fail to anticipate is that, anyone who has experienced the death of someone close, may find this news kind of hard to

believe. So often people want verifiable proof – and even then they may be skeptical.

It's up to us then to point to our Holy Scriptures, the Bible. However, these days, the old argument that whatever is in the Bible is true – that argument doesn't strike all as being something they can believe. So when presenting the good news to others, perhaps it's best to treat the Easter message like a trump card; you don't necessarily play it first, you hang on to it until it can be used to full advantage. Even though we possess the best news the world has ever known, there are times when the world just isn't ready for it.

Take our gospel lesson as an example. Mary Magdalene goes to the gravesite and finds the tomb is empty. The stone is rolled away. Jesus' body is gone. What is she to make of this? She tells 2 of the disciples that there is a body missing, but while they check it out, they don't have any answers for her. So Mary looks in again, sees and speaks with 2 angels, yet still is convinced that someone took Jesus' body. It's the only answer that fits her mind set at that point in time. Mary then turns around, sees Jesus, assumes he's the gardener, and asks him where the body went to. So until the minute that Jesus spoke to her, she just wasn't ready for the best news the world has ever known.

There are times then, when it is best to just approach another person and come to them where they are at. Those who are most receptive to the message that God is alive and well and cares deeply about us, are those who have had the worst happen to them and have discovered that the world doesn't have all the answers it claims to have. So Jesus approaches Mary at the point where she is totally bewildered. The world's answers just don't fit into her thinking at the time. Jesus' answers however – do.

And if there is one thing we can say about our world today, it is that people are still looking for answers. Especially hurting people who find that the world doesn't have the answers it claims to have. A lot of what we took for granted just months ago has fallen to the ground and people are looking for answers.

In many ways then, this is the perfect time to spread the good news that, even if the world appears in chaos, God is still present. The world wants and needs to hear this, and we need to spread this good news any way we can even in this time of social distancing. However you can, let others know that God is

especially present with those who suffer. It is up to us to encourage others to turn to God in prayer and discover the joy of resurrection offered to each of us. CHRIST IS RISEN!

Prayers

Uplifted by the promised hope of healing and resurrection, we join the people of God in all times and places in praying for the church, the world, and all who are in need.

God of resurrection; from the very beginning you give the church the gift of women as your witnesses: as preachers, teachers, and leaders. Open our ears to their proclamation this day and always.

We pray for the countries of the world who experience disunity and conflict. Help us to abandon setting our minds on fear and greed, and instead focus on your rule of justice and steadfast love. Build up all countries on your cornerstone of peace.

Look over us in these times of uncertainty as we deal with a pandemic. Help us to cast away our fears, to be mindful of our neighbor, and to pray for the ill and dying.

We still weep with those who weep, and mourn with those who mourn. Cradle the fearful, the suffering, and the dying, assuring them of your loving presence, especially all affected by this worldwide pandemic.

Risen Lord, you went ahead of us into the grave and defeated the powers of evil. We remember before you those who have died in recent weeks. Inspire us to live our lives in this resurrection hope and draw us to you in our final days.

With bold confidence in your love, almighty God, we place all for whom we pray into your eternal care; through Christ our Lord. Amen.