

# New Hope Lutheran Church

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## Pastor:

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*April 19, 2020*  
*2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Easter*

## 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](http://nhlc.ca)*  
*Sermons from previous Sundays are available on our*  
*website [nhlc.ca](http://nhlc.ca)*  
*The office is closed, but phone messages, email and mail*  
*are being checked regularly.*

## Prayer of the Day

Almighty and eternal God, the strength of those who believe and the hope of those who doubt, may we, who have not seen, have faith in you and receive the fullness of Christ's blessing, we pray in the name of the one 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 2:22 – 32

**22** "Fellow Israelites, listen to this: Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you through him, as you yourselves know. **23** This man was handed over to you by God's deliberate plan and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross. **24** But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him. **25** David said about him: 'I saw the Lord always before me. Because he is at my right hand, I will not be shaken. **26** Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest in hope, **27** because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead, you will not let your holy one see decay. **28** You have made known to me the paths of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence.' **29** "Fellow Israelites, I can tell you confidently that the patriarch David died and was buried, and his tomb is here to this day. **30** But he was a prophet and knew that God had promised him on oath that he would place one of his descendants on his throne. **31** Seeing what was to come, he spoke of the resurrection of the Messiah, that he was not abandoned to the realm of the dead, nor did his body see decay. **32** God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of it.

## Psalm 16

**1** Keep me safe, my God, for in you I take refuge. **2** I say to the LORD, "You are my Lord; apart from you I have no good thing." **3** I say of the holy people who are in the land, "They are the noble ones in whom is all my delight." **4** Those who run after other gods will suffer more and more. I will not pour out libations of blood to such gods or take up their names on my lips. **5** LORD, you alone are my portion and my cup; you make my lot secure. **6** The boundary lines have fallen for me in pleasant places; surely I have a delightful inheritance. **7** I will praise the LORD, who counsels me; even at night my heart instructs me. **8** I keep my eyes always on the LORD. With him at my right hand, I will not be shaken. **9** Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest secure, **10** because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead, nor will you let your faithful one see decay. **11** You make known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.

## Second Reading 1 Peter 1:3 – 9

**3** Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, **4** and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. This inheritance is kept in heaven for you, **5** who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time. **6** In all this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. **7** These have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed. **8** Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, **9** for you are receiving the end result of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

## Gospel John 20:19 – 31

**19** On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jewish leaders, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!" **20** After he said this, he showed them his hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord. **21** Again Jesus said, "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you." **22** And with that he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit. **23** If you forgive anyone's sins, their sins are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven. **24** Now Thomas (also known as Didymus), one of the Twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came. **25** So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord!" But he said to them, "Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe." **26** A week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!" **27** Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe." **28** Thomas said to him, "My Lord and my God!" **29** Then Jesus told him, "Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed." **30** Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book.

**31** But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

**April 19, 2020 – The 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Easter  
“Preconceived Notions”**

My first days in Jerusalem back in 2013 were rather disappointing because I had expected to see there how things had been back in Jesus’ day. I wanted to see the spot in the Garden of Gethsemane where Jesus had prayed and been arrested. I wanted to see the place on the Mount of Olives where Jesus had taught the Lord’s Prayer. I wanted to see the stable or cave where Jesus was born in nearby Bethlehem. I wanted to see the hill of Calvary where Jesus died for our sins.

One problem that led to my disappointment was the discovery that most locations were guesswork because they weren’t really marked until about 300 years after Jesus resurrection. There are actually 2 sites that claim to be the tomb of Jesus, (although one has more of a claim than the other). Another problem was that in each place churches large, small, and mostly massive were built on the site. How was I going to get any idea of what the place was like when it was all roofed over and renovated with stairs, altars, and tons of marble and mosaics? It felt pretty odd to go inside and climb a stairway to the top of Mount Calvary when in my mind it should have all been outdoors.

With all that uncertainty, I felt a bit like Thomas in our gospel lesson. Yes this may perhaps be the actual site of an event, but what if it isn’t? It certainly doesn’t look like what I’d envisioned. It can be difficult to wrap our minds around something that is not a preconceived notion. Often we have an image in our minds of what is or isn’t possible. For me Holy Sites were supposed to be pretty much how they had been 2000 years ago. For Thomas, people didn’t just resurrect themselves from the dead.

For both of us then, the reality makes our preconceived notions seem pretty ridiculous. How can a spot not change in 2000 years, especially in an area prone to wars, earthquakes, and human occupation? In retrospect, it’s ridiculous that I could

have thought otherwise. For Thomas, in retrospect, I’m sure he felt about the same way.

The point here is that our preconceived notions can cause us to doubt, and in our doubt we falter. We fail God, we fail our fellow Christians, and we fail ourselves. As the resurrection and so many other Biblical stories inform us, our faith is supposed to be about being open to what we often think is impossible. Thomas’ problem wasn’t that he doubted, it was that (for a short time) he allowed that doubt to hinder his faith. Even though he had seen Jesus perform miracles, including the raising of Lazarus, he just couldn’t come to grips with Jesus resurrection. And it hindered him for a whole week. He couldn’t wrap his mind around it.

In our time, we too can have our faith hindered by preconceived notions that may cause us to doubt just what God is capable of. New Hope is at a point in time where we are disposing of our worship sites. While some are excited about the prospect of moving into new and borrowed worship spaces, perhaps we have doubts about what the future holds for us as a congregation. Perhaps we have a preconceived notion that a congregation is only viable with a building, and doubt the possibility of a building-less congregation.

If that is the case, what we may want to remember is that while Jesus was a carpenter, he never did erect a building for worship. When we read about the early church in the book of Acts, they never had their own building dedicated only for worship either. They used the buildings of others to gather, trusting God would be with them. Their focus wasn’t on where to gather, but rather how to get out the message, the good news of the resurrection and what that means for humankind.

I suppose in some ways we should be allowed to have our doubts about our congregation’s future, because we’ve never experienced it any other way. Kind of like the disciples having to forge forward without Jesus at their immediate side. For those like Thomas, it may be difficult to wrap our heads around something we hadn’t imagined as being possible before. But, like the early disciples, God continues to call us to the excitement of what the future can hold when we focus not on “where”, but on “how”. Spread the word. Feel the excitement of possibility. Watch our doubts and fears fade. Amen.

## 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.

We pray for those who are feeling lonely in their isolation, that they may find comfort in your presence and your Word. Be with them so they feel your hand working in their lives, safe in the knowledge that you will never leave them.

We pray for those who are feeling anxious and afraid in this time of pandemic. Ease their fears and anxiety compassionate Lord, remind them of how your caring and protecting love has blessed others through all eternity.

We pray for the leaders of nations, that they would seek your wisdom for guidance in this time of chaos. May they look to you in making decisions that affect so many in this time of health crisis.

We pray for those who find themselves without income. Let the hearts of your blessed servants reach out to those who have found themselves without jobs or means. Guide each of us to bless others with our resources in any way we are able.

We pray for the sick, for those who are suffering illness in our congregation and those around the world who are in pain. May your healing presence be with them in their time of affliction and may they feel the comfort of your hand at their side.

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