

# New Hope Lutheran Church

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## Pastor:

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*March 22, 2020*  
*4<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Lent*

## ALL EVENTS FOR THE COMING WEEK HAVE BEEN CANCELLED

*Please remember to send in your offering.*

### Prayer of the Day

Bend your ear to our prayers, Lord Christ, and come among us. By your gracious life and death for us, bring light into the darkness of our hearts, and anoint us with your Spirit, for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

### IN OUR PRAYERS

Aline Hay, Fred Lahti, Pentti Puusaari, Esme Rintala,  
Martha Tapanila, Derek, Maria and Kai Erkkilä.

### To be evaluated April 1

Lenten Soup-er Time  
Mar 25 cancelled **Sud**  
Apr 1 cancelled **CC**

Maundy Thursday  
Apr 9 4:00 Finnish **Sud**  
Apr 9 7:00 English **CC**  
Good Friday  
Apr 10 10:00 English **CC**  
Apr 10 11:15 Finnish **Sud**

### First Reading 1 Samuel 16:1-13

1 The LORD said to Samuel, "How long will you mourn for Saul, since I have rejected him as king over Israel? Fill your horn with oil and be on your way; I am sending you to Jesse of Bethlehem. I have chosen one of his sons to be king." 2 But Samuel said, "How can I go? If Saul hears about it, he will kill me." The LORD said, "Take a heifer with you and say, 'I have come to sacrifice to the LORD.' 3 Invite Jesse to the sacrifice, and I will show you what to do. You are to anoint for me the one I indicate." 4 Samuel did what the LORD said. When he arrived at Bethlehem, the elders of the town trembled when they met him. They asked, "Do you come in peace?" 5 Samuel replied, "Yes, in peace; I have come to sacrifice to the LORD. Consecrate yourselves and come to the sacrifice with me." Then he consecrated Jesse and his sons and invited them to the sacrifice. 6 When they arrived, Samuel saw Eliab and thought, "Surely the LORD's anointed stands here before the LORD." 7 But the LORD said to Samuel, "Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The LORD does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart." 8 Then Jesse called Abinadab and had him pass in front of Samuel. But Samuel said, "The LORD has not chosen this one either." 9 Jesse then had Shammah pass by, but Samuel said, "Nor has the LORD chosen this one." 10 Jesse had seven of his sons pass before Samuel, but Samuel said to him, "The LORD has not chosen these." 11 So he asked Jesse, "Are these all the sons you have?" "There is still the youngest," Jesse answered. "He is tending the sheep." Samuel said, "Send for him; we will not sit down until he arrives." 12 So he sent for him and had him brought in. He was glowing with health and had a fine appearance and handsome features. Then the LORD said, "Rise and anoint him; this is the one." 13 So Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the presence of his brothers, and from that day on the Spirit of the LORD came powerfully upon David. Samuel then went to Ramah.

### Psalm 23

1 The LORD is my shepherd, I lack nothing.  
2 He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters,  
3 he refreshes my soul. He guides me along the right paths for his name's sake.  
4 Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.  
5 You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.  
6 Surely your goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.

### Second Reading Ephesians 5:8 – 14

8 For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light 9 (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth) 10 and find out what pleases the Lord. 11 Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them. 12 It is shameful even to mention what the disobedient do in secret. 13 But everything exposed by the light becomes visible—and everything that is illuminated becomes a light. 14 This is why it is said: "Wake up, sleeper, rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you."

### Gospel John 9:1 – 41

1 As he went along, he saw a man blind from birth. 2 His disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" 3 "Neither this man nor his parents sinned," said Jesus, "but this happened so that the works of God might be displayed in him. 4 As long as it is day, we must do the works of him who sent me. Night is coming, when no one can work. 5 While I am

### Gospel John 9:1 – 41 (continued)

in the world, I am the light of the world." 6 After saying this, he spit on the ground, made some mud with the saliva, and put it on the man's eyes. 7 "Go," he told him, "wash in the Pool of Siloam" (this word means "Sent"). So the man went and washed, and came home seeing. 8 His neighbors and those who had formerly seen him begging asked, "Isn't this the same man who used to sit and beg?" 9 Some claimed that he was. Others said, "No, he only looks like him." But he himself insisted, "I am the man." 10 "How then were your eyes opened?" they asked. 11 He replied, "The man they call Jesus made some mud and put it on my eyes. He told me to go to Siloam and wash. So I went and washed, and then I could see." 12 "Where is this man?" they asked him. "I don't know," he said. 13 They brought to the Pharisees the man who had been blind. 14 Now the day on which Jesus had made the mud and opened the man's eyes was a Sabbath. 15 Therefore the Pharisees also asked him how he had received his sight. "He put mud on my eyes," the man replied, "and I washed, and now I see." 16 Some of the Pharisees said, "This man is not from God, for he does not keep the Sabbath." But others asked, "How can a sinner perform such signs?" So they were divided. 17 Then they turned again to the blind man, "What have you to say about him? It was your eyes he opened." The man replied, "He is a prophet." 18 They still did not believe that he had been blind and had received his sight until they sent for the man's parents. 19 "Is this your son?" they asked. "Is this the one you say was born blind? How is it that now he can see?" 20 "We know he is our son," the parents answered, "and we know he was born blind. 21 But how he can see now, or who opened his eyes, we don't know. Ask him. He is of age; he will speak for himself." 22 His parents said this because they were afraid of the Jewish leaders, who already had decided that anyone who acknowledged that Jesus was the Messiah would be put out of the synagogue. 23 That was why his parents said, "He is of age; ask him." 24 A second time they summoned the man who had been blind. "Give glory to God by telling the truth," they said. "We know this man is a sinner." 25 He replied, "Whether he is a sinner or not, I don't know. One thing I do know. I was blind but now I see!" 26 Then they asked him, "What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?" 27 He answered, "I have told you already and you did not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you want to become his disciples too?" 28 Then they hurled insults at him and said, "You are this fellow's disciple! We are disciples of Moses! 29 We know that God spoke to Moses, but as for this fellow, we don't even know where he comes from." 30 The man answered, "Now that is remarkable! You don't know where he comes from, yet he opened my eyes. 31 We know that God does not listen to sinners. He listens to the godly person who does his will. 32 Nobody has ever heard of opening the eyes of a man born blind. 33 If this man were not from God, he could do nothing." 34 To this they replied, "You were steeped in sin at birth; how dare you lecture us!" And they threw him out. 35 Jesus heard that they had thrown him out, and when he found him, he said, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?" 36 "Who is he, sir?" the man asked. "Tell me so that I may believe in him." 37 Jesus said, "You have now seen him; in fact, he is the one speaking with you." 38 Then the man said, "Lord, I believe," and he worshiped him. 39 Jesus said, "For judgment I have come into this world, so that the blind will see and those who see will become blind." 40 Some Pharisees who were with him heard him say this and asked, "What? Are we blind too?" 41 Jesus said, "If you were blind, you would not be guilty of sin; but now that you claim you can see, your guilt remains."

The 4th Sunday in Lent  
New Hope Lutheran – March 22, 2020

***A Meditation on 1Samuel 16:1-13***

This week marks the beginning of a situation few of us could have foreseen: a pandemic that keeps us from worshipping together for a long period of time. This is not something that most, if any, of us have ever experienced. It seems like we overcome one problem that pops up, and another arrives. Who could ever have anticipated this situation?

In our first lesson, Samuel also finds himself in a situation he hadn't anticipated – a situation that forces him to face one problem after another. King Saul has been a disappointment to God, and the prophet Samuel has been instructed to go behind the king's back and anoint another king. But how does one do that? God suggests a covert operation, which is why Samuel is somewhat vague about his reasons for visiting Bethlehem. The next difficulty Samuel faces is that Jesse has seven sons, all of whom appear to Samuel to be prime candidates for a new king. Which to pick? In turning to God, Samuel finds that none of those present are God's choice. Now what? The youngest, hardly more than a boy, is fetched from the fields. David is the one anointed, which may be a rather surprising choice.

You would think that God could find a less complicated way of doing things. What we often forget is that God doesn't work simply to make God happy, but rather for our spiritual well-being and fulfillment. God didn't need a king, but the people did, so God was just choosing the best replacement for them at that time and in that place. To get there though, the people had to depend on God for guidance.

In a time of pandemic, New Hope Lutheran and others are still finding our way around a variety of roadblocks, and to do that successfully we need to also look for God's guidance in how we proceed so that when this is all over we are still bonded together as one body. Let's use the power of prayer to guide us through our difficulties, seeking answers from God who provides answers, not only to prophets like Samuel, but to us as well. Amen.

***A Meditation on Ephesians 5:8-14***

When I was teaching my children to drive a boat, I made certain that they were aware of one important factor: unlike driving a land based vehicle, with a boat you want to be aware not only of what is around you but also what is underneath you. And on our part of Golden Lake, you might also want to scan the skies above for the odd float plane looking to land! But, most importantly, keep in mind what is beneath you.

Most driving takes place on roads and highways where it is marked out where you are to be in order to be in the safest possible position. Anything above you is placed high enough for your vehicle to pass under, and roads are kept (reasonably) smooth to avoid damage underneath. But with a boat, very few lanes are marked - generally with the odd buoy – and you may feel free to wander wherever you see water. So it is important to constantly keep in mind that danger may lurk below, and be diligent in looking for changes in color, shading, or objects poking up. Weeds can foul a propeller. Rocks or branches can damage the underside. One can become stuck on a shoal. Some people might feel all those dangers are too much and want to give up boating altogether. But with some practice, and learning the layout of any body of water, we become aware of hazards and learn to navigate around them.

With our current situation of being encouraged to practice social isolation and a myriad of other rules to keep us away from hazards, (including the closing of worship spaces), I suspect we might 2

feel like we are in foreign waters here, and stumbling along in the dark, not knowing what might be lurking around, above, or underneath. I know that has been true for our congregation's leadership over the past few weeks. We have been struggling with how to “do church” in a way that still connects all of us. And so, like learning to drive a boat, we are practicing, experimenting, keeping our eyes open for a variety of ways to reach out to you and the wider community, while often feeling like we are navigating dark waters.

In our lesson from Ephesians, we find some guidance when we are told to “*live as children of light*”. What might this mean to us in these times of immense change? Simply put, in our current situation, let us not fall into darkness. Let us remember that even though we may not be together on a regular basis, we are still a family of God. Let us remember that our mission to be a light to others continues, especially in times of isolation. Let us remember each other, our neighbor, and those who live in loneliness, reaching out with phone calls, and other acts of caring.

Most of all, let us not travel forward in absolute fear simply because we've never been in this position before. Yes, we are to be careful. Yes, we are to take precautions. And certainly, we are not to put ourselves in danger. But being children of the light means that we are to be on the look out for ways that we can still reach out to others, sharing the light of Christ as we are able. Amen.

***A Meditation on John 9:1-41***

Our gospel for today is a rather long and meandering story, filled with all kinds of details, so many that we may lose the main point of the lesson which is that Jesus can take our blindness away so that we may see Jesus for who he really is, the promised messiah. And it exposes a lot of ways that people are blind. In the story, the neighbors are blind, some of them thinking the healed man is just a doppelganger who looks like the blind man. The Pharisees are blind to Jesus' identity because the miracle occurred on the Sabbath, so it had to be a bad thing. Even the man's parents are somewhat blinded because they fear standing up for their son in front of the Pharisees.

So we are here informed that there are many ways to be blind, and many things that keep us from seeing what is right before us. The truth is told by the man who was healed: “*One thing I do know. I was blind, but now I see.*” He isn't interested in whether there are legal argument against Jesus' actions, or who is right or wrong. All he is certain of is that he has regained the blessed sense of sight and Jesus was the one who gave that to him.

Of course the lesson isn't simply about physical blindness, but points to spiritual blindness. And being able to see isn't just about knowing Jesus is the Messiah. In verse 41 Jesus implies that those who are spiritually blind are unable to see their own sin. Maybe they just don't want to look for fear of what they will discover. We may need to be reminded today that in this Lenten season, part of the Lenten journey is to examine ourselves, take off the blindfold, and see our sin. In that way we can acknowledge it, repent of it, and be forgiven for it. Thanks be to God! Amen