

Watch this week's service on YouTube by clicking: [Sunday Worship Service Video](#)

- **This Sunday at 10am Hebrews eCafé** is doing a Christmas ornament show-and-tell. Have your favourite ornament with you and be ready to share why it is important to you. Join us clicking: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/9542153646?pwd=T0tRODRMLGZxeWlvNzJsUVdPODIUdz09>  
OR phone 204 272 7920 and enter meeting ID 954 215 3646 and Passcode: 370976
- **For Children: A New Cool School video (#6)** is available by clicking here: <https://youtu.be/J2q8O8lcAVk>  
You are welcome to share this with others but please note that you must use the link provided. It is not available by search.
- We have launched a **Lights for Lives Book of Remembrance**. You may visit it here: <https://charleswoodunited.org/lights-for-lives/> To add a name please contact the church office by phone (204-832-3667) or email ([office@charleswoodunited.org](mailto:office@charleswoodunited.org))
- **Hope, Peace, Joy, Love – Images of Advent** - As we prepare for Advent, Laura is collecting words and images to go with our candle lighting that reflect the theme for each week of Advent. If you have a picture that represents Love for next week please email it to [lrousseau@charleswoodunited.org](mailto:lrousseau@charleswoodunited.org)
- Please enjoy our online worship and feel free to share with others. The **link for sharing** is: <https://youtu.be/qfpmetD3sdo>

Dear Friends

Welcome to worship for Sunday, December 13, 2020.

If the opening verses of Isaiah 61 sound familiar when you hear/read them in our service this week, rest assured, they should be. This is the passage that Jesus chooses to read to the synagogue congregation at Nazareth in Luke chapter 4.

It is a compelling story. The ministry of Jesus has barely begun following his baptism in the Jordan at the hands of his cousin John (the Baptist). He has returned to the region of Galilee and Luke goes out of his way to mention that he came to Nazareth “where he had been brought up.” That small, seemingly insignificant detail tells us that the people who were there that day knew Jesus, and more importantly, knew Mary. Though a predominantly Arab-Israeli town today, Nazareth is the location of the magnificent Church of the Annunciation below which there is an altar in a beautiful stone carved grotto which tradition maintains as the site of Mary’s home and where the angel Gabriel visited her (Luke 1:26).

By Luke 4 Jesus has developed a glowing reputation in the region as a teacher (*everyone sang his praises* - verse 15) and so his home synagogue was very keen to have him read scripture and teach in this place that had nurtured him as a child. Perhaps they were waiting for a proverbial pat-on-the-back for a job well done. He was handed the scroll of Isaiah, unrolled it and began to read, “*The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because God has anointed me; has sent me to announce good news to the poor, to proclaim release for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind; to let the broken victims go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favour.*” Essentially Isaiah 61:1-2.

The connection between the two uses of these words I think is fairly obvious. God *wants* for our well-being. God *promises* our well-being. God *acts* for our well-being. The fact that the setting of these two lessons from scripture is 600 years apart may be an indication that this has always been the case. And always will.

There have not been a lot of weeks since the beginning of the pandemic where there has been an abundance of good news. Indeed for the last two months or so the news has been increasingly difficult to hear. But a light shone through the darkness this week as it was announced that the first vaccine (hopefully of several) had been approved for use in Canada. There is a long way to go but that news felt at least as though our hope has been somewhat rewarded.

We are far from the time and place when all of our regular activity and social interaction can resume. Indeed, it is time to work and pray for the most vulnerable among us all the more. The saving grace of the Canadian Armed Forces reserves who arrived at Shamattawa this week does not lessen our concern for that frightened and ailing community. An outbreak at a care home in our community breaks our hearts for the depth of relationship we have had with that facility. The prospect of a vaccine does not lessen the anxiety of our sisters and brothers who look upon such news with suspicion.

But surely faith is a means of knowing just we hold to be true in the foundation of our being, the touchstone upon which everything else is built. And that faith is formed by the witness of scripture which says and repeats time and again that God is always on the side of healing and wholeness. Those in our midst who are working for health and recovery are agents of God's grace. They are an answer to prayer whether they know it or not.

The congregation at Nazareth handled the news that day very poorly. They turned on Jesus and ran him out of the synagogue and town, intent on throwing him over a cliff. Luke says Jesus *passed through them* but suffice to say he never preached to that crowd again. Their rejection though, did nothing to dispel or disprove the testimony that God *wants, promises, and acts* for our well-being. Everyone's. Always.

Nazareth included.

Grace and peace,

Michael

*P.S. Would you like to follow along with today's bible readings on the video? Click here: [Isaiah 61:1-4; 8-11](#)*

*P.P.S. For news and events please have a look at the **Life & Work** insert: <https://charleswoodunited.org/media/life-work/>*

*P.P.P.S. You can **support the ministry** of Charleswood United Church by visiting: [www.charleswoodunited.org/donate](http://www.charleswoodunited.org/donate). Thank you to all those who have continued to contribute regularly.*