

Good morning,



I found mandarin oranges at the store last week. That, for me, is a sign of the times and means that Christmas is soon on the horizon. Those oranges remind me of the coming of Christmas from as far back as I can remember. You must recall the wooden crates they used to come in all wrapped up individually in that thin green paper. Then there was a subtle shift over the years to cardboard boxes of different types and colours at first with the oranges separately wrapped and then someone decided not to bother with that anymore. When I picked my mandarins last week they were in an orange netted bag. They were the right size and firmness and when I got home the taste was like time-travel. It brought back eating segments with my mom while waited for my dad to return home from a trucking trip in the trailer court home of my early childhood. There was always a large bowl of them at my soon-to-be mother-in-law's home coupled with the aroma of German cookies and cooking during those weeks before Christmas. When our kids were little the oranges were so popular that we could barely keep up with the needed supply, and those small wooden boxes piled up in the garage. Each year we have had the oranges. The tang, sweetness, and pleasure of each bite points to Christmas past and present while memories of other times and places and people sweep through my mind and heart. The taste is real and always been the same and always will be. Once you have tasted a mandarin orange, you never forget. It stays with you.

That reminds me of the phrase I speak just before we share communion on Sundays: ***"Taste and see that the Lord is good."*** The verse comes from ***Psalm 34:8*** and adds, ***"happy are those who take refuge in the Lord."*** There is happiness in tasting what God offers even though life changes rapidly, even though we feel helpless in the midst of trouble, even though we wear out with age. Like the sweetness of the mandarin, the grace of God is a constant reminder of the continuity of care and hope that has been, and always will be, our companion.

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Thank you to **Pastor Marvin** who covered for me last Sunday and to all our volunteers and helpers who are always present to keep our worship and life together vital and life-giving. My break was exactly what I needed and I am glad to now be back in the saddle.

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The close of what is called the “**Church year**” will soon be upon us. Sunday, November 26 marks the end of this year and is referred to as **Christ the King Sunday**, or *Reign of Christ Sunday*. We will have the sanctuary set up in a semi-circular arrangement for that day to help remind us of the cyclical nature of our lives together.

After that Sunday we find ourselves at the beginning of the new church year with the season of **Advent** and we start hearing promises of a child: a Savior.

This year **Christmas Eve** falls on a Sunday. We will have our usual Sunday morning service but will also have an evening (6:30 pm) Christmas Eve service as well. The tradition at Hope does not include a Christmas Day service.

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I hope you are able to remain gentle, kind, and compassionate during these troublesome and terrible times that we continue to face globally in the news. *Canadian Lutheran World Relief* is one agency that cares for those in distress. Why not consider a donation for the sake of innocent victims while war rages without letup? We can help those who suffer. Thanks.

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You will receive the *Worship service* and *Invitation to Zoom* emails on Saturday morning as usual. In the meantime, don't forget that the Lord is with you.

Taste and see that the Lord is good.

Pastor Terry