

**HAGERSVILLE UNITED CHURCH &
SPRINGVALE UNITED CHURCH
SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 25th, 2024**

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Ministry of Caring: The Whole People of God
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REGIONAL COUNCIL PRAYER CYCLE

Hamilton: St. John

*“Taking Another Step In The Journey Toward
The Cross”*

OFFERING PRAYER

God of the wilderness,
We give these offerings in gratitude,
rejoicing in the abundance of your gifts to us.
We give these offerings in faith,
trusting that you will provide for our needs.
We give these offerings in hope,
knowing you can use them to spread your love in this world.
And with these offerings, we give ourselves;
May we live with generous hearts, with open hands. Amen

MINUTE FOR MISSION

PRELUDE AND WELCOME

ANNOUNCEMENTS, BIRTHDAYS AND CELEBRATIONS

CALL TO WORSHIP

L: Today we step up a little higher on our Lenten Journey
P: We are moving from contemplation to action.
L: Are you ready to take the next step?
P: Yes, we are ready. The cross is before us.
L: Come, walk together on this journey to the Cross.

**P: Lord, prepare our hearts and our spirits for this next step.
AMEN.**

OPENING HYMN: #341 Fairest Lord Jesus

- 1 Fairest Lord Jesus, ruler of all nature,
O thou of God to earth come down:
thee will I cherish, thee will I honour,
thou my soul’s glory, joy, and crown.
- 2 Fair are the meadows, fairer still the woodlands,
robed in the blooming garb of spring;
Jesus us fairer, Jesus is purer,
who makes the troubled heart to sing.
- 3 Fair is the sunshine, fairer still the moonlight,
and fair the twinkling, starry host;
Jesus shines brighter, Jesus shines purer
than all the angels heaven can boast.
- 4 All fairest beauty heavenly and earthly,
wondrously, Jesus, is found in thee;
none can be nearer, fairer or dearer
than thou, my Saviour, art to me.

OPENING PRAYER

Lord of presence and power, be with us on this second step of our
Lenten journey to the Cross. Be our guide on our Lenten journey. Help
us to make a commitment of our lives, our spirits, our hearts as we
worship you today. AMEN.

ANTHEM

CHILDREN TIME

CHILDREN’S VIDEO

LITANY FOR OUR LENTEN JOURNEY

Leader: How did you do last week??

**People: Well, we didn’t do too badly last week. I entered the
journey with Jesus, walking toward the cross. I have to admit that
some of my own fears were a bit much to confront, but I kept my**

eyes focused on Jesus, knowing that he was guiding me. I just wish I knew where this was all leading.

Leader: That's the common human problem, we always want to know the outcome before we ever begin a task - the children's question "Are we there yet?" seems to loom in our minds also.

People: That's natural, you know. We want to know if we will make it. Can we overcome the obstacles; stay on the path.

Leader: And that is where faith comes in. You have to be willing to place your trust in the guiding love of Jesus.

People: This sounds like a little more than we bargained for. What other demands will be placed on me?

Leader: Your life.....your willingness to squarely face your fears, to take up your "cross" and follow Jesus, no matter what the outcome.....to travel forward without being assured of the ending for your journey. Are you willing to take this step?

People: We guess so. This is getting a little scary.

Leader: Not really. Jesus is guiding you and giving you peace and hope. Place your trust in him.

LET US PRAY - UNISON

Guiding Lord, even though we hesitated on our Lenten journey; we vowed to come with you through all the trials and fears toward the Cross. Today we face the challenge which true commitment brings. Are we willing to offer our whole selves to you in service? We would like to think that we can do that, but we are aware of how many times we have turned away from service and instead focused on our own desires. Remind us again of the commitment you would have us give if we are to become disciples. Forgive our stubbornness and fears. Lead us forward, gracious Lord, up these steps toward the Cross. AMEN.

*CHORUS: #20 "BECAUSE HE LIVES"

Because He lives, I can face tomorrow,
Because He lives, all fear is gone.
Because I know He holds the future,
And life is worth the living, just because He lives. X2

SCRIPTURE READINGS: Genesis 17:1-7, 15-16; Romans 4:13-25

Genesis 17:1-7 ¹When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to him and said, "I am God Almighty; walk before me faithfully and be blameless. ²Then I will make my covenant between me and you and will greatly increase your numbers." ³Abram fell facedown, and God said to him, ⁴"As for me, this is my covenant with you: You will be the father of many nations. ⁵No longer will you be called Abram; your name will be Abraham, for I have made you a father of many nations. ⁶I will make you very fruitful; I will make nations of you, and kings will come from you. ⁷I will establish my covenant as an everlasting covenant between me and you and your descendants after you for the generations to come, to be your God and the God of your descendants after you.

Genesis 17:15-16 ¹⁵God also said to Abraham, "As for Sarai your wife, you are no longer to call her Sarai; her name will be Sarah. ¹⁶I will bless her and will surely give you a son by her. I will bless her so that she will be the mother of nations; kings of peoples will come from her."

Romans 4:13-25

¹³It was not through the law that Abraham and his offspring received the promise that he would be heir of the world, but through the righteousness that comes by faith. ¹⁴For if those who depend on the law are heirs, faith means nothing and the promise is worthless, ¹⁵because the law brings wrath. And where there is no law there is no transgression. ¹⁶Therefore, the promise comes by faith, so that it may be by grace and may be guaranteed to all Abraham's offspring—not only to those who are of the law but also to those who have the faith of Abraham. He is the father of us all. ¹⁷As it is written: "I have made you a father of many nations."^[a] He is our father in the sight of God, in whom he believed—the God who gives life to the dead and calls into being things that were not. ¹⁸Against all hope, Abraham in hope believed and so became the father of many nations, just as it had been said to him, "So shall your offspring be."^[b] ¹⁹Without weakening in his faith, he faced the fact that his body was as good as dead—since he was about a hundred years old—and that Sarah's womb was also dead. ²⁰Yet he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God, ²¹being fully persuaded

that God had power to do what he had promised. ²² This is why “it was credited to him as righteousness.” ²³ The words “it was credited to him” were written not for him alone, ²⁴ but also for us, to whom God will credit righteousness—for us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead. ²⁵ He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification.

MESSAGE: Because of Faith

Did you know that Vincent Pilkington holds the world record for plucking a turkey - 1 minute 30 seconds?

Did you know that Ken Edwards can eat 36 cockroaches in one minute? (In fact, that's all he eats).

A Russian woman has the record for the largest number of births. She had eight sets of twins, seven sets of triplets, and four sets of quadruplets. And this leaves another sixteen individual births. All that means she was pregnant over thirty-five times and delivered 69 children. What is even more amazing - these births took place in the early 1700s and even though medical science was still quite primitive only 2 of 69 failed to survive infancy. I think that record will stand for along time if not forever.

Also the oldest woman to give birth was aged 70 and her husband 72. They had been married for 50 years and this was their first child through IVF. (invitro fertilization)

We know that Sarah, Abraham's wife, was 90 and Abraham 100. The biological clock had certainly stopped ticking for Abraham and Sarah. When Abraham was told that he would be a father, he fell to the ground laughing.

When Sarah heard the news, she also had a good chuckle to herself. Some people try to explain away this laughter saying that it was laughter of joy and excitement. I don't think so. These two old people were as human as you and I. I dare say that if the oldest person here this morning were told the same news, he/she would react much the same way. In fact, for most of us it wouldn't be a laughing matter at all. The thought of giving birth, dealing with diapers, toilet training and then a teenager is enough to stop any aging heart.

From the time God first told Abraham that he would be the father of a great nation to the fulfilment of that promise twenty-five years had passed. This long delay certainly tested Abraham's faith in God and his

promise, but Abraham never gave up on the idea that he would be a father and from his child he would more descendants than the stars in the night sky.

We heard a part of the Apostle Paul's discussion about Abraham's faith in his letter to the Romans. Let me read a bit of it again, *God promised Abraham a lot of descendants. And when it all seemed hopeless, Abraham still had faith in God and became the ancestor of many nations. Abraham's faith never became weak, not even when he was nearly a hundred years old. He knew that he was almost dead and that his wife Sarah could not have children. But Abraham never doubted or questioned God's promise. His faith made him strong, and he gave all the credit to God.*

Abraham was certain that God could do what he had promised. (Romans 4:18-21).

That's a great description of what faith is.

Abraham's faith filled him with certainty that God would do what he promised.

His faith believed even when it was illogical to believe.

His faith in God and his promise filled him with power, with the ability to endure, with the strength to overcome doubt, to the point where he praised God in spite of the circumstances.

His faith enabled him to overcome all kinds of objections, hardship, perhaps ridicule from others when he told them that he would be a father of a great nation yet he had no children.

Abraham simply focussed on God, certain that God would somehow fulfil his promise. This was nothing new for Abraham. Remember how God told him to pack up, leave his home and go to an undisclosed destination. Abraham trusted that God knew what he was doing. This was not blind faith. This was an intelligent faith that knew whom he could trust, and firmly knew who would travel with him no matter what that journey might bring and where it might take him. This faith showed him that God always keeps his promises.

Faith is a matter looking away from what we can personally achieve and look at what God can do for us and with us and through us.

Faith is realising that we are at a point where we can do nothing to change our circumstances, and look to God who has the power to make a difference.

Abraham.... The aging man took God at his word, trusted his promises and believed in his power to make this a reality even though from a human point of view the situation was hopeless.

That's why God waited so long.

In no way could Abraham or Sarah take the credit.

God did it! Their childbearing days were over. If God was going to create a nation from Abraham's descendants, then it was over to God to do something about it. Abraham trusted God that he knew what he was doing.

Maybe it is has been your experience that when all human effort has failed, and supports have been pulled out from under you, that it has been faith in God's love and goodness that has kept you going.

When sickness and pain have been almost too much to endure, it is faith in God that has strengthened you and enabled you to get through it.

When fear for the future grips your soul, it is faith that assures you that God has everything under control.

When grief tears you apart, it is faith in God's promises of hope, his ever-abiding love, and his assurance of eternal life that enables you to cope.

When you are depressed, overwhelmed, self-worth is at rock bottom it is faith in a God who made you and cares for you that gets you on top of things again.

I don't want to make this sound too simplistic and be too blasé about the struggles that you have. Faith in God's love and care ought to banish all our problems. But our human nature get in the way. We are often involved in a struggle between faith and doubt. A battle goes on inside of us as we try to decide whether we ought to trust God to help us or will he leave us to fight our own way through the turmoil.

True faith in God refers to being able to maintain a heart of reverence for and submission to God in whatever environment we may face. It means that when our mind and body endure great suffering during adversity, and we still don't misunderstand or complain about God, but instead can obey God and persevere in believing in and following God. To have true faith in God, we must be able to persist in the hardest times, truly love God, and not develop doubts about Him.

In Romans the apostle Paul then wraps up his discussion about Abraham's faith by applying it directly to you and to me. The story of Abraham isn't simply an ancient account of how God used to work. No,

this story is written in the Bible for our instruction. The God of Abraham is our God too. The God of the Old Testament is the same gracious and forgiving God today.

Because of faith we know that Jesus has dealt with our sin and that as far as God is concerned is forgiven and forgotten.

Because of faith we know that God has established a special and unique relationship with us.

In faith we believe that we too shall live after death.

In faith we are certain that Jesus helps us and walks with us over the rough terrain of our life.

May God grant us the kind of faith that Abraham had – a faith that trusts that God has his arm around us as we walk through life – a faith that believes that he will never ignore one of those whom he loves – a faith that is certain that he is ready to hear our prayers and help us when there is no other help.

HYMN: Jesus Loves Even Me

1 I am so glad that our Father in heaven
Tells of His love in the Book He has given;
Wonderful things in the Bible I see,
This is the dearest, that Jesus loves me.

Refrain:

**I am so glad that Jesus loves me,
Jesus loves me, Jesus loves me;
I am so glad that Jesus loves me,
Jesus loves even me.**

2 Though I forget Him and wander away,
Kindly He follows wherever I stray;
Back to His dear loving arms would I flee,
When I remember that Jesus loves me. **[Refrain]**

3 O, if there's only one song I can sing,
When in His beauty I see the great King,
This shall my song in eternity be:
O, what a wonder that Jesus loves me! **[Refrain]**

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

You stop us in our tracks, O Lord, with your reminder that discipleship is not a “sometime” thing. We are called to place our whole lives in your care; to follow you; to serve you by caring for others, not just once in a while, but always. We admit that we’re not always ready to do this. The demand is great; the need is great; our energies are limited. Help us to place our trust and our lives in your care. You will give us the strength and courage that we will need for this step on the journey. Be with us. Help us to remember that your love is poured out for all your people; you are never far away. It is in Jesus’ Name, we pray. AMEN.

LORD’S PRAYER

CLOSING HYMN: Sweet Hour of Prayer
1 Sweet hour of prayer! sweet hour of prayer!
that calls me from a world of care,
and bids me at my Father's throne
make all my wants and wishes known.
In seasons of distress and grief,
my soul has often found relief,
and oft escaped the tempter's snare
by thy return, sweet hour of prayer!

2 Sweet hour of prayer! sweet hour of prayer!
the joys I feel, the bliss I share
of those whose anxious spirits burn
with strong desires for thy return!
With such I hasten to the place
where God my Savior shows his face,
and gladly take my station there,
and wait for thee, sweet hour of prayer!

3 Sweet hour of prayer! sweet hour of prayer!
thy wings shall my petition bear
to him whose truth and faithfulness
engage the waiting soul to bless.
And since he bids me seek his face,
believe his word, and trust his grace,
I'll cast on him my every care,
and wait for thee, sweet hour of prayer!

SENDING FORTH

The step of discipleship requires commitment and faith. Go now in peace, bringing the good news of Jesus’ love to all people. Do not be afraid. God is with you. AMEN.

CHORAL AMEN

POSTLUDE

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Announcements

Tuesday, March 5th: Coffee Time at 9:30am at Springvale. All are welcome!

Wednesday, March 6th: Official Board meeting at 10:30am at Springvale.

Sunday, March 10th: Daylight Savings time begins! Don’t forget to change your clocks and look forward to brighter days.

Friday, March 15th: Scrapbooking table setup in the late afternoon/evening at Hagersville. All help is appreciated.

Sunday, March 17th: St. Patrick’s Day. Wear your green!

Friday, March 22nd: Chili Lunch at Hagersville from 11:30am-1pm. Tickets are \$10/person. Takeout Only. Call Susan at 905-768-3729 by March 21st to order ahead.

Friday, March 29th: Good Friday Service at Hagersville at 10:30am. Hot cross buns served afterwards.

Please bring in paper products for the
Hagersville Food Bank!

