

**HAGERSVILLE UNITED CHURCH &
SPRINGVALE UNITED CHURCH
SUNDAY, MARCH 17th, 2024**

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

Bethany

Discipleship requires a willingness to give totally of one's self to the Lord. Holding nothing back, our deeds of mercy, justice and peace will bear a great witness to all, long after we have moved on in our journey.

OFFERING PRAYER

For the blessings of this and all our days, we thank you, gracious God.

Accept, we pray, not just these gifts of offering but also our lives freely offered in gratitude for all you have done for us. Use them both, in this place and wherever you might take us. Amen.

PRELUDE AND WELCOME

ANNOUNCEMENTS, BIRTHDAYS AND CELEBRATIONS

CALL TO WORSHIP

L: This is the fifth step on our Lenten journey, the step of sacrifice.

P: Be with us, Lord, as we take this step.

L: This requires the willingness to give all of your life to the Lord.

P: Be with us, Lord, as we commit our lives to you.

L: Come, let us worship and offer our voices of praise to God.

P: Let us open our hearts and spirits to God this day.

OPENING HYMN: #412 This is the Day

1,4 This is the day, this is the day
 that our God has made, that our God has made;
 we will rejoice, we will rejoice,
 and be glad in it, and be glad in it.

This is the day that our God has made,
 we will rejoice and be glad in it.

This is the day, this is the day
 that our God has made.

2 Open to us, open to us
 your gates, O God, your gates, O God;
we will go in, we will go in,
 to your holy place, to your holy place.

Open to us your gates, O God,
 we will go in to your holy place.

Open to us, open to us
 your gates, O God.

3 You are our God, you are our God,
 we will praise your name, we will praise your name;
we will give thanks, we will give thanks,
 for your faithfulness, for your faithfulness.

You are our God, we will praise your name,
 we will give thanks for your faithfulness.

You are our God, you are our God,
 we will praise your name.

OPENING PRAYER

Lord, be with us this day as we commit ourselves to being your disciples. Help us to face the future unafraid, trusting in your loving care and presence with us. We pray this in Jesus' name. AMEN.

ANTHEM

CHILDREN'S TIME

CHILDREN'S VIDEO

READING FOR THE 5TH SUNDAY OF LENT

Reader 1: I'm not sure about this journey. When it started out, it seemed all right to me. I thought I could follow Jesus along the path. Sure, there were some snags and trouble spots, but nothing I couldn't handle. Now Jesus wants me to be willing to give my whole life, my

whole entire life. I'm scared. I don't know if I can let go of everything, just to follow Jesus. I don't know if I can continue on the journey. I need some assurances that everything will be OK.....that I will be OK.

Reader 2: Listen, Jesus says right from the beginning that we need to place our trust in him. We have seen so much on this journey.....healing, forgiveness.....people having a glimmer of hope where only hopelessness prevailed. I suggest that we continue to place our trust in him and fix our eyes on him. We'll be OK....because we'll be walking and working with Jesus.

Reader 1: I know you are right, but I had to admit to my fear. I would love to pretend that following Jesus was just an easy task; but actually it's a huge commitment. Jesus wants us to pay attention to the people who are in need. He wants us to serve and works with them to help create a better life for them. I guess I need to stop worrying and just trust in Jesus.

Reader 2: We all need to place our trust in Jesus. In these times when the future seems so clouded, Jesus reminds us that the greater good is in working together to help each other; offering our gifts and our service, not for a grand reward; but because we can do this to help. Even if it means that we lose ourselves, the gifts we have given will go on long after we have been here, helping others.

Reader 1: Well, let's get back on the path again. Thanks for the "listening ear" and the good advice.

Reader 2: No problem.....

LET US PRAY - UNISON

Compassionate Lord, forgive us when we falter on this Lenten pathway; when the road ahead seems too uncertain and we are afraid. We admit that following Jesus is not an easy task. Jesus requires us to be willing to make the ultimate commitment of our whole lives and we hesitate and hold back. Draw us back to you, Lord. Give us confidence and courage to face the future with hope. Let us place our trust in you that the message of peace and mercy you have given to us through Jesus Christ may be offered to others through our own witness to your healing mercy. In Jesus' Name, we pray. AMEN.

WORDS OF ASSURANCE

Even though the future is clouded; God is with us, guiding, healing, comforting, restoring. Rejoice! In the name of Jesus Christ, you are forgiven and healed. AMEN.

CHORUS: #41 In His Time

In His time, in His time,
He makes all things beautiful in His time.
Lord, please show me ev'ry day,
As You're teaching me Your way,
That You do just what You say, in Your time.

In Your time, in Your time,
You make all things beautiful in Your time.
Lord, my life to You I bring,
May each song I have to sing
Be to You a lovely thing, in Your time.

SCRIPTURE READINGS: John 12:20-33

Jesus Predicts His Death

²⁰ Now there were some Greeks among those who went up to worship at the festival. ²¹ They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, with a request. "Sir," they said, "we would like to see Jesus." ²² Philip went to tell Andrew; Andrew and Philip in turn told Jesus.

²³ Jesus replied, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. ²⁴ Very truly I tell you, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds. ²⁵ Anyone who loves their life will lose it, while anyone who hates their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. ²⁶ Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honor the one who serves me.

²⁷ "Now my soul is troubled, and what shall I say? 'Father, save me from this hour'? No, it was for this very reason I came to this hour. ²⁸ Father, glorify your name!"

Then a voice came from heaven, "I have glorified it, and will glorify it again." ²⁹ The crowd that was there and heard it said it had thundered; others said an angel had spoken to him.

³⁰ Jesus said, "This voice was for your benefit, not mine. ³¹ Now is the time for judgment on this world; now the prince of this world will be driven out. ³² And I, when I am lifted up^[a] from the earth, will draw all people to myself." ³³ He said this to show the kind of death he was going to die.

MESSAGE: Be the Light

At the beginning of our scripture reading for today, we hear about some Greek's, probably God-fearers, non-Jews who follow some Jewish teachings and regularly traveled to Jerusalem for religious festivals, they came to the disciple Philip and said, "Sir, we wish to see Jesus." I'm not sure what the Greeks were expecting when they went looking for Jesus. I have a feeling that they hoped to hear his wise and strange parables or receive healing. They just wanted to see Jesus. And who can blame them? Jesus has a pretty good track record up to this point. He has cleansed the temple, turned water into wine, healed a little boy, fed 5000, given sight to the blind, and raised Lazarus from the dead. I can understand why they wanted to see Jesus but I know the desire. I want to see Jesus. That's what many people looked came to see Jesus. Seeing Jesus makes it all real. After all, seeing, they say, is believing. We all have our reasons for wanting to see Jesus.

And when Jesus comes forward to the Greeks who want to see him he shares these words...

Unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. Those who love their life lose it, and those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. Whoever

serves me must follow me, and where I am, there will my servant be also. And then he speaks of his death.

I'm not sure that the Greeks or the disciples were prepared for Jesus to speak of his death or of his troubled soul. I'm not sure that they expected to hear God's voice like thunder or to be told that they must hate their life in this world in order to keep it eternally. I bet they didn't expect to hear that the Messiah would have to leave them and they probably didn't know what he meant when he said the Son of Man would be lifted up. While they were still trying to figure out just exactly what he meant, he said to them simply, "The light is with you for a little longer. Walk while you have the light, so that the darkness may not overtake you. If

you walk in the darkness, you do not know where you are going. While you have the light, believe in the light, so that you may become children of light." We have all walked in the darkness. We may know that we can get by without the light. We can adapt to many kinds of situations, even the dark. In fact, sometimes, good things happen in the dark. After all, when we look at the creation stories at the beginning of the Bible, God shaped creation out of the dark.

And, plants, which need light to grow, begin their lives as seeds, buried in the dark, pushing roots ever deeper, to find the nutrients they need to survive.

But, even though we may be able to survive in the dark, though we may even need the dark at certain times in our lives, we know that something changes when we finally see the light. We know, even as we shield our eyes from the brightness, that the light and heat will do new things in our lives, maybe things we could not have imagined. The disciples certainly couldn't have imagined that they would have ended up following a Messiah like Jesus. I was once told that someone I could not be a minister. I was told that women could be teachers within Christian education, but certainly not preachers, and definitely not preside over communion.

Then many years ago I was asked to take a worship service, for me, it would be my first sermon. I would stand for the first time in a pulpit having prepared a sermon written by me and intended to be delivered to my home congregation on that Sunday. As the day approached, I felt my anxiety increase and suffered from a very nervous stomach. I wondered why I had agreed to preach in the first place. I also wondered if I really had anything worth saying, a question I thought the congregation just might be asking the same question.

In my favor, I didn't come into without due preparation. I had researched and soul searched the text I had chosen. I had written and rewritten the sermon and had mounds of used paper to point to as evidence of those rewrites. I had stood in front of the mirror and practiced the final draft until I was so sick of the words.

I was still nervous, but then I remembered the advice of my minister. She said, "When you stand in the pulpit, step back a bit, and allow the love and light of God to pour into your words; and I did it. Even though I continued to struggle with the call to ministry for many

months I allowed the light of Christ to shine on me and as the light shone, I allowed myself to be changed by it. Remember, if you are willing to be changed by this light, you will become a child of the light. You will carry his light with you. You will become a mirror that reflects his love and compassion. You will become a light bulb that shines hope in hopeless places. You will be the bonfire that warms a cold heart. You will become an embodiment, an extension of the light that Jesus brought into this world. And, the darkness can't defeat that light, even though we walk through shadows sometimes. I think a major way that Jesus' light continues to make it into this world is through the reflections of the people who follow him. My prayer today is that you will continue to ask to see Jesus, and that you remember that his light can shine through all you do. So, be the light. Carry his hope and love to the world.

HYMN: #120 O Jesus, I Have Promised

- 1 O Jesus, I have promised to serve you to the end;
remain for ever near me, my Saviour and my friend:
I shall not fear the journey if you are by my side,
nor wander from the pathway if you will be my guide.
- 2 O let me feel you near me: the world is ever near;
I see the sights that dazzle, the tempting sounds I hear;
my foes are ever near me, around me and within;
but, Jesus, then draw nearer and shield my soul from sin.
- 3 O let me hear you speaking in accents clear and still,
above the storms of passion, the murmurs of self-will;
O speak to reassure me, to hasten or control;
now speak, and make me listen, O guardian of my soul.
- 4 O Jesus, you have promised to all who follow you,
that where you are in glory your servant shall be too.
And Jesus, I have promised to serve you to the end;
O give me grace to follow, my Saviour and my friend.

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

You know us too well, Lord. You know that we would like the ways of discipleship to be easy; to have the paths laid out in a neat line with the

future clearly visible at all times. But part of our journey is obscured by our own greed and fear. You do not block the way to hope and peace. Our own fears provide the barriers; and far too often those barriers take the forms of alienation and prejudice. Write your words on our hearts, Merciful God. Plant your transforming love in our spirits. Give us courage. As we have gathered this day to bring before you our concerns, our joys and our sorrows, give us hearts of peace and confidence in your all-sustaining presence. Help us to set our feet on this pathway toward the cross and beyond. AMEN.

LORD’S PRAYER

CLOSING HYMN: #664 What a Friend We Have in Jesus

- 1 What a friend we have in Jesus, all our sins and griefs to bear!
What a privilege to carry everything to God in prayer!
O what peace we often forfeit, O what needless pain we bear,
all because we do not carry everything to God in prayer.
- 2 Have we trials and temptations? Is there trouble anywhere?
We should never be discouraged; take it to the Lord in prayer.
Can we find a friend so faithful, who will all our sorrows share?
Jesus knows our every weakness; take it to the Lord in prayer.
- 3 Are we weak and heavy laden, cumbered with a load of care?
Christ the Saviour is our refuge; take it to the Lord in prayer.
Do our friends despise, forsake us? Are we tempted to despair?
Jesus' strength will shield our weakness, and we'll find new courage
there.

SENDING FORTH

Fix your eyes on the Lord. Place your hand in His Hand, trusting in his guiding and comfort. Go into this world, that needs so much the words of healing love, and bring the good news of God’s absolute love and presence to all people. Go in peace.

CHORAL AMEN

POSTLUDE

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Announcements

Tuesday, March 19th: Coffee Time at 9:30am at Springvale. All are welcome!

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.

Sunday, March 24th: Palm Sunday

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

Sunday, March 31st: Easter Sunday. Springvale will be having an Easter Basket draw as well as a hot breakfast starting at 8:30am. Tickets for the draw are 1/\$2 or 3/\$5. Baskets will be drawn during breakfast with service to follow. Special music by Chad & Emilia Smith and our choir.

Thursday, April 18th: Ham & Turkey Supper at Springvale. More information to follow.

Friday, April 19th: Soup Lunch at Hagersville. More information to follow.

Please bring in paper products for the
Hagersville Food Bank!

☘Helen's Treasures is looking for children & adult clothing donations. If you have been thinking about doing some spring cleaning, keep them in mind for your donations. ☘

Some St. Patrick's Day Jokes....

- Why don't you ever iron a four-leaf clover?
-Because you don't want to press your luck.
- What position did the leprechaun play on the baseball team?
Shortstop.
- Dr O'Mahony tells his patient: "I have bad news and worse news, John. "Oh dear, what's the bad news?" asks the patient. "You only have 24 hours to live." "That's terrible," says the patient. "How can the news possibly be worse?" Dr O'Mahony replies: "I've been trying to contact you since yesterday."
- What do you get when you cross poison ivy with a four-leaf clover?
A rash of good luck.
- What kind of spells do leprechauns use?
Lucky charms.
- Why did the leprechaun go outside?
To sit on his paddy-o.
- What did the leprechaun say when the video game ended?
"Game clover!"
- What would you call a big Irish spider?
Paddy-Long-Legs!
- What type of music do Leprechauns dance to?
Sham-Rock-And-Roll!
- Why did St. Patrick drive all the snakes out of Ireland?
Because the train tickets were too expensive!
- What do you call it when someone does the wrong Irish dance?
A jig mistake!
- What do you call an artificial stone in Ireland?
A Sham-Rock!