

**HAGERSVILLE UNITED CHURCH &
SPRINGVALE UNITED CHURCH
SUNDAY, AUGUST 30th, 2026**

Ministry of Caring: The Whole People of God
Ministry of Pastoral Care & Worship: Rev. Peggy Bartlett
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“Something’s Fishy!”

*God's grace is bigger than we imagine ... and sometimes bigger than we
would like!*

Offering Prayer

Generous God, receive these gifts and use them to bring hope,
compassion and grace into our community and our world.
And receive us as well. Take our hands and use them to serve.
Take our voices and use them to encourage. Take our hearts and make
them generous. And when you call us, give us courage to say yes.
Amen.

PRELUDE & WELCOME

ANNOUNCEMENTS, BIRTHDAYS AND CELEBRATIONS

CALL TO WORSHIP

Leader: God calls us.

People: Sometimes we listen.

Leader: God leads us.

People: Sometimes we follow.

Leader: God asks us to trust.

People: Sometimes we run the other way.

Leader: And still God comes looking for us.

People: Still God calls us home.

Leader: God's mercy is greater than our mistakes.

People: God's grace is greater than our failures.

Leader: God's love reaches farther than we can run.

People: So we come to worship the God of second chances.

2

Leader: Come, let us worship God.

All: With grateful and open hearts!

OPENING HYMN: #537 The Wise May Bring Their Learning (Hymns
for the Family of God)

1 The wise may bring their learning,
The rich may bring their wealth,
And some may bring their brilliance,
And some bring strength and health:
We too would bring our treasures
To offer to the King,
We have no gifts deserving—
What shall we children bring?

2 We'll bring Him hearts that love Him,
We'll bring Him thankful praise,
And young souls humbly striving
To walk in holy ways:
And these shall be our treasures
We offer to the King,
And these are gifts that even
The youngest child may bring.

3 We'll come and show the Saviour
The things we do each day;
We'll try our best to please Him
At home, at school, at play:
And better are these treasures
To offer to our King
Than richest gifts without them:
Yet these a child may bring.

OPENING PRAYER

Gracious God, you call us to follow you, but sometimes we would rather
choose our own direction. You call us to love, and sometimes we hold
onto anger. You call us to forgive, and sometimes we would rather keep
score. You call us to trust, and sometimes fear gets in the way. Yet you
do not give up on us. When we wander, you seek us. When we stumble,
you steady us. When we fail, you offer another beginning.

When we run, your grace runs farther. As we worship today, open our hearts to the story of Jonah. Help us see ourselves somewhere within it. And teach us again that your mercy is wider, deeper and greater than we can imagine. Amen.

ANTHEM

CHILDREN'S TIME

CHILDREN'S VIDEO

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Jonah 1:1–3 God Calls, Jonah Runs

The word of the Lord came to Jonah:

“Get up and go to the great city of Nineveh. Speak to the people there, for I have seen what is happening in their city.”

But Jonah did not want to go.

Instead of travelling toward Nineveh, Jonah headed in the opposite direction. He went down to the port, found a ship sailing far away, paid his fare, and climbed aboard.

God had called Jonah to go one way,
but Jonah decided to run the other.

Jonah 2:1–2, 7–10 Jonah Prays and God Rescues

From inside the great fish, Jonah prayed to the Lord his God:

“In my trouble, I called out to you, Lord,
and you heard me.

When I felt that all hope was slipping away,
I remembered you.

My prayer rose to you,
and I knew that you had not forgotten me.

I will give thanks to you,
for you are the God who saves.”

Then God commanded the great fish,
and Jonah was brought safely back onto dry land.

Jonah 3:1–5, 10 God Gives Jonah Another Chance

Then the word of the Lord came to Jonah a **second time**:

“Get up. Go to Nineveh and give the people the message I have given you.”

This time, Jonah went. He entered the great city and delivered God's warning. The people of Nineveh listened. They believed that God was speaking to them, and they began to change their ways. When God saw that they had turned away from the wrong they were doing, God responded with mercy and compassion. God gave Jonah a second chance—and God gave Nineveh one too.

Jonah 4:1–4, 9–11 Jonah Struggles With God's Mercy

But Jonah was angry.

He complained to God, “This is exactly why I didn't want to come here! I knew you were a gracious and compassionate God. I knew you were patient, overflowing with love, and willing to forgive.”

And God asked Jonah:

“Is it right for you to be so angry?”

Later, Jonah became upset when a plant that had given him shade died. God said to him, “Jonah, you are concerned about a plant that you did not create or cause to grow. Should I not be concerned about the people of Nineveh?”

Peggy - And Jonah was left with something important to think about:

God's mercy is bigger than Jonah expected.

God's love reaches even to the people Jonah thought did not deserve it.

MESSAGE: “Something's Fishy!”

There are some stories from the Bible that almost everybody knows.

And Jonah is one of them. Say “Jonah” and immediately somebody says: “The whale!” Although the Bible actually calls it a great fish.

But let's not allow a technicality to ruin a perfectly good Sunday-school story! The interesting thing is that the book of Jonah isn't really about the fish. It's about a man who runs from God, and a God who refuses to give up on him. “Have you ever known exactly what you were supposed to do...and then gone in precisely the opposite direction?”

That's Jonah. God says, “Go to Nineveh.” Jonah essentially says,

“Absolutely. Which way is Nineveh?” God points east. Jonah heads west. And from there, things get...well...a little fishy. But the fascinating thing is that the fish isn't really what the book of Jonah is about. In fact, the fish gets only a tiny part of the story.

He gets on a ship heading toward Tarshish, as far away from Nineveh as he can manage.

And then many have become too hard on Jonah, but I say to all of you... I wonder if there isn't a little Jonah in all of us.

Maybe we've never boarded a ship to escape God's call, but haven't there been moments when we knew the right thing to do, and didn't particularly want to do it?

We know we should forgive, but we'd rather hold onto the hurt.

We know we should apologize, but we'd rather wait for the other person to go first.

We know we should reach out, but we hope somebody else will.

God says, "This way." And sometimes we quietly head for Tarshish.

Jonah soon discovers that running from God doesn't bring him peace.

A storm comes. The sailors are terrified. And eventually Jonah finds himself in the sea, where he is swallowed by a great fish.

But here's something we sometimes miss.

The fish isn't really Jonah's punishment. The fish is his rescue.

The very thing that looks like the worst part of Jonah's story becomes the means through which God saves him. And inside that fish, Jonah prays. Eventually Jonah is safely back on dry land, and then something wonderful happens. God speaks to Jonah again. In other words: "Jonah, let's try this one more time." What a beautiful picture of grace.

God doesn't say, "You had your chance."

God doesn't say, "You failed me, so I'll find somebody better."

God calls him again. Jonah gets another chance. And haven't most of us needed that kind of grace? Maybe a second chance. Maybe a third.

Maybe a twenty-third! We "ALL" make mistakes. We say things we wish we could take back. We get our priorities wrong. We take the wrong road. And Jonah reminds us: Failure does not have to be the end of the story. God is a God of new beginnings. So, this time Jonah goes to Nineveh. He delivers God's message, the people listen and they change. God sees their response and shows them mercy. And you would think Jonah would be thrilled. One sermon and an entire city responds! Most preachers would be thinking, "Well, that went rather well!"

But Jonah isn't celebrating. Jonah is angry.

And this is where the story gets really interesting.

Jonah didn't want to go to Nineveh because he didn't like the Ninevites.

They were enemies. As far as Jonah was concerned, they didn't deserve

God's mercy.

Jonah knew God was compassionate and forgiving.

And his complaint is essentially ... "God, I knew you would do this!"

Jonah is happy to receive grace when Jonah needs rescuing.

He's grateful for second chances when Jonah gets one.

But when God gives grace to those people? Suddenly Jonah isn't so enthusiastic about grace anymore. And that's where this ancient story gets uncomfortably close to us.

It's easy to believe in forgiveness when we need to be forgiven.

It's harder when we're the ones being asked to forgive.

It's easy to believe in second chances when we need another chance.

It's harder when God offers another chance to somebody we think doesn't deserve one.

Jonah wants to draw a circle around God's mercy:

These people are in. Those people are out. And God keeps making the circle bigger. Maybe that's the real miracle in Jonah. Not that a great fish could swallow a man. But that God's grace could be big enough for Jonah and Nineveh. Grace for the obedient and for running away.

Grace for the people we understand and the people we don't.

Grace for the people we like, and even the people we struggle to like.

The book of Jonah ends with a question from God, and we never hear Jonah's answer. Maybe that's because the question is really meant for us.... *Can we make room for God's grace, not only for ourselves, but for others too?*

Sometimes we are Jonah, running, resisting and judging. Sometimes we are Nineveh, needing forgiveness and another chance. But either way, God is still God. Still calling. Still forgiving. Still offering new beginnings. Yes, there's something fishy about this story.

A man runs away. A fish becomes his rescue. A reluctant prophet gets another chance. And an entire city discovers God's mercy. But perhaps the greatest lesson is this, we can run away from what God asks us to do, but we can never run beyond God's love. And when we have received that grace ourselves, God asks us to make room for someone else to receive it too. Thanks be to God. Amen.

HYMN: #266 Amazing Grace

1 Amazing grace (how sweet the sound)
that saved a wretch like me!

I once was lost, but now am found,
was blind, but now I see.

2 'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear,
and grace my fears relieved;
how precious did that grace appear
the hour I first believed!

3 Through many dangers, toils and snares
I have already come:
'tis grace has brought me safe thus far,
and grace will lead me home.

4 The Lord has promised good to me,
his word my hope secures;
he will my shield and portion be
as long as life endures.

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

Let us pray. God of mercy, we thank you that you do not give up on us.
When we wander, you call us back. When we make mistakes, you offer
forgiveness. When we lose our way, you help us begin again.

Thank you for every second chance we have received.

Today we pray for those who feel as though they have gone too far to
come home. May they discover that your grace reaches farther.

We pray for people carrying regret. Give them courage to seek
forgiveness, make amends where they can, and begin again.

We pray for those who have been hurt by others.

Give them wisdom, healing and peace.

We pray for people we find difficult to understand and difficult to love.
Keep our hearts from becoming small and hard.

Remind us that every person is known by you and precious to you.

We pray for our community and our world—for places where hatred
divides people, where violence brings fear, where hunger and injustice
cause suffering, and where peace seems far away.

Raise up people of courage, compassion and mercy.

And gracious God, when you call us this week, help us not to run in the
opposite direction. Give us ears to listen, courage to respond, and hearts
large enough to share the grace we ourselves have received. **Amen.**

CLOSING HYMN: #509 Here I Am, Lord

I, the Lord of sea and sky, I have heard my people cry
All who dwell in dark and sin, My hand will save.

I who made the stars and night, I will make the darkness bright
Who will bear my light to them, Whom shall I send?

Refrain: Here I am Lord, Is it I Lord?

**I have heard you calling in the night, I will go Lord
If you lead me, I will hold your people in my heart.**

I the Lord of snow and rain, I have borne my people's pain
I have wept for love of them, They turn away.
I will break their hearts of stone, Fill their hearts with love alone
I will speak my word to them, Whom shall I send? **R**

I, the Lord of wind and flame, I will tend the poor and lame
I will set a feast for them, My hand will save
Finest bread I will provide, 'Til their hearts be satisfied
I will give my life to them, Whom shall I send? **R**

SENDING FORTH

As you go into this week, remember Jonah.

When God calls you toward kindness...

don't run the other way.

When God calls you toward forgiveness...

don't book passage to Tarshish!

When God gives you another chance...

receive it with gratitude.

And when God gives someone else another chance...

make room for grace.

For God's mercy is wider than our judgment, God's patience is greater
than our failures, and God's love reaches farther than we could ever run.
Go in peace. Go in courage. Go in grace. And if things get a little fishy
this week... remember Jonah and keep listening for God.

CHORAL AMEN**POSTLUDE**

Announcements

Wednesday, September 9th: Official Board at Hagersville at 1:30pm.
Church Council will meet at 6:30pm.

Sunday, September 27th: Springvale's 153rd Musical Anniversary joint service beginning at 10:30am. Lunch to follow. There will be **no service** at Hagersville.

Tuesday, September 29th: Turkey Supper at Springvale from 4pm-6pm. Takeout only. Adults are \$25, ages 12 and under are \$10. For tickets call Barb at 905-768-3910 or Betty at 905-537-4188.

Please bring in your paper products for the
Hagersville Food Bank! ☺

