

**HAGERSVILLE UNITED CHURCH &
SPRINGVALE UNITED CHURCH
SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 13th, 2020**

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

Waterdown: St. James

“Help Us To Accept Each Other”

Before we begin our service...I know we are giving our offerings as we
arrive...I would just like us to offer this prayer.

Giving God,
all we are and all we have
come from you.
We offer back to you
what has always been yours.
As you have entrusted your gifts to us,
so we return these gifts to you,
trusting that you will multiply them
to the great glory of your kingdom on earth.
We pray through Jesus
who gave the totality of his life for us. Amen.

CALL TO WORSHIP

L: Sing praise to God who rescues us when we fall!

P: Sing praise to God who walks with us on all our journeys!

L: Even though we fall, God lifts us and places us on paths of peace.

P: Even though we stray, God finds us and brings us back to lives of hope.

L: Thanks be to God, whose love is continually with us.

P: Praise be to God, whose mercy is over us all.

OPENING HYMN: Trust and Obey
When we walk with the Lord
In the light of His Word,
What a glory He sheds on our way;
While we do His good will,
He abides with us still,
And with all who will trust and obey.

**REFRAIN: Trust and obey,
For there's no other way
To be happy in Jesus,
But to trust and obey.**

Not a shadow can rise,
Not a cloud in the skies,
But His smile quickly drives it away;
Not a doubt or a fear,
Not a sigh or a tear,
Can abide while we trust and obey. **R**

Not a burden we bear,
Not a sorrow we share,
But our toil He doth richly repay;
Not a grief or a loss,
Not a frown or a cross,
But is blest if we trust and obey. **R**

But we never can prove
The delights of His love,
Until all on the altar we lay;
For the favor He shows,
And the joy He bestows,
Are for them who will trust and obey. **R**

OPENING PRAYER

In this moment, gracious God, you have called us away from the world
to a place and a time where we can commune with you and with one
another. Calm our anxious spirits, that we may be set apart to hear your
word of truth through which we receive grace to bring about the

obedience of faith. Open us to the reality of your all-embracing love, both in this place and in the wider world. May we, by our words and actions, be bearers of your kingdom, in the name and Spirit of the Christ. Amen.

CHILDREN'S TIME

CHILDREN'S SONG: My God is Number One - Yancy

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Lord Jesus Christ,
we expect that you will do what we want,
whatever we ask.
We want places of honor and all the glory.
We want to be great.
We want to be first.
But you, O Christ, are servant of all.
Forgive our boldness.
Forgive our self-importance.
Forgive us.
Teach us to be humble.
Teach us to be more like you.

*CHORUS: "LORD, I LIFT YOUR NAME ON HIGH"

Lord, I lift your name on high, Lord, I love to sing Your praises,
I'm so glad You're in my life, I'm so glad You came to save us,
You came from heaven to earth to show the way,
From earth to the cross my debt to pay;
From the cross to the grave, from the grave to the sky;
Lord, I lift Your name on high. 2X

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Romans 14:1-12

New International Version

The Weak and the Strong

14 Accept the one whose faith is weak, without quarreling over disputable matters. ²One person's faith allows them to eat anything, but another, whose faith is weak, eats only vegetables. ³The one who eats

everything must not treat with contempt the one who does not, and the one who does not eat everything must not judge the one who does, for God has accepted them. ⁴Who are you to judge someone else's servant? To their own master, servants stand or fall. And they will stand, for the Lord is able to make them stand.

⁵One person considers one day more sacred than another; another considers every day alike. Each of them should be fully convinced in their own mind. ⁶Whoever regards one day as special does so to the Lord. Whoever eats meat does so to the Lord, for they give thanks to God; and whoever abstains does so to the Lord and gives thanks to God. ⁷For none of us lives for ourselves alone, and none of us dies for ourselves alone. ⁸If we live, we live for the Lord; and if we die, we die for the Lord. So, whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord. ⁹For this very reason, Christ died and returned to life so that he might be the Lord of both the dead and the living.

¹⁰You, then, why do you judge your brother or sister^[a]? Or why do you treat them with contempt? For we will all stand before God's judgment seat. ¹¹It is written:

"As surely as I live," says the Lord,
'every knee will bow before me;
every tongue will acknowledge God.'"^[b]

¹²So then, each of us will give an account of ourselves to God.

MESSAGE

WE are All in this Together!

The church didn't meet in a central place in Rome, back in Paul's day like we do here in this sanctuary. They met in different houses, and after a while each of the house churches developed a personality all its own. The Christians of Jewish background tended to gravitate toward one another. It was natural, I suppose. They thought that not only did the Lord's Day need to be observed, but so did the Sabbath. Those who spoke Latin met together. The same was true for those who preferred to worship in Greek.

"Birds of a feather flock together." But that didn't mean all the birds got along.

Some were vegetarians, not necessarily for reasons of nutrition but because they were afraid that if they purchased meat in the local market it might have once been offered to idols as a sacrifice at one of the

pagan temples. That was an abomination to them, so instead of taking the chance, they felt it better to abstain completely... which was all right, except they looked unkindly toward those who did eat meat. And, as you might imagine, there were those who weren't as careful about that sort of thing. They thought it was all pretty silly and superstitious. They didn't care where their meat had been.

Are you getting the picture? There were all these independent Christians running around acting... well, independent. It's okay to be different, to have varying ideas about some things. But here's where the problems start... when you're convinced that you're right and anybody else who disagrees with you or does things differently from you is wrong, trouble is the name of the game. It is when you elevate your opinions to the level of such importance that whether you have fellowship with others is dependent on that, things start to fall apart. That's what was happening in Rome.

Pretty soon, in the church at Rome, they're squabbling with one another, not because of anything really important, but simply because they looked at things differently from one another. Grudges started taking hold, feelings got hurt, and instead of being a place where people worshiped and fellowshiped together in their common devotion to Christ, church became the place where grievances were aired and scores were settled. Adults were judging one another's values and ideas. There was a grudge in just about every pew.

Now, let me ask you: do you think Paul is going to stand for that? Not for a minute. "We do not live to ourselves," he says, "and we do not die to ourselves. If we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord; so then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's." What does he mean by that? I think he's talking about family. Because we are family – the family of God – my opinion counts only when it is voiced out of consideration that your feelings are as important as mine. When I make a decision, it is to be based not just on how it will impact on me. I need to be thinking of you as well. When I speak, how will you hear it? When I act, how will you respond to what I do? We do not live to ourselves. We're in this thing together. It is called family.

That's what I think Paul is saying.

That's my theory.

But this isn't a theory... Our common grief, our common anger, will not bind us together. There has to be something else, something more,

something eternal. And I can't think of anything better to remind us of that than what Paul has said to the church in Rome. "We do not live to ourselves," he says, "and we do not die to ourselves. If we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord; so then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's."

But how do we get there? How do we come to that point in our journey of faith that we hear what Paul is saying, that we really and truly consider the thoughts and needs and cares and opinions of others as much as or more than we do our own? When is it that we start to swim against the flow of human nature and become more like Christ? How do we get there?

If I understand Paul correctly, he is saying that in all circumstances God is there. Whether those circumstances are good or bad, God is present. And wherever the hand of God is, there is hope. Wherever the hand of God is, there is love. God does not leave us. Whether it's an enemy attack or a pandemic that stops the world, God's job is to keep on being God. It takes the eyes and ears of faith to find God, it seems, but if we are open to God's presence, we will find it. We will find the guiding and compassionate hand of God.

Sometimes God's presence is obvious. At other times, you have to look really, really hard. Or, as Barbara Brown Taylor puts it, "you have to dust for God's fingerprints. But when the dust is settled and the flood waters have found their way back to the sea, always – always – there is the loving hand of God."

And "whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's." Whether it's an enemy attack or the devastation of nature, or a virus we are the Lord's. And that

means, that for some people, to see the face of God they have to see your face and mine. When they do, are we then the presence of Christ? "Whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's." Do you believe that? If so, go and tell someone. Better yet, go and live it by extending to others your hand of grace. You might just find it to be the hand of God. Lord, in all circumstances of life – in good, in bad, and in between – we belong to you. May your hand, that guides the world, be our guide as well, and may you find us faithful to you in all things. Through Christ our Lord we pray, Amen.

HYMN VIDEO: My Prayer for You**PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE**

We love to say, "I may forgive, but I'll never forget!" And we think that we are truly following the ways of Christ. How blind we are, O Lord. Forgiveness means wiping the slate clean, not retaining the hurt. It works both ways: letting ourselves make a decision for healing and reaching out to the one who has hurt us to offer forgiveness and redemption. None of us is perfect. We know that. But Jesus reminded us that love is the ruling component in lives of faithful living. Help us, O Lord, really receive the love that you have lavished upon us. Help us understand that love as an agent of forgiveness. As we have brought before you the names of people and situations that are on our hearts, we seek your healing mercies and tender love for them. Remind us that the same mercy and love is continually offered to us, though we falter and fail, though we seek and strive. Be with us, gracious Lord, all of our days. AMEN.

LORD'S PRAYER**CLOSING HYMN: #424 May the God of Hope Go With Us**

- 1 May the God of hope go with us every day,
 filling all our lives with love and joy and peace.
 May the God of justice speed us on our way,
 bringing light and hope to every land and race.
 Praying, let us work for peace,
 singing, share our joy with all,
 working for a world that's new,
 faithful when we hear Christ's call.

- 2 May the God of healing free the earth from fear,
 freeing us for peace, both treasured and pursued.
 May the God of love keep our commitment clear
 to a world restored, to human life renewed. R

SENDING FORTH

As you have been forgiven, now go into a world that needs your forgiving, healing touch. Bring peace and hope to others, sharing God's love with them. Amen

CHORAL AMEN

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