

**HAGERSVILLE UNITED CHURCH &
SPRINGVALE UNITED CHURCH**

SUNDAY, APRIL 11th, 2021

Ministry of Caring: The Whole People of God Ministry of Pastoral

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REGIONAL COUNCIL PRAYER CYCLE

Bethesda

*“We come together today like the first believers, praying for unity of
heart and soul. With our fellow Christians, we celebrate the
resurrection of the Lord Jesus, the Lord of Life!”*

Offering Prayer

Generous and surprising God,
when we thought that death
had claimed your only Son,
you amazed us with the resurrection.
Surprise us again
with your ability to turn these humble offerings
into gifts that will transform the world
through our witness to your love.
We lay our very lives at your feet, O God,
knowing that you will use us
to proclaim and embody the gospel. Amen.

CALL TO WORSHIP

We gather as people on a journey.

We believe & we have doubts, we do good & we sin.

We are imperfect humans, and still beloved by God.

Love and grace. Hope and faith.

These are the essence of the one we call God.

We seek forgiveness & grace from

the One and from those we've harmed.

Assured of that grace, we are ready to grow again.

We yearn for a new way, a new perspective, and a clear path.

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Though we are full of trust and full of doubt, we are here.

Speak to us, God! Continue creating us!

Inspire our hearts. Enlighten our minds. Guide our actions. Amen.

OPENING HYMN: #409 Morning Has Broken

1 Morning has broken like the first morning,

Blackbird has spoken like the first bird.

Praise for the singing! Praise for the morning!

Praise for them, springing fresh from the Word!

2 Sweet the rain's new fall sunlit from Heaven,

Like the first dewfall on the first grass.

Praise for the sweetness of the wet garden,

Sprung in completeness where his feet pass.

3 Ours is the sunlight! Ours is the morning,

Born of the one light Eden saw play!

Praise with elation, praise every morning,

God's re-creation of the new day!

OPENING PRAYER

Holy God, we continue to hold on to the celebration and triumph of Easter. As we look back over the past year, we realize that many of us can identify with Thomas's doubt. "Can we be the church, the body of Christ, when we can't see the body gathered in our sanctuary?" Yet Christ has opened our eyes to his risen body that can't be confined by walls and is not diminished by precautions and social distance. We affirm the Resurrection power that we have seen, and so we say again, "Alleluia!" In the powerful name of Jesus, we pray. Amen!

ANTHEM

CHILDREN'S STORY

CHILDREN'S SONG

LITANY (INSPIRED BY JOHN 20:24-29)

Thomas said:

“Unless I see the mark of the nails and put my hand in his side, I will not believe.”

We are often skeptical people, driven by our senses, relying on that which we can hear, see or prove.

Our Lord asks us to see the invisible, to trust in the spirit, to have faith. Lord, give us faith!

Sometimes we get carried away by our emotions, by wishful thinking and by popular trends that pull us in.

Lord, help us to be bold in our beliefs, but also careful as Thomas was. Move us beyond mere trust in ordinary things and open our eyes for spiritual realities.

Jesus said: “Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe.”

SCRIPTURE READINGS: John 20:19-31**Jesus Appears to the Disciples**

¹⁹ When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you.” ²⁰ After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. ²¹ Jesus said to them again, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.” ²² When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit. ²³ If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.”

Jesus and Thomas

²⁴ But Thomas (who was called the Twin^[a]), one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. ²⁵ So the other disciples told him, “We have seen the Lord.” But he said to them, “Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands, and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe.”

²⁶ A week later his disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were shut, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you.” ²⁷ Then he said to Thomas, “Put

your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe.” ²⁸ Thomas answered him, “My Lord and my God!” ²⁹ Jesus said to him, “Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe.”

The Purpose of This Book

³⁰ Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. ³¹ But these are written so that you may come to believe^[b] that Jesus is the Messiah,^[c] the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name.

MESSAGE: Why do we have Doubts?

Last Sunday we celebrated that Christ’s resurrection. We read together the story of how Christ rose again, and appeared to those he loved, and how the message that God’s love still lived began to spread.

It’s hard to leave church on Easter morning and not feel some sense of joy, and some sense of faith. I leave Easter services, like Christmas services, on a sort of “faith high”. I feel surrounded by witnesses to God’s love, and this time of year I feel particularly close to God. Lent is over, and joy has filled the church.

So, we come back to church this week, and we expect the hard stuff to be over.

Except that’s not exactly what we get. The story we read today starts on that first Easter Sunday. After Jesus has appeared to Mary in the garden, he goes to the room where the rest of his disciples are, and they’re afraid.

And suddenly Jesus appears, despite the locked doors, and they can see the wounds in his hands and his side. And he says “peace be with you”. And they believe.

But one disciple was missing. Thomas wasn’t there when Jesus came back. It is not stated why he was not there but for whatever reason, Thomas arrives and all the other disciples tell him Jesus was just here. I’ll bet they even said to him something like, “Thomas, you won’t believe this!”

And he doesn’t. Thomas tells them, “Unless I see it for myself, and can touch his wounds, I won’t believe.”

Have you ever wondered how Thomas must have felt right then? Maybe he thought they were playing a joke on him? Or were they telling the

truth, and if so, why hadn't Jesus stayed around for him to see him too? All he knew was that the other ten remaining disciples saw Jesus and he didn't and this led him to his doubting.

But the following week and this time Thomas is with the other Disciples, and he still hasn't seen Jesus. Then all of a sudden the same thing happens. Jesus appears and tells Thomas to put his hands on his, and feel the wounds from the nails. And he does. And he believes. Jesus asks him, "Do you believe because you have seen me?" And he tells him, "Blessed are those who do not see yet believe."

I've always felt bad for Thomas. He was asked to do what the other disciples didn't have to do. He had to believe sight unseen. Probably any of the others would have had the same struggle. And yet, we all know Thomas as "doubting Thomas". I wonder how long after this happened did it take for the other disciples to call him that. "Oh, that's doubting Thomas. Jesus had to come and let him touch his hands before he believed."

I'd hate to be remembered only my greatest moment of doubt. But as much as Thomas's sort of gets this label as the disciple who didn't believe, he's the one that I think most of us can relate to. Because most of us understand what it is to live between faith and doubt.

Millions of people have doubted every day. Nobody is immune. We have doubts because life is full of "unknowns." How can we be sure of anything? Having doubts is natural and smart and it prevents us from making rash choices. We doubt, when something is too good to be true, then it surely is. Doubt is a feeling of uncertainty towards something, people or ideas and beliefs.

Having a doubt in your mind doesn't make you a doubter. Doubt encourages re-thinking of a matter. Its purpose is to sharpen your mind rather than to change it. Your doubts can force you to ask yourself questions, look for answers and then take actions. The tendency of doubts is to slow us down and to give us time for reflection on some issues. Our doubts should have a purpose. They should always make us want to learn the truth.

So, Thomas doubted and maybe if we were in the same situation, we would have doubted. Let's be honest even as Christians we have doubts. One reason we are so prone to doubt is that sometimes we fail to see God at work in our circumstances. We asked, and nothing happened. But the Lord is not a Genie who jumps in response to our requests. He

sees past, present, and future and knows the right time for every answer. His invisible hand is already at work on our behalf...arranging situations to accomplish His will, opening hearts, and preparing us to receive what He wants to give.

Another cause for doubting is unawareness. If we don't know God's ways, we will be disappointed in His response. All too often our prayers are accompanied by

expectations of how God will work. When He fails to intervene according to our timetable or anticipated method, we start to doubt. That is what makes us human.

Therefore, as you look for the answer to what is causing your doubts, you may discover truths disguised by the hustle and bustle of life. So, don't stop until the reason for your doubt is clear.

Only then can you let go of doubt; and doubt can let go of you. The easiest way to do that is place your faith in the Lord, even if you haven't seen you must trust that God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit are with us.

By placing our faith in them and trusting you can let go of your doubt and walk in Jesus's footsteps as Thomas did spreading the words and love of Jesus to the nations until his death.

Amen

HYMN #663 My Faith Looks up to Thee

1 My faith looks up to thee, thou Lamb of Calvary, Saviour divine.
Now hear me while I pray; take all my guilt away.
O let me from this day be wholly thine.

2 While life's dark maze I tread, and griefs around me spread,
be thou my guide, bid darkness turn to day;
wipe sorrow's tears away; nor let me ever stray
from thee aside.

3 May thy rich grace impart strength to my fainting heart,
my zeal inspire. As thou hast died for me,
O may my love to thee pure, warm, and changeless be,
a living fire.

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

Lord of mercy, it has been a week since the Easter celebration. Our church was beautified with flowers, lovely decorations, beautiful music. It was the kind of Easter in which we could celebrate. But during this week we have slumped back to our old ways. The world, which seems to be too much with us, has claimed our souls. Our resurrection faith has become dim. Let the story of Thomas who wanted more than anything else to see the risen Lord, pour into our hearts, reviving our spirits, giving assurance to our souls. Let fear subside! Replace our doubts with certainty in your love and healing mercies. As we have brought names before you this day, asking for your healing touch, be with us as we also receive that same healing love. Give us joy and courage for all the times ahead; for we offer this prayer in the name of Jesus Christ, our Risen Lord. AMEN.

LORD'S PRAYER

CLOSING HYMN: #506 Take My Life and Let it Be

1 Take my life and let it be
consecrated, all for thee;
take my moments and my days;
let them flow in ceaseless praise.

2 Take my hands, and let them move
at the impulse of thy love,
take my feet, and let them be
swift and purposeful for thee.

3 Take my lips, and let them be
filled with messages from thee;
take my intellect, and use
every power as thou shalt choose.

4 Take my will, and make it thine;
it shall be no longer mine;
take my heart, it is thine own;
it shall be thy royal throne.

5 Take my love: and I will pour
at thy feet its treasure store;
take myself, and I will be
ever, only, all for thee.

SENDING FORTH

May you trust in God's promises to his people:
Peace, security, blessing, even when they are difficult to believe.
May you know that God's news is good news,
Nourishing, true, even when people tell you it is not.
And when you encounter doubt, may you strengthen your belief
guiding you in his perfect wisdom and counsel.

CHORAL AMEN

POSTLUDE

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Announcements

Friday, April 30th: Spaghetti Supper at
Hagersville United Church from 4-6pm. Takeout
only! Curbside pickup & in-town deliver available!
Tickets are \$10/person. Meal includes spaghetti
with homemade meat sauce, bun, salad & dessert.
To reserve your ticket, please call 905-768-3729.

****Please note that during the next 4 weeks we will
not be hosting coffee time at either church. We
look forward to resuming when we are able to!**