

**HAGERSVILLE UNITED CHURCH &
SPRINGVALE UNITED CHURCH
SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 21st, 2021**

Ministry of Caring: The Whole People of God Ministry of Pastoral
Care & Worship: Pastor Peggy Bartlett Cell: 905-317-5275
Email: info@hsupc.ca Website: www.hsupc.ca Church:
Hagersville- 905-768-5863 Springvale- 905-768-1501

.....
REGIONAL COUNCIL PRAYER CYCLE

Mount Pleasant

First Sunday of Lent

CALL TO WORSHIP

L: There are some journeys for which we long.

P: But the journey to the cross looks as though it will be difficult.

L: The way of discipleship and faith is difficult.

P: We would prefer something easier. We are not ready for this trip.

L: Put your hearts at ease. You are not traveling alone.

P: Perhaps we can accomplish this trip. At least we will try the first step.

OPENING HYMN: #415 God We Praise You for the Morning

1. God, we praise you for the morning;
hope springs forth with each new day,
new beginning, prayer and promise,
joy in work and in play.

2. God, we praise you for creation,
mountains, seas and prairie land.
Waking souls find joy and healing
in your bountiful hand.

3. God, we praise you for compassion,
all the loving that you show;
human touching, tears and laughter,
help your children to grow.

4. God, we praise you for your Spirit,
Comforter and daily friend;
restless searcher, gentle teacher,
strength and courage you send.

5. God, we praise you for the Saviour,
come that we may know your ways.
In his loving, dying, rising,
Christ is Lord of our days.

6. Hallelujah, hallelujah,
Hallelujah, hallelujah!
Hallelujah, hallelujah!
Christ is Lord of our days!

OPENING PRAYER

The season of Lent is here again and, as with so many times before, we find that we are not really ready for this journey of discipleship. So many things claim our lives and prevent us from being ready to take the steps in faith. As we look at our barrier of readiness, help us to remember that Christ is with us, every step of the way. We are not alone. Christ will help lift our hearts and spirits and direct our paths. Enable us, loving Saviour, to take this journey of faith to new life with you. AMEN.

CHILDREN'S TIME: Noah and the Ark

CHILDREN'S SONG

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

God, we come with hesitant steps and uncertain motives to sweep out the corners where sin has accumulated, and uncover the ways we have strayed from Your truth. Expose the empty and barren places where we don't allow you to enter. Reveal our half-hearted struggles where we have been indifferent to the suffering of others. Nurture the faint stirrings of new life, where your spirit has begun to grow. Let your

healing light transform us into the image of Your Son. For You alone can bring new life and make us whole. Amen

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Mark 1:9-15

New International Version

The Baptism and Testing of Jesus

⁹ At that time Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. ¹⁰ Just as Jesus was coming up out of the water, he saw heaven being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. ¹¹ And a voice came from heaven: “You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased.”

¹² At once the Spirit sent him out into the wilderness, ¹³ and he was in the wilderness forty days, being tempted^[a] by Satan. He was with the wild animals, and angels attended him.

Jesus Announces the Good News

¹⁴ After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. ¹⁵ “The time has come,” he said. “The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!”

Genesis 9:8-17

New International Version

⁸ Then God said to Noah and to his sons with him: ⁹ “I now establish my covenant with you and with your descendants after you ¹⁰ and with every living creature that was with you—the birds, the livestock and all the wild animals, all those that came out of the ark with you—every living creature on earth. ¹¹ I establish my covenant with you: Never again will all life be destroyed by the waters of a flood; never again will there be a flood to destroy the earth.”

¹² And God said, “This is the sign of the covenant I am making between me and you and every living creature with you, a covenant for all generations to come: ¹³ I have set my rainbow in the clouds, and it will be the sign of the covenant between me and the earth. ¹⁴ Whenever I bring clouds over the earth and the rainbow appears in the clouds, ¹⁵ I will remember my covenant between me and you and all living creatures of every kind. Never again will the waters become a flood to destroy all life. ¹⁶ Whenever the rainbow appears in the clouds, I will see it and

remember the everlasting covenant between God and all living creatures of every kind on the earth.”

¹⁷ So God said to Noah, “This is the sign of the covenant I have established between me and all life on the earth.”

MESSAGE: The Covenant with Noah

“Never again will the waters become a flood to destroy all life. Whenever the rainbow appears in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and all living creatures of every kind on the earth.”

Genesis 9:15-16

There is always something exciting about seeing a rainbow. Sometimes stretched across the whole sky, something beautiful, something mysterious, sometimes brief and fleeting. They don't last long ... they live in the space between the storm and the sun. What is called liminal space Meaning- relating to, or being an intermediate state, phase, condition or in-between, transitional ... in the liminal state between life and death. Standing between the sacred and secular, the mundane and exciting and the local and global. The state of in-between.

Lent brings us to our own liminal space – a space without definition, where the spiritual and practical meet. A space of invitation and slowness. A space where we can reflect on what has been and might be. Noah and his family were in a liminal space in the Ark. They did not know how long they would spend afloat on floodwaters or what they would find when the water receded. While the instructions for building the Ark had a lot of details, weathering the storm and the rebuilding afterward didn't come with a handbook.

In many ways, the past year feels like its own floating ark. We have gathered the goods we need to survive, limited our circles and activities. We have shared extra work and the endless shifts. We have done our best to keep residents and patients comfortable in nursing homes and hospitals, looking out through the portholes of our screens. In these months, we have caught glimpses of how Noah's family must have felt:

cooped up, tired of having no place to go, utterly exhausted by the demands of everyday life on a floating zoo.

In the end, God gives Noah a rainbow as a promise that the world would never be destroyed again. While rebuilding after devastation is hard and does not come without loss ... so too, a rainbow does not exist without rain. Illness and injuries of the body, mind and soul, leave us with scars. The process of healing is rarely a short or a straight path. Even with treatment plans that account for every possible unexpected outcome, how healing actually unfolds will never be fully known. Indeed, sometimes it doesn't unfold at all. We are limited in the promises that we can make.

The deepened prayer of Lent allows us to bring our fears and challenges to God, who cherishes our most guarded questions and worries. Frustrated and tired, we have so many of them. How long will I work from home? How soon can we get another nurse on this floor? How can I keep the residents' spirits up? Will we ever be able to worship the same again? Will I survive this? Will people take the vaccine? Why is God letting this happen? We do not know the answers to most of our questions. However, we do have God's promise to be with us and the knowledge that God's promises are not ours.

God makes a covenant with Noah, but also with his descendants. God does not promise there will never be another storm. God does not promise that storms will come without cost. Rather, God promises that all will not be lost; there will always be life after the storm.

The existence of a rainbow ... born out of sun and storm, that has unique beauty. It looks different each time, and it is only visible from that liminal place between sun and storm. I always marvel at rainbows and even though I know rationally it's just a refraction of light through

micro water droplets, the fact that a full spectrum of color appears gives me a more spiritual experience, an inward sense of God's presence. Remember, no matter how hard we may try to chase them, rainbows are elusive. Rather, they come to us when and where we are perhaps least prepared for them. And so it is with God... God is always there... the

in-between times in our life situations ... God comes to us when we least expect God too. Amen

HYMN: Softly and Tenderly Jesus is Calling

1 Softly and tenderly Jesus is calling,
calling for you and for me;
see, on the portals he's waiting and watching,
watching for you and for me.

Refrain:

**Come home, come home;
you who are weary come home;
earnestly, tenderly, Jesus is calling,
calling, O sinner, come home!**

2 Why should we tarry when Jesus is pleading,
pleading for you and for me?
Why should we linger and heed not his mercies,
mercies for you and for me? [Refrain]

3 Time is now fleeting, the moments are passing,
passing from you and from me;
shadows are gathering, deathbeds are coming,
coming for you and for me. [Refrain]

4 O for the wonderful love he has promised,
promised for you and for me!
Though we have sinned, he has mercy and pardon,
pardon for you and for me. [Refrain]

PASTORAL PRAYER

Loving, Creating God, you are in covenant with your people. You have pledged to be our God and ask us to be your people, trusting in you in all our ways. But we find many excuses to prevent us from really trusting you. We erect barriers before our faith journey even begins. Our time, obligations, energy, all become part of the bricks and mortar which fashion this barrier. We can daydream about what it would be like to truly place our hands in yours and follow you. But when it comes to

actually making the journey, our time constraints and weak commitments loom largely before us. Help us to tear down this barrier. Make us ready for the journey by replacing the fear in our hearts with a sense of joy and challenge of self-discovery and discipleship. Remind us that in service to you, helping others, we will also find our selves made more fully whole. As we have spoken the names of our friends, and family members, and others situations in which healing and comfort are needed, let us remember that we, too, stand in need of prayer and healing. Make us ready to receive your good news and then to be witnesses to your love to all your people. AMEN.

LORD'S PRAYER

CLOSING HYMN: #652 Be Still, My Soul

1 Be still, my soul, for God is on your side;
bear patiently the cross of grief or pain.
Trust in your God, your Saviour and your guide,
who through all changes faithful will remain.
Be still, my soul, your best, your heavenly friend
through stormy ways leads to a peaceful end.

2 Be still, my soul, for God will undertake
to guide the future surely as the past.
Your hope, your confidence let nothing shake,
all now mysterious shall be bright at last.
Be still, my soul, life's tempests still obey
the voice that once the waves' wild fury strayed.

3 Be still, my soul, the hour is hastening on
when we shall be for ever in God's peace;
when disappointment, grief, and fear are gone,
love's joys restored, our strivings shall cease.
Be still, my soul: when change and tears are past,
all safe and blessed we shall meet at last.

SENDING FORTH

The first step on the journey, that of readiness, is one of the hardest. We keep thinking that we have forgotten something. God has called you by name, to this journey. You will have all that you need. Go in peace, and know that God is going with you. AMEN.

CHORAL AMEN

.....