

**HAGERSVILLE UNITED CHURCH &
SPRINGVALE UNITED CHURCH
SUNDAY, MARCH 14th, 2021**

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REGIONAL COUNCIL PRAYER CYCLE

Trinity Oakville

Lent 4

We can never do anything to deserve Jesus' immeasurable sacrifice for us. In humble gratitude, we can only accept God's grace and follow Jesus' instructions in the gospel to attain the salvation that symbolizes how God so loved the world.

CALL TO WORSHIP

For God so loved (*Springvale United Church / Hagersville United Church*)

that God gave his only child, Jesus Christ,
so that any human being,
of any background,
who believes in the mission,
work, and atonement in Christ
will not suffer punishment,
but instead have the gift
of eternal joy and life.

OPENING HYMN: #299 Teach Me, God, to Wonder

1. Teach me, God, to wonder; teach me, God, to see;
let your world of beauty capture me.
Praise to you be given; love for you be lived,
life be celebrated; joy you give.

2. Let me, God, be open; let me loving be;
let your world of people speak to me.
Praise to you be given; love for you be lived,
life be celebrated; joy you give.

OPENING PRAYER

Lord, as we gather here, on this day of sharing, remind us that you have shared with us your most precious gift, our Lord Jesus Christ. Help us to model our lives after his messages of compassion and service to you and to all your world. In Christ's Name, we offer this prayer. AMEN.

ANTHEM

CHILDREN'S TIME

CHILDREN'S SONG

PRAYER OF AFFIRMATION

I believe in God the Creator, who made me and all things,
who set me on my path in this world. I believe in God the Savior,
who is one with the Creator, who rescued me and all creation
from the depredations of our violations against God and creation.
This man, Jesus of Nazareth, the Christ, walked a path through this
world, taking on human form having been born of a woman
through the power of the Holy Spirit. He lived and worked in this world
among people just like me. He walked God's path to death on a cross,
and rose from the dead to open our pathway to eternal life. I believe in
God the Holy Spirit, my counselor and guide, who is one with the
Creator and the Christ, who through the body and blood of Jesus
brings me into communion with all people, past, present and future;
who calls me to walk a sacred way of life through this world,
caring for creation and the people I meet on the way, loving them,
helping them, welcoming them without prejudice, being God's hands
and feet in the world.
Amen

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Numbers 21:4-9 NIV

The Bronze Snake

⁴They traveled from Mount Hor along the route to the Red Sea,^[a] to go
around Edom. But the people grew impatient on the way; ⁵they spoke
against God and against Moses, and said, "Why have you brought us up

out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? There is no bread! There is no water! And we detest this miserable food!”

⁶ Then the LORD sent venomous snakes among them; they bit the people and many Israelites died. ⁷ The people came to Moses and said, “We sinned when we spoke against the LORD and against you. Pray that the LORD will take the snakes away from us.” So Moses prayed for the people.

⁸ The LORD said to Moses, “Make a snake and put it up on a pole; anyone who is bitten can look at it and live.” ⁹ So Moses made a bronze snake and put it up on a pole. Then when anyone was bitten by a snake and looked at the bronze snake, they lived.

John 3:14-21 NIV

¹⁴ Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up,^[a] ¹⁵ that everyone who believes may have eternal life in him.”^[b]

¹⁶ For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁷ For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. ¹⁸ Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because they have not believed in the name of God’s one and only Son. ¹⁹ This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but people loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. ²⁰ Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that their deeds will be exposed. ²¹ But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what they have done has been done in the sight of God.

MESSAGE: The Light for Dark Corners

Light is wonderful creation of God. It is a very important for our happiness and our survival. It is with light that we are able to see the world around us. It is everywhere; it determines everything we see. Light is the conveyor of shape and colour; it is the swiftest carrier of energy in the universe. Nothing can move faster than the speed of light. And since the invention of the laser beam in the 1960s and it's ever-increasing application by doctors as they slice away cancers, dentists as they cut out decay, and the armed forces as they accurately target weapons, it may well be that nothing is more powerful than light.

And yet there are times when there is too much light. It exposes corners that had previously been hidden. You know, it’s a bit like those dark spots around our homes - behind a cupboard, under the fridge, under the bed, and its only when things are moved and you see those spots in the light of day that you see just how much dirt has accumulated in the dark. There are so many dark corners in our world also. There is the dark world of politics, the dark world of poverty, of environmental irresponsibility, the dark world of a lack of purpose and identity among so many of today's kids, and the dark world of war where people are harmed and killed. And it's so easy to pretend these dark corners don't exist, but they do and they push away the light of Christ in our world. In today's text we are told, “Light has come into the world, but people loved the darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil.” Jesus is the Light. He came into the world not to condemn but to bring life. It is only as those dark private corners of our lives are exposed, that we can be helped. It is in the light of God’s Word that we are faced with the reality that we have dark corners of sin in our lives that need tidying. We are suddenly shaken to the realization that we are sinners. Everything is not as neat and tidy as we thought. There is a mess that needs to be cleaned up, and even though we have tried to hide the mess in the darkest and most private corner of our lives, the light of Jesus has shown us that there is dirt piled up it needs cleaning out. Those things like our temptations and secret sins, those faults that we would prefer not to admit to, the poor way we have treated the people we love, and selfish attitude when it comes to our fellow brothers and sisters. The Light, Jesus, has come into the world not to bring condemnation, but to bring salvation, not to rub our noses in the dirt of those dark corners, but to sweep them out, to bring healing and reconciliation. This gift is freely yours. "Come," says the Light of the Word, "you are my daughter, you are my son. You are forgiven, you are accepted. Come and enjoy light and life. Bask in the beauty and warmth of the sun, the Son of God." "For God so loved the world" ... that means you. God loved you so much that he sent his only Son so that you may believe and have eternal life. God's love for us is free, and it certainly is freely given. But it cost God a great deal. It cost him the life of his Son. It meant raising up the Light of the world on a cross, for the world to see. Jesus spoke about this in the gospel reading. Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes in him

may have eternal life. Freely the light of his forgiveness shines into our lives brightening up every corner, forgiving every sin, restoring our relationship with God, renewing our lives. Whoever follows Jesus will not walk in darkness. They will experience the joy and peace of sins forgiven, of new attitudes for work, to school, to leisure, our world, our bodies, and of new relationships with family and friends. But you know what? Too often we prefer to keep some of the dirt in our lives in the dark. We pretend it's not there. We know it's there all right, but like the dirt under the fridge, we cover it up and pretend everything is all right. We think that what we can't see, won't hurt us. What is hidden in the dark won't matter. It matters to God. God knows about the dark corners in our lives. And he wants us to stop hiding our sin in the dark. He wants us to expose every dark corner to the Light of life. He is giving to us the Light that not only shows up the dirt in our lives but cleans it away. Jesus died so that we could be made new and clean. We are in the Lenten season, a time for reflecting on why our Lord had to go to such extremes to save us. And this is why? He wants to clean the dirt hidden away in every corner of our lives. And just one last point. Jesus shines his light into our lives, he fills us with his love and forgiveness. He fills us with the joy and knowledge of freedom from guilt for the things that upset us, comfort for our times of sadness, joy we experience between each other. The light that shines in our lives ought to bring blessing to others. We are to let this light of Christ shine through us so we can be the light in the darkness of the people around us. The light you give to that person can dispel the darkness from that person's life and bring to him/her a completely new outlook. Don't underestimate what the light of Christ can do through you. As Jesus said: You are the light of the world your light must shine before people so that they will see the good things you do and praise your Father in heaven. (Matthew 5:14,16) And Peter reflects the words of Jesus when he says, "God has called you out of darkness into his own marvellous light" (1Peter 2:9). Amen

HYMN: #585 Jesus Bids Us Shine

1 Jesus bids us shine with a clear, pure light,
like a little candle burning in the night. In this world of darkness,
so let us shine, you in your small corner, and I in mine.

2 Jesus bids us shine, first of all for him; well he sees and knows it if our light grows dim: Jesus walks beside us to help us shine, you in your small corner, and I in mine.

3 Jesus bids us shine, then, for all around, many kinds of darkness in this world are found: sin, and want and sorrow; so we must shine, you in your small corner, and I in mine.

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

The days are getting longer, Lord. The sun's rays are higher in the sky bringing more light to our world. Warmth begins to flood over the colder portions of our nation. Let the warmth of your mercy and love pour over us. As we have gathered this day to celebrate the good news that you have given to the world, remind us that it is our purpose to offer that good news to others, not only in words but in deeds of love and mercy, peace and justice. As we have offered names of people and situations which have been heavy on our hearts for your healing mercies, remind us also that we stand in need of that self same healing love. As we have prayed for ministries of peace and justice and for those engaged in those wondrous missions, remind us that we are also on a journey of peace and justice whenever we offer comfort and aid to others. Be with us during this Lenten season. Give us hearts of great joy and courage to serve you all our days. AMEN.

LORD'S PRAYER

CLOSING HYMN: #684 Make Me a Channel of Your Peace

Make me a channel of Your peace
Where there is hatred, let me bring Your love
Where there is injury, your healing power,
And where there's doubt, true faith in You

Make me a channel of Your peace
Where there's despair in life, let me bring hope
Where there is darkness, only light
And where there's sadness, ever joy

Make me a channel of Your peace
 It is pardoning that we are pardoned
 In giving to all that we receive
 And in dying that we're born to eternal life

SENDING FORTH

God's great love and rich mercy
 have made us alive in Christ.
 Let us depart to live lives of grace,
 and to do good works.

CHORAL AMEN

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Joke for the Day...

There are a whole series of answers to the question, "How many Christians does it take to change a light bulb?"

Roman Catholics: None. They use only candles.

Pentecostals: Ten. One to change the bulb, and nine to pray against the spirit of darkness.

Baptists: At least 15. One to change the light bulb, and three committees to approve the change.

Lutherans: None. Lutherans don't believe in change.

United: Two. One to call the electrician, and one to talk about how much better the old one was.