

**HAGERSVILLE UNITED CHURCH &
SPRINGVALE UNITED CHURCH
SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 6th, 2020**

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REGIONAL COUNCIL PRAYER CYCLE

Ker-Tapleystown

*We're glad you came to join with us
In our worship time today,
We hope that you have felt God's love
In a new, refreshing way
For you're so welcomed in this place*

CALL TO WORSHIP

L: Welcome to this community of faith.

P: We come seeking hope and courage for the future.

L: Here you will find peace, hope, love and joy.

P: We come weighed down by difficulties, struggles and what is going on in our world and in our lives.

L: Here you will find Jesus who will take your burdens on himself.

P: Lord, we come to you this day in need of your love, your care and compassion for all.

OPENING HYMN: #574 Come, Let Us sing of a Wonderful Love

1 Come, let us sing of a wonderful love,
tender and true, tender and true,
out of the heart of the Father above,
streaming to me and to you:
wonderful love, wonderful love
dwells in the heart of the Father above.

2 Jesus the Saviour this gospel to tell
joyfully came, joyfully came,
came with the helpless and hopeless to dwell,
sharing their sorrow and shame,

seeking the lost, seeking the lost,
saving, redeeming at measureless cost.

3 Jesus is seeking the wanderers yet;
why do they roam? why do they roam?
Love only waits to forgive and forget;
home, weary wanderers, home!
Wonderful love, wonderful love
dwells in the heart of the Father above.

4 Come to my heart, O thou wonderful love!
Come and abide, come and abide,
lifting my life till it rises above
envy and falsehood and pride:
seeking to be, seeking to be
lowly and humble, a learner of thee.

OPENING PRAYER

Gracious God, we come this day seeking courage and hope for the future. Our world is in such peril. Heal these wounds and quiet the words of war. Help us to be those who bring peace in our families and communities. Banish the darkness of doubt and fear; anoint us with your light and love that we may spread the good news of your mercy to everyone. As come together in worship today. In Jesus' name we pray. AMEN.

CHILDREN'S TIME

CHILDREN'S SONG: Jesus is My Best Friend

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Merciful Lord, we like to think that we do everything well. We pat ourselves on the back when we act with love and mercy toward others, complimenting ourselves in self-righteousness. But you know us better. You know our faults and our failings. You know when we falsely proclaim that we are truly living as you would have us live. Teach us again about your forgiving and healing love. Show us ways of merciful

living that we may extend the love and mercy you have given us to others. Forgive us, we pray. For we ask these things in Jesus' Name. AMEN.

SCRIPTURE READINGS: Psalm 149 – a paraphrase

Reader: When you are feeling so joyful that you think you will burst....

People: Sing to the Lord a new song!

Reader: When words do not seem to be enough in praise to our Lord.....

People: Let us praise God with joyful dance, lovely and lively instrumental music, with the rhythm of the drum!

Reader: God watches over us, guards and guides us!

People: Therefore we will celebrate the good news of God's love in our community of faith, in our towns and cities, in our nation.

Reader: When praises to God rise heavenward in many languages.....

People: Let us thank God who blesses us with such a rich diversity of friends!

Reader: In all ways, and in all our days, Let us praise God!

People: Praise the Lord!

Matthew 18:15-20

15 "If another member of the church sins against you, go and point out the fault when the two of you are alone. If the member listens to you, you have regained that one. 16 But if you are not listened to, take one or two others along with you, so that every word may be confirmed by the evidence of two or three witnesses. 17 If the member refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if the offender refuses to listen even to the church, let such a one be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector. 18 Truly I tell you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. 19 Again, truly I tell you, if two of you agree on earth about anything you ask, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. 20 For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them."

MESSAGE

This is a very hard passage to really understand what Jesus is telling us to do. So here I go....

Her name was Mary. She was very involved in her local church. She was on the finances committee. The outreach to the elderly. The worship team. She helped out with the children. She lead a bible study group. And on this particular morning, she found herself awake very early. A few hours before the council meeting for that night. So she thought she had better put the time to good use. So she baked three trays of cinnamon buns, that everyone loved. She arrived at the meeting with these cinnamon buns still hot. She placed two trays on the counter, returned to her car to fetch the third tray, and as she was placing the third tray on the counter, Rebecca was on the other side of the counter arranging cookies, that she had just bought from the store. And Rebecca said to Mary, "So do you have to take over wherever you go?" Well that was enough to silence Mary. She just left her cinnamon buns on the counter and turned away. And she was silent for the rest of the evening. When Sunday service came and when Rebecca arrived, she made sure to see where Mary was sitting, because they used to sit quite close to each other. And she decided to sit in a new seat, so that when the pastor asked them to stand up and greet one another, they would not be near enough to have to greet each other.

That Wednesday evening, it was Bible study and someone commented out loud how lovely Mary's cinnamon buns were at the Council meeting. And as they mentioned that, Mary began to cry and then she explained to the Bible study group what Rebecca had said to her, and now the whole church knew.

Eventually, the church secretary started making sure that Rebecca and Mary were never paired together for any church activities or events. And sometimes, one of them was invited to something and the other wasn't. Or whenever the church gathered around tables, people made sure to strategically place themselves between Mary and Rebecca.

Time passed. Until a new pastor arrived at the church. And Mary, out of kindness, welcomed the new pastor with a tray of cinnamon buns. Which the pastor loved! The pastor was going to be meeting with the Council on Thursday night for the first time and he thought it would be a wonderful idea if Mary could make some of those cinnamon buns. So, he asked Mary and she said, "Yes, how many trays would you like?" And the pastor said, "I think three will do." And something happened to Mary's face at the mention of three trays. The pastor said, "Oh, I'm sorry, is that too much?" And Mary said, "No. I just haven't baked three

trays for a long time.” And then she told the pastor the story. After she told him and see that she was still emotional, the pastor asked her, “When did this happen?” And Mary said, “In October, it will be eight years.” The Pastor just stood there.

Have you ever seen conflict like this in the church? We all know stories like this, don’t we? At some point, I imagine we’ve all heard or been part of a story just like this. Anyone who thinks the church is filled with perfect people is fooling themselves. In fact, sometimes the church can be the place where we feel hurt and judged the most.

It is a sad reality, but the church is filled with conflict. And sometimes it is even the birthplace of conflict. So, how do you respond when conflict arises? Do you fight or do you flight? Do you run towards the conflict to fight and win or do you run from away from it?

I think most of us have a tendency to run away from conflict. Because we don’t want to hurt the person’s feelings. But then as we saw with Mary, ironically, we have no trouble hurting their feelings behind their back. Or else we run from conflict because we think that conflict means fighting. It feels like you are at war with someone.

Today in our gospel reading from Matthew, Jesus is giving us conflict resolution counseling. He is teaching us about how to manage conflict. Which is good news, because it tells us that conflict in the church is nothing new. But rather it has been around a long time; it is part of being human.

So, let’s look at what Jesus has to say. Jesus says first, “If another member of the church sins against you, go and point out the fault when the two of you are alone.”

Now, I don’t think this is Jesus’ most eloquent moment. I don’t think any of us would be too successful if we just go up pointing out people’s faults to them. Hey, I see you have some faults there. Would you like me to point them out to you?

But rather, I think the emphasis of Jesus statement should be – go and point out the fault when the two of you are alone. Go to them face-to-face. Speaking directly to them. Because it is so easy to speak around them. Which is called triangulation. Triangulation is when you speak to another person about someone else, with whom you really should be

speaking. In our story earlier, Mary didn’t speak to Rebecca about what Rebecca did, Mary spoke to others about what Rebecca did.

It is the same way with rumors, isn’t it? Instead of going to the person who the rumor is about to see if it is true, we go and tell others and wonder together if it is true. A friend of mine was a pastor, was only three weeks at his new church. Early one morning his wife had to leave for a long drive to go visit her family. But a woman who lived across the street from the parsonage saw her pack up and leave very early in the morning, and suddenly, the rumor was going around town that the pastor’s wife didn’t like it there and she’s leaving him. And no one came to ask them if it was true or not.

So friends, let me know just say this...if you have a conflict with someone, please go and speak with them directly. Don’t whisper and spread it around because it will only lead to deeper hurt. Or if someone is talking to you about someone else, please stop them and say, “It sounds like you should be talking with them about it.” Otherwise it will only get worse.

According to Jesus, the only goal is listening. That we might hear each other. So, what if that doesn’t work? What if they don’t listen? Jesus says to take a couple of people with you and to try again. Which I imagine wouldn’t be all that comfortable for the other person. Suddenly, here is this gang of people coming to your door. But the point isn’t to bully or to gang up on, but rather to help each other listen. To account for the words spoken. Now, if that doesn’t work, Jesus says to tell the church. Which is even more awful to think about. Could you imagine having your dirty laundry aired out in the sermon on Sunday? Okay, everyone, it is time we talk about so-and-so and all the sinning he is doing. But I cannot imagine that is what Jesus meant to shame that person. I think that Jesus meant that the whole church can be supportive and help resolve the conflict.

And if that doesn’t work, Jesus says to treat them like the Gentiles and the tax collectors, who were the hate groups back them. And some of us might get excited at this point, because now we can finally kick this person out of the church. Now we can hate them. We’ve done everything we were supposed to do, but now I can really just get rid of this person. And that’s how people often hear this passage – as permission now to exclude. But we can’t forget that Jesus ate with

gentiles and tax collectors. Perhaps what Jesus is saying is that if none of this works, take them out to dinner. Spend more time with them. Spend more time with them until you can understand one another and listen.

So that is how I see Jesus' conflict resolution strategy: go and speak with them one on one, then bring others to help, then tell the church, then spend more time with them. And while at times it might sound utterly ridiculous to our ears and we can't imagine ever doing this in the church, there is one thing about this strategy that stands out to me....it is that Jesus' strategy never gives up on the person. It never quits trying to resolve the conflict. Jesus doesn't say give it one chance then give up on the person. But rather Jesus says to keep after the person. Keep trying to preserve and reconcile the relationship.

You see that is what relationships are all about – Loving, caring, understanding and loving one another as Jesus loves us. Why? Not because it is just good advice. Because God lives in our relationships. Jesus says, “Where two or three are gathered, there I am.” God dwells in this community. Amen

HYMN: #635 All the Way My Saviour Leads Me

- 1 All the way my Saviour leads me;
what have I to ask beside?
Can I doubt his tender mercy
who through life has been my guide?
Heavenly peace, divinest comfort,
here by faith in him to dwell,
for I know, whate'er befall me,
Jesus doeth all things well.
- 2 All the way my Saviour leads me,
cheers each winding path I tread,
gives me grace for every trial,
feeds me with the living bread.
Though my weary steps may falter,

and my soul athirst may be,
gushing from the rock before me,
lo, a spring of joy I see!

- 3 All the way my Saviour leads me;
O the fullness of his love!
Perfect rest to me is promised
in my Father's house above.
When my spirit, clothed, immortal,
wings its flight to realms of day,
this my song through endless ages,
'Jesus led me all the way!'

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

Lord of light, in the midst of darkness and fear, you call us to be a community of peace, love and hope. You remind us of the blessings we have and the opportunities to share those blessings with others. We praise and thank you for all these things and for your constant presence with us. Today, as a community seeking peace and healing, we offer the names of loved ones who are struggling with illness, with loss, with feelings of alienation, depression, loneliness and fear. As we have lift up our concerns, we also offer messages of love and rejoicing. Let us offer prayers of Thanksgiving and Joy in this community of faith. Lord, we thank you for your healing mercies and your sustaining love for us. We are confident in your abiding presence with us. Help us to be faithful to you in all times and in all places. Give us the grace to accept the forgiveness you have offered to each of us. For it is in Jesus' name that we offer this prayer.

LORD'S PRAYER

CLOSING HYMN: #605 Jesus, Teacher, Brave and Bold

- 1 Jesus, teacher, brave and bold,
let us serve you, young and old.
Let us faith-filled workers be,
all around, your wisdom see.
Let us play and dance and sing,
your goodness find in everything.

2 Jesus, friend, so strong and true,
show us good, brave work to do.
Show us those who need a friend,
all things broken help us mend.
Free our minds and stretch our care,
teach us to serve you everywhere.

SENDING FORTH

You are prepared to walk away from the darkness into the light. Go into this world confident in Christ's love and God's eternal presence with you. Go to be a witness for good and a bearer of peace to all you meet. Go in peace!

CHORAL AMEN

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