

**HAGERSVILLE UNITED CHURCH &
SPINGVALE UNITED CHURCH
SUNDAY, APRIL 12th, 2020**

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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

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REGIONAL COUNCIL PRAYER CYCLE

Central United Church: Port Colborne

“He is not dead! He Lives!”

WORDS OF CELEBRATION

The darkness is gone! Bright light floods into this new day of hope.
Those who went to the tomb received good news.
Christ was not there! Christ is risen in our hearts and our spirits!
Christ is risen from the dead! Alleluia! Amen!

CALL TO WORSHIP

L: Come quickly to the tomb to see the place where He was laid.

P: Look! The stone is rolled away! He is not here!

“Jesus Christ Is Risen Today” verse 1
1. Jesus Christ is ris'n today, Alleluia!
our triumphant holy day, Alleluia!
who did once upon the cross Alleluia!
suffer to redeem our loss. Alleluia!

L: Just as He said, He would conquer death.

P: We can see for ourselves this awesome sight.

2. Hymns of praise then let us sing Alleluia!
unto Christ our heav'nly King, Alleluia!
who endured the cross and grave, Alleluia!
sinner to redeem and save. Alleluia!

L: Christ is Risen! Alleluia!

P: Christ is Risen indeed! Alleluia!

3. But the pains which he endured, Alleluia!
our salvation have procured; Alleluia!
now above the sky he's King, Alleluia!
where the angels ever sing. Alleluia!

4. Sing we to our God above Alleluia!
praise eternal as his love; Alleluia!
praise him, all ye heav'nly host, Alleluia!
Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Alleluia!

OPENING PRAYER

Loving, Powerful God, joy floods over our souls on this day! Christ is risen! Fear is vanquished! Open our hearts and our spirits to receive fully the joy which has been given for us! Let us celebrate the victory of Christ and the hope for the future! Amen.

CHILDREN'S TIME, CHILDREN'S PRAYER AND LORD'S PRAYER

CHILDREN'S HYMN: 1..2..3...Jesus is Alive !!

A LITANY FOR EASTER

Leader: Blest are you, Lord Jesus who came to us a little child one of us, flesh and blood to share in our humanity

People: Blest are you, Lord Jesus who came to us as carpenter and yet in whose creative hands a world was fashioned

Leader: Blest are you, Lord Jesus who came to us as fisherman and yet pointed to a harvest that was yet to come

People: Blest are you, Lord Jesus who came to us as teacher and opened eyes to truths that only the poor could understand

Leader: Blest are you, Lord Jesus who came to us as healer and opened hearts to the reality of wholeness

People: Blest are you, Lord Jesus who came to us as prophet, priest and king and yet humbled himself to take our place upon the cross

Leader: Blest are you, Lord Jesus who came to us as servant and revealed to us the extent of his Father's love for human kind

People: Blest are you, Lord Jesus, who rose from the ignominy of a sinner's death to the triumph of a Saviour's resurrection

Leader: God so loved the world that he gave his only Son for the sake of me and you and others too. God so loved the world, that we all might have eternal life. What an Easter Gift!

CHORUS: #20 BECAUSE HE LIVES

Because he lives

I can face tomorrow

Because he lives

All fear is gone

Because I know he holds the future

And life is worth the living

Just because he lives

SCRIPTURE READINGS JOHN 20: 1-18

John 20:1-18 New International Version (NIV)

The Empty Tomb

20 Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the entrance. 2 So she came running to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one Jesus loved, and said, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don't know where they have put him!"

3 So Peter and the other disciple started for the tomb. 4 Both were running, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. 5 He bent over and looked in at the strips of linen lying there but did not go in. 6 Then Simon Peter came along behind him and went straight into the tomb. He saw the strips of linen lying there, 7 as well as the cloth that had been wrapped around Jesus' head. The cloth was still lying in its place, separate from the linen. 8 Finally the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went inside. He saw and believed. 9 (They

still did not understand from Scripture that Jesus had to rise from the dead.) 10 Then the disciples went back to where they were staying.

Jesus Appears to Mary Magdalene

11 Now Mary stood outside the tomb crying. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb 12 and saw two angels in white, seated where Jesus' body had been, one at the head and the other at the foot.

13 They asked her, "Woman, why are you crying?"

"They have taken my Lord away," she said, "and I don't know where they have put him." 14 At this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not realize that it was Jesus.

15 He asked her, "Woman, why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for?"

Thinking he was the gardener, she said, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will get him."

16 Jesus said to her, "Mary."

She turned toward him and cried out in Aramaic, "Rabboni!" (which means "Teacher").

17 Jesus said, "Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father. Go instead to my brothers and tell them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'"

18 Mary Magdalene went to the disciples with the news: "I have seen the Lord!" And she told them that he had said these things to her.

MESSAGE

Love and Blessings to All...

Easter is marked by church gatherings, family gathering, food and celebrations. Let us make this Easter profoundly memorable by celebrating the "empty tomb," by letting our sacred gathering places that remain empty as testimony that lives in the reflection of the Risen Christ. The empty tomb, after all, marked the beginning of the Resurrection.

This Easter will be so very different this year. Our social and religious norm is to mark this celebration with weekend's festivities filled with people gathering, sunrise services, Easter Breakfasts, and sanctuaries filled with families on Resurrection Sunday. But this year, there is nothing socially or religiously normal about the Easter season; we are in

a global crisis. This year we are separated, socially distanced. Not by choice, but for the sake of saving lives. Therefore, pastors and worship leaders everywhere are pushed to reimagine how we mark this Easter season, with congregants in their homes. How do we celebrate the resurrection of Jesus Christ?

So today, we celebrate the empty tomb. When churches across the country will be empty, we mark the Easter season by remembering the powerful message of the empty tomb. The empty tomb represents life; it is the message that our risen Savior defeated the worse death imaginable, and gives us hope and the promise of resurrection. It is the salvation message that speaks life in our Christian faith. In the same manner, may our empty churches speak to our care for life as an exercise of faith ... that we care for one another.

It is important to re-imagine this Easter season in light of the empty tomb in order to help us imagine our efforts to stay at home, and socially distance ourselves during the COVID-19 pandemic as an act of faith. Our caring for our lives and the lives of others is an act of holy justice. Our churches are empty in this season so we might live! This is the reality in our Easter season, and a reality in our lives in this unparalleled time. Yes, Easter will be different, but there is nothing about this time in the history of our lives that is the same. We are in unique and unfamiliar times in humanity, and our faith practices must reflect these times. Jesus knows what that's like and even more. On the cross he suffered the agony of complete separation from God (descending into hell) so that we wouldn't have to and his body was placed in a tomb till he rose to life again on the third day. Jesus' work of salvation for us would not have been complete if he did not suffer the full punishment of "unspeakable anguish, pain, and terror of soul" on the cross to pay the price for all our sins. Finally, I want to suggest that we rest in the resurrection; in the power of the empty tomb.

Let there be an experience of peace in knowing that God is still in control. Our journey into new life in Christ may take us through times of darkness. Yet, as hard as those times may be, we can be assured that death, loneliness, and despair do not have the final victory; Jesus conquered them. As you walk through valleys of shadow in your life,

lean on Jesus, the Savior, the who knows you and is walking with you into new life. Through our virtual connection, as you read this message, find moments of being still and resting in the hope of God's power, knowing that even in this season, life will prevail; resurrection means life ... the empty tomb means life, and our empty churches are a sign of life-care and preservation.

Yes, Eastertide is a public celebration, one that we will celebrate physically apart, but spiritually connected. Blessings to each of you as we reflect on the importance of the empty tomb and not our empty sanctuaries, and may we move forward from the empty tomb, from the power of the resurrection of our Lord to understanding that God is still very, very much alive in this world. "He Got the Whole World in His Hands."

HYMN: #173 THINE IS THE GLORY

1 Thine be the glory, risen, conqu'ring Son;
endless is the vict'ry thou o'er death hast won;
angels in bright raiment rolled the stone away,
kept the folded grave-clothes where thy body lay.

Refrain:

Thine be the glory, risen, conqu'ring Son;
endless is the vict'ry thou o'er death hast won.

PRAYERS FOR THE PEOPLE

Lord, listen to your children praying. Lord, send your Spirit in this place. Lord, listen to your children praying. Send us love, send us power, send us grace." (VU# 400).

Lord of life. We pray for all who bring your word of life.

As a light to those in darkness. For those who bring your word of peace
To those enslaved by fear. For those who bring your word of love
To those in need of comfort. Lord of love and Lord of peace. Lord of resurrection life. Be known through our lives and through your power.
God of Awesome Joy, be with us this day as we celebrate the resurrection of your Son, our Savior Jesus Christ. Let the light of your love flood into our lives. Remind us again of the ministry and mission of Christ, who came that we might have life. May we open our hearts and offer prayers for all our front line workers, Anson place, our families

and friends, for all situations near and far. Remind us that Darkness does not win. Death is not victorious. Christ is Risen, for us, for you and for me. We are raised with Christ to a new life of hope and service. Let the joy of this good news swirl around in our hearts. Let excitement for service and ministry burst forth from us. Let us truly be the “Easter People” that you have called us to be. For we ask these things in the name of the Risen Lord, Jesus Christ.... Who taught us to pray saying....our Father who art in heaven

CLOSING HYMN: #586 WE SHALL GO OUT WITH HOPE OF RESURRECTION

1. We shall go out with hope of resurrection;
we shall go out, from strength to strength go on;
we shall go out and tell our stories boldly;
tales of a love that will not let us go.
We'll sing our songs of wrongs that can be righted;
we'll dream our dream of hurts that can be healed;
we'll weave a cloth of all the world united
within the vision of new life who sets us free.

2. We'll give a voice to those who have not spoken;
we'll find the words for those whose lips are sealed;
we'll make the tunes for those who sing no longer,
expressive love alive in every heart.
We'll share our joy with those who are still weeping,
raise hymns of strength for hearts that break in grief,
we'll leap and dance the resurrection story
including all in circles of our love.

BENEDICTION

Dance, celebrate, sing, and shout for joy! Christ is Risen and He goes before us, into this world of fear and pain. He has called us to bring the Good News of healing and hope, of redemption. Go in peace, and feel the presence of the Risen Lord with you, now and forever.

CHORAL AMEN