

HAGERSVILLE UNITED CHURCH &  
SPINGVALE UNITED CHURCH  
SUNDAY, APRIL 19<sup>th</sup>, 2020

Ministry of Caring: The Whole People of God  
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**REGIONAL COUNCIL PRAYER CYCLE**

Silver Spire Pastoral Charge (St. Catharines)

*We live in the midst of trials and suffering, doubt and fear. Jesus' resurrection invites us to a resilient, specially blessed faith that does not end with doubt or fear or suffering. Instead, our God proclaims that we may rejoice even now in this "living hope" that Jesus Christ is among us in this time of uncertainty.*

**CALL TO WORSHIP**

L: The joy of the resurrection of our Savior Jesus Christ is with us.

**P: We rejoice in the blessing God has poured into our lives.**

L: Even though we hear words of doubt, we are called to believe.

**P: Even though the world would draw us back again into darkness, we focus on the Light.**

L: Thanks be to Christ who gives us the victory

**P: Alleluia! Amen.**

**OPENING HYMN: #412 This is the Day**

1. This is the day, this is the day  
that the Lord has made,  
that the Lord has made.

We will rejoice, we will rejoice  
and be glad in it, and be glad in it.

This is the day that the Lord has made;  
we will rejoice and be glad in it.

This is the day, this is the day  
that the Lord has made.

**OPENING PRAYER**

Stand among us once again, risen Christ, and bless us with your greeting: "Peace be with you." Stand among us once again, Exalted Brother, and breathe upon us your promised Spirit. Stand among us once again, You Who Have Escaped Death, and give us new birth into your living hope. Amen.

**CHILDREN'S TIME AND SONG** (If you are able view on the website)

**PRAYER OF BROKENNESS**

Holy One, we confess that it has been too much. There is too much loss, too much fear, too much grief, too much despair. There's only so much we can handle and it is overwhelming us. Help us, O God, to let go of the fear that holds us in its grip and instead cling to hope. Help us, O God, to acknowledge our doubts, and yet to trust in You, to know that You are with us, and we are not alone. Help us, O God, to have faith that this too shall come to pass. Guide us in this time of uncertainty to focus on You, our Rock and our Redeemer. In the name of Christ we pray. Amen.

**SCRIPTURE READINGS:** 1 Peter 1:3-9; John 20:19-31

**1 Peter 1:3-9 New International Version (NIV)**

Praise to God for a Living Hope

<sup>3</sup>Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, <sup>4</sup>and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. This inheritance is kept in heaven for you, <sup>5</sup>who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time. <sup>6</sup>In all this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. <sup>7</sup>These have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed. <sup>8</sup>Though you have not seen him, you love him;

and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, <sup>9</sup> for you are receiving the end result of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

### **John 20:19-31 New International Version (NIV)**

#### **Jesus Appears to His Disciples**

<sup>19</sup> On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jewish leaders, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you!” <sup>20</sup> After he said this, he showed them his hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord.

<sup>21</sup> Again Jesus said, “Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.” <sup>22</sup> And with that he breathed on them and said, “Receive the Holy Spirit. <sup>23</sup> If you forgive anyone’s sins, their sins are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven.”

#### **Jesus Appears to Thomas**

<sup>24</sup> Now Thomas (also known as Didymus<sup>[a]</sup>), one of the Twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came. <sup>25</sup> So the other disciples told him, “We have seen the Lord!”

But he said to them, “Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe.”

<sup>26</sup> A week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you!” <sup>27</sup> Then he said to Thomas, “Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe.”

<sup>28</sup> Thomas said to him, “My Lord and my God!”

<sup>29</sup> Then Jesus told him, “Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.”

#### **The Purpose of John’s Gospel**

<sup>30</sup> Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. <sup>31</sup> But these are written that you may believe<sup>[b]</sup> that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

### **MESSAGE - A LIVING HOPE**

Do you have hope? What motivates you to continue? Or are you ready to give up and lose faith? Would you cease to believe in God? How do you cope in this time of uncertainty and social distancing? What keeps people going? What is the source of our hope?

When Peter wrote this letter, about AD 64, persecutions were still taking place among the young Christian churches. They had been alienated from society because of their faith. Peter was reminding them of the grace of God and that they must remain true to their calling. Life is a difficult pilgrimage, one that demands insight and endurance. There is a heavenly reward for remaining faithful to the end.

When we talk of a “Living Hope”, we are not only in the future we are also talking about the present. “The Living Hope of Salvation” that has already begun.

Peter promised the early Christians a “living hope.” Incidentally, the word “salvation” is rooted in the Latin word SALUS. It has nothing to do with life after death. It means health or wholeness. It is also very close to the Hebrew word SHALOM, which means peace.

The hope that Peter advocated has to do with a wholeness or peace that is possible today. For Peter, hope is an active and living reality. He goes on to say that this living hope is one that can never perish, spoil or fade. The living hope that Peter talked about is a hope that never wears out. It will be there longer than any antique. The hope of God is a hope that never dies or fades. It is infinite, permanent.

The early church was in danger of giving up their faith because of the persecutions they endured. No other hope could keep the faithful from giving up. Peter assures his followers that God is with them in the present moment. They were to live with a hope that never perishes, spoils or fades. With hope like that they could withstand any sufferings, hardships or crises that came their way.

In Life ... when all seems hopeless we have three choices.

The first is to abandon hope. Well that is easy... just have a negative attitude. Comments like these... “Well things are only going to get worse”. “I will never see my grandkids again”. “Life is not worth living anymore.” Abandoning something is not facing the problem head on. The second choice we have is to pretend. We could pretend that this crisis doesn’t really exist. We could stick our heads in the sand and continue to live as though there is no crisis in world. Pretending is

nothing more than a defense mechanism. It is a way to ignore what is taking place around us.

We can either abandon hope or pretend. But ... Both lead to hopelessness.

There is a third choice. We can BELIEVE, just as Peter did, that there is indeed a living hope.

Biblical hope means that we expect things like glory and grace with confidence because the Lord has promised them to us. In Psalm 42 when it says "hope in God," that means to have confidence in God.

But, to simply "hope" is not enough. There must be some form of action.

As a supervising minister I was attending a Board meeting. The church treasurer said that offerings were a little low that winter and unless stewardship improved they would not be able to pay all the bills. One man said that all they needed to do was pray and God would deliver. There was a few moments of silence. Finally, one of the oldest men in the church spoke up. He said, "In all my years in the church I have never once seen God hand down a check from the clouds."

Hope is being made possible because we are all this together, we are praying, loving, supporting one another. Hope is possible for those who have it and have taken action.

None of us has to carry any burden alone. God is always intervening on our behalf to make our hope real. It is a lasting hope, one that will be there to the end of time. For the hope that God gives will never perish, spoil or fade. It there ... sometimes we just have to dig a little deeper to find it in times like this. Amen

*"Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead."*

**HYMN:** #365 Jesus Loves Me

Jesus loves me!

This I know,

For the Bible tells me so.

Little ones to Him belong;

They are weak but He is strong.

Jesus loves me!

Loves me still,

Tho I'm very weak and ill,

That I might from sin be free,

Bled and died upon the tree.

Jesus loves me!

He who died

Heaven's gate to open wide;

He will wash away my sin,

Let His little child come in.

Jesus loves me!

He will stay

Close beside me all the way.

Thou hast bled and died for me;

I will henceforth live for Thee.

Chorus

Yes, Jesus loves me!

Yes, Jesus loves me!

Yes, Jesus loves me!

The Bible tells me so.

—Anna B. Warner, 1820 -1915

### **PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE**

Surprising God, we come to Easter through the long Lenten journey in which you have called us to examine our inner lives. Then on Easter, as different as it was this year, you were freed from darkness and invited us to walk in the Light with you. However, Easter and its celebration so quickly slide into the past and we again are tempted to move back into our doubts and fears. Surprise us again, Lord, as Jesus surprised his disciple Thomas who feared and doubted. Remind us that the signs of Jesus' resurrection are all around us.

As we remember this day our dear friends who suffer from illness and loss, Lord, help us to uplift prayers of comfort for them; for those who are lost and alone, alienated from family and friends. For Those who

are grieving and feel so alone in this time of uncertainty and for all our front-line workers. Lord, we ask that you give to the leader’s compassion and wisdom. And we pray for ourselves, we ask for the extra measure of faith so that as doubts arise, we may meet them with confidence, and emerge as strong witnesses to your love. In Christ’s name, we offer this prayer. AMEN.

**LORD’S PRAYER**

**HYMN: #187 The Spring Has Come**

1 The spring has come  
let all the Church be part of it!  
The world has changed,  
and God is at the heart of it!  
New light, new day,  
new colour after winter grey.  
New light, new day,  
the spring has come,  
let all the Church be part of it!

2 The sun is warm,  
let all God's children play in it!  
The world expands,  
let's spread the Gospel way in it!  
New leaf, new thrust,  
new greening for the love of Christ.  
New leaf, new thrust,  
the sun is warm,  
let all God's children play in it!

3 The spring has come,  
new people are the flowers of it.  
Through wind and rain,  
new life is in the showers of it.  
New bud, new shoot,  
new hope will bear the Spirit's fruit.  
New bud, new shoot,  
the spring has come,  
new people are the flowers of it.

**SENDING FORTH**

In great mercy, God has given us a new birth  
into a living hope,  
for it is the risen Christ  
who stands in our midst and says,  
"Peace be with you!"  
We go forth to walk the path of new life  
and living hope.  
May God's blessing continue in and through you to others  
May God's love also pour into your heart this day and always. Amen

**CHORAL AMEN**

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