

**HAGERSVILLE UNITED CHURCH &
SPINGVALE UNITED CHURCH
SUNDAY, APRIL 26th, 2020**

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REGIONAL COUNCIL PRAYER CYCLE

Caistorville

Giving God the glory in the midst of trial can be so difficult. But even when we don't see it, God is working on our behalf. We've seen how healthcare workers have bravely stepped into danger to be the hands and feet of Jesus, and how countless acts of kindness have kept our communities strong.

The hymn "To God Be The Glory" is a hymn of encouragement. May you look for the little ways God is working to bring light, hope, and joy in your life and in lives others in the midst of everything that is happening around us.

God Bless, Peggy

CALL TO WORSHIP

L: Sometimes good things are right in front of us and we don't see them.

P: Our fears and our prejudices blind us.

L: Open your eyes this day to see the goodness of the Lord.

P: Open our hearts, gracious God, to receive your blessings.

L: Hallelujah!

P: Hallelujah!

***OPENING HYMN: #581 "When We are Living"**

1 When we are living, it is in Christ Jesus,
and when we're dying, it is in the Lord.
Both in our living and in our dying,
we belong to God, we belong to God.

2

2 Through all our living, we our fruits must give.
Good works of service are for offering.
When we are giving, or when receiving,
we belong to God, we belong to God.

3 'Mid times of sorrow and in times of pain,
when sensing beauty or in love's embrace,
whether we suffer, or sing rejoicing,
we belong to God, we belong to God.

4 Across this wide world, we shall always find
those who are crying with no peace of mind,
but when we help them, or when we feed them,
we belong to God, we belong to God.

OPENING PRAYER

Loving God, come and speak to our hearts today. May we, like those on the Emmaus Road, find your words burning with hope in our lives. Strengthen us and give us courage for the journey ahead. For we pray in Christ's Name. AMEN.

CHILDREN TIME AND SONG (IF YOU ARE ABLE TO VIEW ON THE WEB SITE)

REFLECTION OF THE BELIEVER AND THE QUESTIONER

Reader 1: What a great day this is!

Reader 2: You're happy! What's got you in such an "up" mood?

Reader 1: Well, I'm not sure. It's just that the news of the Resurrection still makes me so joyful. It's like we have hope. It's like we can all believe because Jesus said these things would happen and they did, and God raised him. You know, it's great news.

Reader 2: Sooner or later you will come back down to earth. Things will get real again, quick enough.

Reader 1: What makes you so sure that what I'm feeling isn't lasting or real?

Reader 2: Nobody can be that happy all the time. It just isn't humanly possible.

Reader 1: No problem. It doesn't have to be humanly possibly; it's Godly possible.

Reader 2: Cute. Life isn't a bed of roses, you know. There's lots of tough stuff out there right now that we have to deal with. Everyday people are hurting, dying, getting sick and don't know which way their lives are going. Uncertainty... uncertainty.

Reader 1: Of course, life isn't a bed of roses. I know that. But I know that no matter what is thrown at me, I will get through it because my Savior got through the worst that can happen. Things will hurt and people will get sick, people do die, life isn't easy. But instead of just hanging my head and moaning about the problems, maybe now I can be someone who helps with the solution. I'm not alone; it doesn't all depend on me we need to come together, so we all can do our part.

Reader 2: I wish I had faith like that.

Reader 1: You can have that faith. Let your heart open up and see Jesus with you. Listen again to the words of the people on the Emmaus road, and know that he is with you, walking with you on your journey. You don't have to go it alone. No matter what happens, he will be with you.

CHORUS OF RESPONSE: Open the Eyes of My Heart by Michael W. Smith

Open the eyes of my heart, Lord
 Open the eyes of my heart
 I want to see You
 I want to see You
 To see You high and lifted up
 Shinin' in the light of Your glory
 Pour out Your power and love
 As we sing holy, holy, holy

Open the eyes of my heart, Lord
 Open the eyes of my heart
 I want to see You
 I want to see You

To see You high and lifted up
 Shinin' in the light of Your glory

Pour out Your power and love
 As we sing holy, holy, holy

SCRIPTURE READING: In Luke's Gospel, we find the risen Jesus unfolding scripture to two disciples as they journey to the village of Emmaus. Only when "their eyes were opened" did they truly understand who he was and what he had said

Luke 24:13-35 New International Version (NIV)

On the Road to Emmaus

¹³ Now that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles ^afrom Jerusalem. ¹⁴ They were talking with each other about everything that had happened. ¹⁵ As they talked and discussed these things with each other, Jesus himself came up and walked along with them; ¹⁶ but they were kept from recognizing him. ¹⁷ He asked them, "What are you discussing together as you walk along?"

They stood still, their faces downcast. ¹⁸ One of them, named Cleopas, asked him, "Are you the only one visiting Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?"

¹⁹ "What things?" he asked.

"About Jesus of Nazareth," they replied. "He was a prophet, powerful in word and deed before God and all the people. ²⁰ The chief priests and our rulers handed him over to be sentenced to death, and they crucified him; ²¹ but we had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel. And what is more, it is the third day since all this took place. ²² In addition, some of our women amazed us. They went to the tomb early this morning ²³ but didn't find his body. They came and told us that they had seen a vision of angels, who said he was alive. ²⁴ Then some of our companions went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but they did not see Jesus."

²⁵ He said to them, "How foolish you are, and how slow to believe all that the prophets have spoken! ²⁶ Did not the Messiah have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?" ²⁷ And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.

²⁸ As they approached the village to which they were going, Jesus continued on as if he were going farther. ²⁹ But they urged him strongly,

“Stay with us, for it is nearly evening; the day is almost over.” So he went in to stay with them.

³⁰ When he was at the table with them, he took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them. ³¹ Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him, and he disappeared from their sight. ³² They asked each other, “Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?”

³³ They got up and returned at once to Jerusalem. There they found the Eleven and those with them, assembled together ³⁴ and saying, “It is true! The Lord has risen and has appeared to Simon.” ³⁵ Then the two told what had happened on the way, and how Jesus was recognized by them when he broke the bread.

MESSAGE

(Luke 24:13-35).

The Emmaus road experience is a well-known story... This is such a gripping story because it is in many ways our own story... when we lost hope and the desire to move on because our dreams have been crushed. This story highlights the living hope that we have in the Resurrection of Jesus.

Paul wrote to his friends at Corinth,

"If we have hope in Christ in this life only, we are the most miserable of all men. But now Christ is risen from the dead" (1 Cor 15:19,20).

But on that first Easter day that living hope was all but snuffed out for the two disciples on their way back home to Emmaus.

Have you ever noticed that some of the saddest words in our language begin with the letter D? For example, disappointment, doubt, disillusionment, defeat, despair and death. All of these are summed up in the words of Cleopas and his companion to the unrecognized stranger on the Emmaus road.

They had left the disheartened and confused group of disciples with the events of Good Friday fresh in their memories.

We can understand their confusion, can't we? The Master they had loved and followed had been horribly put to death on a Roman cross. Death by crucifixion was the most shameful of deaths; the victim was made a public spectacle, exposed to the taunts of all that passed by.

The followers of Jesus were without a leader and they were falling apart quickly...

These two were already on their way home. What else was there left to do?

Life goes on... Life must go on...

The reports that Christ's tomb was empty had only confused the disciples more.

Their entire world had come apart. The two downhearted disciples summed up the situation when they said, "we had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel."

Human hope is a fragile thing, and when it withers it's difficult to recover.

So here we have 2 disciples to followers of Jesus not of the 12 but those who heard his words, those who had witnessed his death. Think about it ... think about how they must have felt. The world did not change like they were promised ... they felt trapped in their own misery thinking ... they had hoped it would be better, they had hoped that things would change ... now there's nothing left to do, filled with this disappointment they are on the Emmaus Road going back to where they had come from and then suddenly a stranger walk beside them.

It was going to be one of the most wonderful walks in history!

We know, of course, that it was the risen Jesus, but somehow, they didn't recognize him.

In fact, Luke tells us "they were kept from recognizing him." Maybe they were too preoccupied to look him in the eye.

Maybe they didn't care ... What difference did it make who was walking with them. They were grieving a great loss in their lives!

And along comes along this chatty stranger, who seems not to have a clue about the things that happened in Jerusalem.... or so it seems.

The stranger asked them, "What's going on, fellows?"

And he listened as they poured out their hearts.

he walks with them...

and he listens...

and then he fills their hearts with the promises from God's Word, and ultimately with hope and understanding.

Jesus enters their pain, and allows them to share their story of disappointment. And as they tell the stranger what they thought the

man of Galilee was all about Jesus unpacks for them the full mystery of God's plan of salvation.

He fills their broken hearts with a lesson in faith and hope.

Starting right with the story of the fall of man, and how God deals with our human failure... Jesus told them about God's plan of salvation ...

And then he said "Did not the Christ have to suffer these things ..."

"suffering" that's the one thing they hadn't factored in...

And they listened. Their two-hour journey from Jerusalem to Emmaus must have seemed like just a few minutes.

They were so wrapped up in this conversation with the Lord whom they had not yet recognized.

Luke informs us that, "As they approached the village to which they were going, Jesus acted as if he was going further."

And they invited him to come in, because the evening had fallen, and it was dangerous to travel alone after dark.

They didn't have to ask him in; he was ready to move on.

But no... their hearts had been strangely warmed during the course of the conversation.

So, they set the table for three... There was bread on the table and the stranger took the bread and gave thanks...

And in the act of breaking bread they recognized him for who he was. In an instant they knew him. And in an instant, he's gone. I can imagine Cleopas and his friend standing in amazement, asking each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?"

They suddenly realized that it was Jesus... Christ is risen from the dead! And the two disciples lost no time in retracing their steps to Jerusalem to share the Good News. A simple two-hour walk turned into a life-transforming experience.

Now their hearts were burning with passion to share with everyone what they had seen and experienced.

I am almost certain that the two-hour journey back to Jerusalem took the disciples a mere 45 minutes.

They were on a Mission! Their hearts were burning! They had some Good News to share! They couldn't keep it to themselves...

Their broken hearts had been transformed into hearts that were on fire for their Lord!

You see, Hope has that powerful effect on us.

It transforms ordinary people, like the Emmaus Disciples...

like you and me... into passionate witnesses of the risen Lord!

As we journey along in this life and as we experience loneliness, isolation, distancing, defeat, despair and disappointment in our daily life let us welcome the stranger that joins us on our journey.

May our hearts also be warmed by His company and may our lives be ignited with passion to share with all who we meet that we know the risen Lord!

Let us Pray ...

HYMN: #371 "Open My Eyes, that I May See"

- 1 Open my eyes, that I may see
 glimpses of truth thou hast for me;
 place in my hands the wonderful key
 that shall unclasp and set me free.
 Silently now I wait for thee,
 ready, my God, thy will to see.
 Open my eyes, illumine me, Spirit divine!
- 2 Open my ears, that I may hear
 voices of truth thou sendest clear;
 and while the wavenotes fall on my ear,
 everything false will disappear.
 Silently now I wait for thee,
 ready, my God, thy will to see.
 Open my ears, illumine me, Spirit divine!
- 3 Open my mouth, and let me bear
 gladly the warm truth everywhere;
 open my heart and let me prepare
 love with thy children thus to share.
 Silently now I wait for thee,
 ready, my God, thy will to see.
 Open my heart, illumine me, Spirit divine!

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

Dear Lord, you have so much to show us and to tell us—
things that no human eyes have seen,
things that no human ears have heard,

things that you have prepared for those you love.
 Mighty God, your promises are like shelter in a storm—
 to us and to our children,
 to all those far and near,
 to everyone who hears your call.
 O, that we might have the mind of Christ,
 that we may know and understand your truth.
 We wait as empty vessels,
 ready to be filled to overflowing with your living water,
 as you reveal your love for us through Jesus Christ,
 in whose name we pray. Amen.

LORD'S PRAYER

CLOSING HYMN: #182 "Stay with Us Through the Night"

- 1 Stay with us through the night.
 Stay with us through the pain.
 Stay with us, blessed stranger
 till the morning breaks again.
- 2 Stay with us through the night.
 Stay with us through the grief.
 Stay with us, blessed stranger
 till the morning brings relief.
- 3 Stay with us through the night.
 Stay with us through the dread.
 Stay with us, blessed stranger
 till the morning breaks new bread.

SENDING FORTH

Christ has brought us together:
 together in faith, together in hope, together in love.
 We have gathered together to be sent out again:
 sent out with the welcome message of God's love!
 We go forth together,
 to be living testimonies of Christ's love!
 Amen & Amen

CHORAL AMEN