

**HAGERSVILLE UNITED CHURCH &
SPRINGVALE UNITED CHURCH
SUNDAY, MAY 24th, 2020**

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

Westminster St. Catharines

*“My prayer for all of them is that they will be one....
Then the world will know that you sent me
and will understand that you love them
as much as you love me.” John 17:21, 23*

CALL TO WORSHIP: APART BUT TOGETHER

Spirit of life and love, we gather together in different ways this morning, from computer screens, as we read our bulletins, we gather, reaching out across the wires by phone or text, waving from a safe distance, to come together in religious community.

From living room to front porch to car seat, we gather as we are able, ready to be of service to each other, to the world, ready to build the community of hope and of love, as we face this bright morning.

We are apart, but we are together, offering our love, our commitment, our hope, and our prayers, in service to one another and this world. It is a new way, but an old way, that we come together in worship today.

OPENING HYMN: “We Are One in the Spirit”

We are one in the Spirit, We are one in the Lord,
We are one in the Spirit, We are one in the Lord,
And we pray that all unity may one day be restored:

*And they'll know we are Christians by our love, by our love.
Yes, they'll know we are Christians by our love.*

We will walk with each other, We will walk hand in hand,
We will walk with each other, We will walk hand in hand,
And together we'll spread the news That God is in our land.

*And they'll know we are Christians by our love, by our love.
Yes, they'll know we are Christians by our love.*

We will work with each other, We will work side by side,
We will work with each other, We will work side by side,
And we'll guard each one's dignity And save each one's pride:

*And they'll know we are Christians by our love, by our love.
Yes, they'll know we are Christians by our love.*

All praise to the Father, from who all things come,
And all praise to Christ Jesus, His only Son,
And all praise to the Spirit Who makes us one:

*And they'll know we are Christians by our love, by our love.
Yes, they'll know we are Christians by our love.*

OPENING PRAYER

Almighty God, by your Holy Spirit you have made us one with your saints in heaven and on earth:

Help us to see your presence burning in the hearts of others; grant that we may be united in a fellowship of love and prayer; give us the courage to pick up our cross and respond to the needs of the world, give us the stamina to follow you, to be your hands and heart in the world; enable us to witness to your grace and mercy.

We pray all this through the love your son, Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

CHILDREN'S TIME AND SONG

OUR PRAYER OF CONFESSION

We come, O Lord, on this day of glory to confess that we do not always see you in our world. While we see your handwork in the past days over all creation, we have too often acted as though you are powerless in the face of today's events. Help us to live with confidence in your presence today and in hope for life with you forever. Amen.

SCRIPTURES

John 17:1-11 New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

Jesus Prays for His Disciples

17 After Jesus had spoken these words, he looked up to heaven and said, "Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son so that the Son may glorify you, ² since you have given him authority over all people, ^[a] to give eternal life to all whom you have given him. ³ And this is eternal life, that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent. ⁴ I glorified you on earth by finishing the work that you gave me to do. ⁵ So now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had in your presence before the world existed.

⁶ "I have made your name known to those whom you gave me from the world. They were yours, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word. ⁷ Now they know that everything you have given me is from you; ⁸ for the words that you gave to me I have given to them, and they have received them and know in truth that I came from you; and they have believed that you sent me. ⁹ I am asking on their behalf; I am not asking on behalf of the world, but on behalf of those whom you gave me, because they are yours. ¹⁰ All mine are yours, and yours are mine; and I have been glorified in them. ¹¹ And now I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them in your name that you have given me, so that they may be one, as we are one.

Acts 1: 6-11

The Ascension of Jesus

⁶ So when they had come together, they asked him, "Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" ⁷ He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has fixed by his own authority. ⁸ But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea

and Samar'ia and to the end of the earth." ⁹ And when he had said this, as they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight. ¹⁰ And while they were gazing into heaven as he went, behold, two men stood by them in white robes, ¹¹ and said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven."

MESSAGE

Do you ever get lost in a daydream? Maybe you are sitting somewhere, at the doctor's office or maybe just sitting at home and you start to drift off to somewhere else. I confess that I find myself daydreaming a lot lately. I will sit there and think about things I have to do later, places I would much rather be, and I even dream about events in the past. Why do we daydream? Daydreaming assists us in making moral decisions. It also gives us an outlet to plan as well as problem-solving in a safe space. Or when we don't want to be where we are and so we dream about being somewhere else, someplace better.

The disciples in our story from Acts this morning weren't exactly daydreaming. They had witnessed with their own eyes Jesus ascending to the clouds. They were witnesses to his resurrection and now were witnesses to his ascension. Jesus disappeared into the clouds, back to the presence of God and the disciples stared at the sky. Jesus told them that he would be coming back, did the disciples really think it would be so soon. Jesus would pop back out as soon as he left. The disciples did not want to leave that moment and so they stood there staring at the sky.

For the disciples, this chapter of their lives was now over. For the last three years the disciples followed Jesus and engaged in ministry with Jesus. They left their families, houses, and jobs to follow Jesus and now that journey was over, but a new journey was about to begin.

Then two angels appeared in the sky where they were looking. "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking up toward heaven? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven." In other words the angels were saying okay we understand you want Jesus to return but Jesus wants you to carry on "You've got work to do and there is no time like the present to get started." Jesus completed his work on earth, at least for the time being and now it was the disciples' turn to proclaim the good news to the poor.

Jesus will return in the same way that you saw him leave, but until then you've got work to do. Let's just step back to the disciples staring up to heaven... pausing at this moment in time.

Why did the disciples want to linger in that moment? Why did they want to stay there and daydream? We can ask ourselves that question.

One reason is that they wanted things to return to the way they were before. They thought that when they saw that Jesus had been resurrected they would go back to what they were doing before, preaching the gospel and helping those in need. That was comfortable, that was familiar, and that was easy. It was what they were use to. The disciples were afraid of what was going to happen...things were going to change. We know all about that don't we? In life we struggle with change... sometimes we feel that it is easier if things stay the same. Because it is familiar, it is comfortable, and it is easy. But change has come to us in last months that we didn't expect. Our churches closed. And questions were coming at us in all directions. How can we be the church if we do not have Sunday morning worship, not shaking hands, not hugging, not eating together, how do we support our community, our needy, our homeless.....the list goes on...what do we do now!

Do you see similarly to the disciples who have just lost their leader, Jesus who has just descended into heaven... were uncertain of what was going to come.

All of this sudden change has made me do a lot of discerning about where God is leading me as your minister. Where God is leading you the members of his church in ministry and how do we hold on to our faith? And now I am going to answer my own question....by what we are doing now... caring for each other, sharing the online worship services and bulletins with others, being Christ like in our everyday lives. All of a sudden, it's no longer the Sunday morning worship (even though at this point in time they are truly missed) that gives shape to worship, but the relationships we have from our churches and the relationships we are forming in a virtual way. Those relationships include both person-to-person and person-to-divine relationships. In Romans 8:28 it states...And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.

So in this time of doubt remember that God makes all things new, not all things like they were before. God is always looking forward into the

present and the future, into what is now and what will be in the future. I truly believe we will be living in this world differently from this moment on. However, there is good news. The future that God has in store for us will be different but still amazing. Christ will return to us in the same way that he ascended to the Father and that is with power, grace, and glory.

But...We cannot spend our lives as Christians with our heads in the clouds, daydreaming about the past. We have to be proactive. We have to pull together. We have to keep going. Being disciples of Jesus in a troubled and uncertain world. We may never achieve 100 % unity, but if we work toward it, we will be going in the right direction. If we stand together, we can withstand all the elements the world throws at us, so we can continue being disciples, followers and leaders in Christ's name.

HYMN: Come, Christians, Join to Sing (Traditional Version)

1 Come, Christians, join to sing,
Alleluia! Amen!
Loud praise to Christ our King;
Alleluia! Amen!
Let all, with heart and voice,
Before His throne rejoice;
Praise is His gracious choice:
Alleluia! Amen!

2 Come, lift your hearts on high;
Alleluia! Amen!
Let praises fill the sky;
Alleluia! Amen!
He is our Guide and Friend;
To us He'll condescend;
His love shall never end:
Alleluia! Amen!

3 Praise yet our Christ again;
Alleluia! Amen!
Life shall not end the strain;
Alleluia! Amen!

On heaven’s blissful shore
His goodness we’ll adore,
Singing forevermore,
Alleluia! Amen!

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

Creator God, thank you for being with us through another week. You have been leading your people through trial and difficulty and have always set before them hope for today and hope for a better tomorrow. We pray that you would bless us in our time as we seek to be as faithful and look to the future ahead of us. May we too know the faith which is filled with hope in things not seen.

- Give to us a faith like the grain of mustard seed which had small beginnings but which yielded large results.
- Give to us the faith to move the mountains of difficulty which come to each of us.
- Give to us the faith that sees a distant goal and is willing to work to achieve it.
- Give to us a faith which has a vision of a new world where peace and love characterize the transactions of people and of nations and where war is no more.
- Give to us a faith such as Abraham’s to move forward not knowing our destination but trusting in your guiding providence.
- Give to us a faith which is able to endure those moments of personal disquiet and to trust that you are with us.
- Give to us a faith which sees the welfare of humankind as our business because it is the focus of your enduring love for your people.
- Give to us a faith which sees beyond these years on earth to heaven above.

God, give us faith to walk with you through the ebb and flow of life. Be with us in this time of uncertainty, maintaining our faith in you that through all the victories and the defeats of life we stand strong in our faith to you. We ask this in Jesus’ name. Amen.

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 dreams of hurts that can be healed;
we'll weave a cloth of all the world united
within the vision of new life in Christ.
- 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 still are 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.

SENDING FORTH

As people of faith we have gathered for worship.

As people of faith we now return to the world.

Go out to share the story of faith,
the story of life, with the world around you.

**We share the faith in word and in deed,
in speech and in action.**

As you go out to give a living witness,
as you go out to testify to God's love active in the world,
go knowing that God goes with you,
sharing the laughter and the hope, the fears and the tears.

Thanks be to God! Amen.

CHORAL AMEN

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You may be tired;
you may be frustrated;
you may be stressed, or anxious, challenged,
isolated, or confined;
you may be feeling small or forgotten, sad, sore,
or numb;
you may be one of these things, or some of them,
all of them or none...
but, hear this—
in the midst of all of that, you are most definitely
one thing more.

You are loved.

You are loved by a Love that is forever,
a Love that will never let you go,
a Love that loves regardless of "worth,"
regardless of "name," or "face," or "standing."
Oh, friend...
no matter what, remember—you are loved.

