

**HAGERSVILLE UNITED CHURCH &
SPRINGVALE UNITED CHURCH
SUNDAY, MARCH 21st, 2021**

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

South West Norfolk

LENT 5

Discipleship requires a willingness to give totally of one's self to the Lord. Holding nothing back, our deeds of mercy, justice, peace and the light that shines through us will bear a great witness to all, long after we have moved on in our journey.

Offering Prayer

God, receive these gifts gratefully,
and we dedicate them to the work of our congregation:
welcoming the stranger and upholding religious freedom;
honoring human wholeness and caring for our planet.
Together, we seek to serve with our giving and our receiving.
Amen

CALL TO WORSHIP

L: This is the fifth step on our Lenten journey, the step of sacrifice.

P: Be with us, Lord, as we take this step.

L: This requires the willingness to give all of your life to the Lord.

P: Be with us, Lord, as we commit our lives to you.

L: Come, let us worship and offer our voices of praise to God.

P: Let us open our hearts and spirits to God this day.

OPENING HYMN: #374 Come and Find the Quiet Centre
1 Come and find the quiet center In the crowded life we lead,
Find the room for hope to enter, Find the frame where we are freed:
Clear the chaos and the clutter, Clear our eyes, that we can see
All the things that really matter, Be at peace, and simply be.

2 Silence is a friend who claims us, Cools the heat and slows the pace,
God it is who speaks and names us, Knows our being, touches base,
Making space within our thinking, Lifting shades to show the sun,
Raising courage when we're shrinking, Finding scope for faith begun.

3 In the Spirit let us travel, Open to each other's pain,
Let our loves and fears unravel, Celebrate the space we gain:
There's a place for deepest dreaming, There's a time for heart to care,
In the Spirit's lively scheming There is always room to spare!

OPENING PRAYER

Lord, be with us this day as we commit ourselves to being your
disciples. Help us to face the future unafraid, trusting in your loving care
and presence with us. We pray this in Jesus' name. AMEN.

ANTHEM

CHILDREN'S TIME

CHILDREN'S SONG

LITANY OF ASSURANCE FOR THE JOURNEY

People: I'm not sure about this journey. When it started out, it seemed
all right to me. I thought I could follow Jesus along the path. Sure, there
were some snags and trouble spots, but nothing I couldn't handle. Now
Jesus wants me to be willing to give my whole life, my whole entire life.
I'm scared. I don't know if I can let go of everything, just to follow
Jesus. I don't know if I can continue on the journey. I need some
assurances that everything will be OK.....that I will be OK.

Leader: Listen, Jesus says right from the beginning that we need to place
our trust in him. We have seen so much on this journey.....healing,
forgiveness.....people having a glimmer of hope where only
hopelessness prevailed. I suggest that we continue to place our trust in
him and fix our eyes on him. We'll be OK....because we'll be walking
and working with Jesus.

People: I know you are right, but I had to admit to my fear. I would love to pretend that following Jesus was just an easy task; but actually it's a huge commitment. Jesus wants us to pay attention to the people who are in need. He wants us to serve and works with them to help create a better life for them. I guess I need to stop worrying and just trust in Jesus.

Leader: We all need to place our trust in Jesus. In these times when the future seems so clouded, Jesus reminds us that the greater good is in working together to help each other; offering our gifts and our service, not for a grand reward; but because we can do this to help. The gifts we have given will go on long after we have been here.

People: Well, I think am ready to get back on the path again. Thanks for the "listening ear".

Leader: Your welcome, no path in life is easy. Remember, your guide is Jesus and your faith will lead you forward.

SCRIPTURE READING

John 12:20-40

Some Greeks Wish to See Jesus

²⁰ Now among those who went up to worship at the festival were some Greeks. ²¹ They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and said to him, "Sir, we wish to see Jesus." ²² Philip went and told Andrew; then Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus. ²³ Jesus answered them, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. ²⁴ Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. ²⁵ Those who love their life lose it, and those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. ²⁶ Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there will my servant be also. Whoever serves me, the Father will honor.

Jesus Speaks about His Death

²⁷ "Now my soul is troubled. And what should I say—'Father, save me from this hour'? No, it is for this reason that I have come to this hour. ²⁸ Father, glorify your name." Then a voice came from heaven, "I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again." ²⁹ The crowd standing there heard it and said that it was thunder. Others said, "An angel has spoken

to him." ³⁰ Jesus answered, "This voice has come for your sake, not for mine. ³¹ Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be driven out. ³² And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people^[a] to myself." ³³ He said this to indicate the kind of death he was to die. ³⁴ The crowd answered him, "We have heard from the law that the Messiah^[b] remains forever. How can you say that the Son of Man must be lifted up? Who is this Son of Man?" ³⁵ Jesus said to them, "The light is with you for a little longer. Walk while you have the light, so that the darkness may not overtake you. If you walk in the darkness, you do not know where you are going. ³⁶ While you have the light, believe in the light, so that you may become children of light."

MESSAGE--Be the Light

At the beginning of our scripture reading for today, we hear about some Greek's, probably God-fearers, non-Jews who follow some Jewish teachings and regularly traveled to Jerusalem for religious festivals, they came to the disciple Philip and said, "Sir, we wish to see Jesus." I'm not sure what the Greeks were expecting when they went looking for Jesus. I have a feeling that they hoped to hear his wise and strange parables or receive healing. They just wanted to see Jesus. And who can blame them? Jesus has a pretty good track record up to this point. He has cleansed the temple, turned water into wine, healed a little boy, fed 5000, given sight to the blind, and raised Lazarus from the dead. I can understand why they wanted to see Jesus but I know the desire. I want to see Jesus. That's what many people looked came to see Jesus. Seeing Jesus makes it all real. After all, seeing, they say, is believing. We all have our reasons for wanting to see Jesus.

And when Jesus comes forward to the Greeks who want to see him he shares these words...

Unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. Those who love their life lose it, and those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there will my servant be also. And then he speaks of his death.

I'm not sure that the Greeks or the disciples were prepared for Jesus to speak of his death or of his troubled soul. I'm not sure that they expected to hear God's voice like thunder or to be told that they must hate their

life in this world in order to keep it eternally. I bet they didn't expect to hear that the Messiah would have to leave them and they probably didn't know what he meant when he said the Son of Man would be lifted up. While they were still trying to figure out just exactly what he meant, he said to them simply, "The light is with you for a little longer. Walk while you have the light, so that the darkness may not overtake you. If you walk in the darkness, you do not know where you are going. While you have the light, believe in the light, so that you may become children of light." We have all walked in the darkness. We may know that we can get by without the light. We can adapt to many kinds of situations, even the dark. In fact, sometimes, good things happen in the dark. After all, when we look at the creation stories at the beginning of the Bible, God shaped creation out of the dark.

And, plants, which need light to grow, begin their lives as seeds, buried in the dark, pushing roots ever deeper, to find the nutrients they need to survive.

But, even though we may be able to survive in the dark, though we may even need the dark at certain times in our lives, we know that something changes when we finally see the light. We know, even as we shield our eyes from the brightness, that the light and heat will do new things in our lives, maybe things we could not have imagined. The disciples certainly couldn't have imagined that they would have ended up following a Messiah like Jesus. I was once told that someone I could not be a minister. I was told that women could be teachers within Christian education, but certainly not preachers, and definitely not preside over communion.

Then many years ago I was asked to take a worship service, for me, it would be my first sermon. I would stand for the first time in a pulpit having prepared a sermon written by me and intended to be delivered to my home congregation on that Sunday. As the day approached, I felt my anxiety increase and suffered from a very nervous stomach. I wondered why I had agreed to preach in the first place. I also wondered if I really had anything worth saying, a question I thought the congregation just might be asking the same question. In my favor, I didn't come into without due preparation. I had researched and soul searched the text I had chosen. I had written and rewritten the sermon and had mounds of used paper to point to as evidence of those rewrites.

I had stood in front of the mirror and practiced the final draft until I was so sick of the words.

I was still nervous, but then I remembered the advice of my minister. She said, "When you stand in the pulpit, step back a bit, and allow the love and light of God to pour into pour into your words; and I did it. Even though I continued to struggle with the call to ministry for many months I allowed the light of Christ to shine on me and as the light shone, I allowed myself to be changed by it.

Remember, if you are willing to be changed by this light, you will become a child of the light. You will carry his light with you. You will become a mirror that reflects his love and compassion. You will become a light bulb that shines hope in hopeless places. You will be the bonfire that warms a cold heart. You will become an embodiment, an extension of the light that Jesus brought into this world. And, the darkness can't defeat that light, even though we walk through shadows sometimes.

I think a major way that Jesus' light continues to make it into this world is through the reflections of the people who follow him. My prayer today is that you will continue to ask to see Jesus, and that you remember that his light can shine through all you do. So, be the light. Carry his hope and love to the world.

HYMN: #87 I am the light of the World (Minus Vs. 1)

R: I am the light of the world! You people come and follow me!" If you follow and love you'll learn the mystery of what you were meant to do and be.

2. To find the lost and lonely one, to heal the broken soul with love, to feed the hungry children with warmth and good food, to feel the earth below, the sky above! **R**

3. To free the prisoner from all chains, to make the powerful care, to rebuild the nations with strength of good will, to see God's children everywhere! **R**

4. To bring hope to every task you do, to dance at a baby's new birth, to make music in an old person's heart, and sing to the colours of the earth!" **R**

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

You know us too well, Lord. You know that we would like the ways of discipleship to be easy; to have the paths laid out in a neat line with the future clearly visible at all times. But part of our journey is obscured by our own greed and fear. You do not block the way to hope and peace. Our own fears provide the barriers; and far too often those barriers take the forms of alienation and prejudice. Write your words on our hearts, Merciful God. Plant your transforming love in our spirits. Give us courage. As we have gathered this day to bring before you our concerns, our joys and our sorrows, give us hearts of peace and confidence in your all-sustaining presence. Help us to set our feet on this pathway toward the cross and beyond. AMEN.

LORD'S PRAYER

CLOSING HYMN: #120 O Jesus I Have Promised
 1 O Jesus, I have promised to serve you to the end;
 remain for ever near me, my Saviour and my friend:
 I shall not fear the journey if you are by my side,
 not wander from the pathway if you will be my guide.

2 O let me feel you near me: the world is ever near;
 I see the sights that dazzle, the tempting sounds I hear;
 my foes are ever near me, around me and within;
 but, Jesus, then draw nearer and shield my soul from sin.

3 O let me hear you speaking in accents clear and still,
 above the storms of passion, the murmurs of self-will;
 O speak to reassure me, to hasten or control;
 now speak, and make me listen, O guardian of my soul.

4 O Jesus, you have promised to all who follow you,
 that where you are in glory your servant shall be too.
 And, Jesus, I have promised to serve you to the end:
 O give me grace to follow, my Saviour and my friend.

SENDING FORTH

Fix your eyes on the Lord. Place your hand in His Hand, trusting in his guiding and comfort. Go into this world, that needs so much the words of healing love, and bring the good news of God's absolute love and presence to all people. Go in peace.

CHORAL AMEN

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Coming Events

Tuesday, March 23rd, 2021: Coffee Time at Springvale from 9:30am-11am.

Wednesday, March 24th, 2021: Coffee Time at Hagersville from 11am-12pm.

Friday, March 26th, 2021: Chili Supper at Hagersville United Church from 4:30-6:30pm. This year we will only be offering takeout! Cost is \$10/person and includes your choice of meat or vegetarian chili, garden salad and a roll. Please call Susan at 905-768-3729 to reserve tickets and pickup time.

Sunday, March 28th, 2021: Palm Sunday and Communion. Please bring with you a beverage (coffee, tea, juice, etc.) as well as bread for yourself.

Friday, April 2nd 2021: Good Friday Service at Hagersville United Church at 10:30 am.

Thursday, April 8th, 2021: Ham & Scalloped Potato Supper at Springvale United Church from 4-6pm. This year we will only be offering takeout! Cost is \$15/person and includes ham, scalloped potatoes, baked beans, coleslaw, applesauce & pie. Please call Shirley at 905-981-5455 to preorder your tickets by April 1st.

The Light That Shines in the Darkness

There's a light that shines in the darkness.
There's a destiny waiting at the end of the road.
There's meaning in the middle of this emptiness.
There's a reason you've been asked to carry this heavy
load.

Lessons are taught when we reach out
Farther than we thought we'd ever dare.
Faith abounds when we confront our deepest doubts,
Enduring more than we dreamed we could ever bear.
There's a dawn waiting at the edge of every midnight.
There's a seed planted with every fallen leaf.
With every wrong there's the chance to make a right.
With every hour of suffering there's an eternity of relief.
Our darkest moments give us the opportunity
For seasons of our greatest growth.
Everyday we work towards continuity
Of acceptance and persistent hope.
And there's a light that shines in the darkness.
There's a star that guides the way.
There's a gate that's open to forgiveness.
There's a shepherd who saves those who've gone astray.
-Poem Written by Justin Farley