



Lent 5 Yr A – 26th March 2023

Can these bones live?

Greeter: *Mehry*

Meditation Song: Garden (*Mikali Anagnostis*)
(Please remain seated)

We're making a garden;
We're working the ground.
In land that's bombed and torn,
Your love soaks through the soil;
new life can yet be born.

All welcome to the building;
All invited to the fruit.
On earth God's planned a garden;
Every hand that's gripped a sword,
can make a plough-share too.

Come join the work;
God's bringing life;
God's bringing life.

Hands in the dirt;
enemies are one body now.

Come sing new words;
God's bringing life;
God's bringing life.
Lay down your swords;
the wars you've learned are over now.
God's turned our weapons into ploughs.

Our hands won't be idle;
Our hearts won't grow cold.
In the barren ground before us,
we can see a garden, we can see a home.

Though drought is round us.
Though fires will come,
We've tasted the harvest,
Our God has drawn us close,
Your love has made us one.

Come join the work;
God's bringing life;
God's bringing life.
Hands in the dirt;
enemies are one body now.

Come sing new words;
God's bringing life;
God's bringing life.
Lay down your swords;
the wars you've learned are over now.
God's turned our weapons into ploughs;
New life will come from death somehow.

Welcome:

Greeting:

On this fifth Sunday of Lent
May the Lord be with you
And also with you

Moment of Stillness:

Lent Candles:

In Lent we set love upon our hearts and feet and walk with Jesus towards the cross. As a reminder that Jesus did not shy from entering the darkest and most difficult places, we blow out a candle each week.

[Five candles are blown out]

In our walking we know that we are not alone,
for Jesus has walked this road before us,
and God's Spirit rests upon us as we take this journey forward.

Acknowledgement First Peoples:

We acknowledge that we are on the land of the Gadigal and Wangal people and that the Spirit was in the land revealing God to them through law, custom and ceremony.

We honour the wisdom of the Gadigal and Wangal Elders and their continuing culture, and pray that we might all work together for reconciliation and justice in this nation.

Call to Worship:

Have you ever felt washed up, brittle, worn-down to the bone?

Have you ever felt grief lay heavy on your back?

Have you ever felt like hope was out of reach?

Have you ever wondered, can these bones live?

If you have, then you are in the right place, for this is God's house.

Hope lives here.

So, come. Rest your weary bones.

Let us worship our Holy God.

Opening Prayer:

Creator God,

Why is bad news so loud?

In the midst of violence,

hunger,
illness
and anxiety,
it often feels like suffering has a microphone.
How do we hear you?
How do we find you?
How do we know that these bones can live?
Today we bring our raw selves into this space
asking that once more you would
rush through this place like a mighty wind.
Remind us that these bones can live.
Speak to us in your still, small voice
and let it be loud enough to speak to the sorrow of the day.
We know that good news rests in you,
and we know that you are here.
So help us listen, not to the bad news of the day alone,
but to the hope that you breathe into every word.
With open hearts we pray,
Amen

Song: Beautiful Things

All this pain,
I wonder if I'll ever find my way,
I wonder if my life could really change at all?

You make beautiful things,
You make beautiful things out of the dust.
You make beautiful things,
You make beautiful things out of us.

All this earth,
Could all that is lost ever be found,
Could a garden come up from this ground at all?

You make beautiful things,
You make beautiful things out of the dust.
You make beautiful things,
You make beautiful things out of us.

All around

Hope is springing up from this old ground,
Out of chaos life is being found in You.

You make beautiful things,
You make beautiful things out of the dust.
You make beautiful things,
You make beautiful things out of us.
(repeat)

You make me new, You are making me new.
You make me new, You are making me new.

You make beautiful things,
You make beautiful things out of the dust.
You make beautiful things,
You make beautiful things out of us.
(repeat)

Prayer of Confession:

Friends, there is nothing that we have to keep hidden from God—not our anger, our grief, or the ways in which we have fallen short. In confession, we speak honestly and are met with grace. So let us not hold back. Let us bring our full selves to this prayer, knowing that God is already running to meet us. Let us pray:

Loving God, we confess:
We forget that you know this feeling.
We forget that you, too, have wept.
We forget that you, too, have lost.
We forget that you, too, have gathered at the tomb,
have grieved for a friend, have felt the sting of humanity.
Forgive us for all the times we place blame on you.
Forgive us for all the times we create distance,
imagining that you could never feel what we feel.
Forgive us for allowing the valley of dry bones
to be a sea of space between us.
Pour yourself into the cracks in our heart.
Bring these bones back to life.
Bring us closer to you.
With gratitude we pray,
Amen.

Words of assurance:

Friends, we could spend our whole lives ignoring God, pushing God away, or trying to solve the world's problems all on your own, and God would still love us. Even in our shortcomings, we are God's beloved.

So hear and believe this good news:

We are saved by grace through faith.

We belong to God. We are not alone.

Amen

Peace:

The peace of Christ be always with you

And also with you.

Let's share Christ's peace with one another

Hymn: I Will Sing (Roxanne McLeod, Andrew Ellis, Mark Griffin)

You are God beyond imagination.

You are the one the heavens praise.

You are the Author to whom all creation sings

Glory to your name.

You are as mighty as the highest mountain.

You are as boundless as the sea.

You are as gentle as the breeze that carries

New life to everything.

So I will sing for all the world to hear

The wonder of your power and majesty.

And I'll sing to you who draws me near

My God of love whose grace has set me free.

I will sing.

You are the loving arms that now embrace me.

You are the rock beneath my feet.

You are the constant one whom I will follow

And praise you in everything.

So I will sing for all the world to hear
The wonder of your power and majesty.
And I'll sing to you who draws me near
My God of love whose grace has set me free.

And I will sing for all the world to hear.
The wonder of your power and majesty
And I'll sing to you who draws me near.
My God of love whose grace has set me free.
To you, my God of love I will sing.

Moment for the young at heart: Tonia

Bible Readings: Roger A

Introduction to the Hebrew Bible reading:

When Israel was exiled in Babylon, Ezekiel had to tell them that things were going to get even worse, that they'd become like a desert valley filled with dried bones. But after that, the Lord would revive them and breathe the Spirit into them again.

Ezekiel 37:1-14

The hand of the LORD came upon me, and he brought me out by the spirit of the LORD and set me down in the middle of a valley; it was full of bones. ² He led me all around them; there were very many lying in the valley, and they were very dry. ³ He said to me, "Mortal, can these bones live?" I answered, "O Lord GOD, you know." ⁴ Then he said to me, "Prophecy to these bones and say to them: O dry bones, hear the word of the LORD. ⁵ Thus says the Lord GOD to these bones: I will cause breath^[a] to enter you, and you shall live. ⁶ I will lay sinews on you and will cause flesh to come upon you and cover you with skin and put breath^[b] in you, and you shall live, and you shall know that I am the LORD."

⁷ So I prophesied as I had been commanded, and as I prophesied, suddenly there was a noise, a rattling, and the bones came together, bone to its bone. ⁸ I looked, and there were sinews on them, and flesh had come upon them, and skin had covered them, but there was no breath in them. ⁹ Then he said to me, "Prophecy to the breath, prophecy, mortal, and say to the breath:^[c] Thus says the Lord God: Come from the four winds, O breath,^[d] and breathe upon these slain, that they may live." ¹⁰ I prophesied as he

commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived and stood on their feet, a vast multitude.

¹¹ Then he said to me, “Mortal, these bones are the whole house of Israel. They say, ‘Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost; we are cut off completely.’ ¹² Therefore prophesy and say to them: Thus says the Lord God: I am going to open your graves and bring you up from your graves, O my people, and I will bring you back to the land of Israel. ¹³ And you shall know that I am the Lord when I open your graves and bring you up from your graves, O my people. ¹⁴ I will put my spirit within you, and you shall live, and I will place you on your own soil; then you shall know that I, the Lord, have spoken and will act, says the Lord.”

John 11:1-45

Now a certain man was ill, Lazarus of Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. ² Mary was the one who anointed the Lord with perfume and wiped his feet with her hair; her brother Lazarus was ill. ³ So the sisters sent a message to Jesus,^[a] “Lord, he whom you love is ill.” ⁴ But when Jesus heard it, he said, “This illness does not lead to death; rather, it is for God’s glory, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it.” ⁵ Accordingly, though Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus, ⁶ after having heard that Lazarus^[b] was ill, he stayed two days longer in the place where he was. ⁷ Then after this he said to the disciples, “Let us go to Judea again.” ⁸ The disciples said to him, “Rabbi, the Jews were just now trying to stone you, and are you going there again?” ⁹ Jesus answered, “Are there not twelve hours of daylight? Those who walk during the day do not stumble because they see the light of this world. ¹⁰ But those who walk at night stumble because the light is not in them.” ¹¹ After saying this, he told them, “Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I am going there to awaken him.” ¹² The disciples said to him, “Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will be all right.”^[c] ¹³ Jesus, however, had been speaking about his death, but they thought that he was referring merely to sleep. ¹⁴ Then Jesus told them plainly, “Lazarus is dead. ¹⁵ For your sake I am glad I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him.” ¹⁶ Thomas, who was called the Twin,^[d] said to his fellow disciples, “Let us also go, that we may die with him.”

When Jesus arrived, he found that Lazarus^[e] had already been in the tomb four days. ¹⁸ Now Bethany was near Jerusalem, some two miles away, ¹⁹ and many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to console them about their brother. ²⁰ When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went and met him, while Mary stayed at home. ²¹ Martha said to Jesus, “Lord, if you had been

here, my brother would not have died. ²² But even now I know that God will give you whatever you ask of him.” ²³ Jesus said to her, “Your brother will rise again.” ²⁴ Martha said to him, “I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day.” ²⁵ Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life.^[f] Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, ²⁶ and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?” ²⁷ She said to him, “Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Messiah,^[g] the Son of God, the one coming into the world.”

²⁸ When she had said this, she went back and called her sister Mary and told her privately, “The Teacher is here and is calling for you.” ²⁹ And when she heard it, she got up quickly and went to him. ³⁰ Now Jesus had not yet come to the village but was still at the place where Martha had met him. ³¹ The Jews who were with her in the house consoling her saw Mary get up quickly and go out. They followed her because they thought that she was going to the tomb to weep there. ³² When Mary came where Jesus was and saw him, she knelt at his feet and said to him, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.” ³³ When Jesus saw her weeping and the Jews who came with her also weeping, he was greatly disturbed in spirit and deeply moved. ³⁴ He said, “Where have you laid him?” They said to him, “Lord, come and see.” ³⁵ Jesus began to weep. ³⁶ So the Jews said, “See how he loved him!” ³⁷ But some of them said, “Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?”

³⁸ Then Jesus, again greatly disturbed, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone was lying against it. ³⁹ Jesus said, “Take away the stone.” Martha, the sister of the dead man, said to him, “Lord, already there is a stench because he has been dead four days.” ⁴⁰ Jesus said to her, “Did I not tell you that if you believed you would see the glory of God?” ⁴¹ So they took away the stone. And Jesus looked upward and said, “Father, I thank you for having heard me. ⁴² I knew that you always hear me, but I have said this for the sake of the crowd standing here, so that they may believe that you sent me.” ⁴³ When he had said this, he cried with a loud voice, “Lazarus, come out!” ⁴⁴ The dead man came out, his hands and feet bound with strips of cloth and his face wrapped in a cloth. Jesus said to them, “Unbind him, and let him go.” ⁴⁵ Many of the Jews, therefore, who had come with Mary and had seen what Jesus did believed in him

Hear the Word of the Lord
Thanks be to God

Reflection: Hector Abrahams

Moment of Stillness:

Prayers of the People: John

The Lord's Prayer:

Our Father in heaven
hallowed be your name.
your kingdom come
your will be done
on earth as in heaven.

Give us today our daily bread
forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Save us in the time of trial
and deliver us from evil.

For the kingdom the power and the glory are yours.
Now and forever.
Amen

Community News:

Offering Prayer:

Creator God,
Take our Lenten offerings
and make them radical;
Grow their actions,
enable their impact.
As we prepare for tomorrow,
may your will be done.
On earth as it is in heaven.
Amen.

Song: When I Survey (O Waly Waly tune)

1 When I survey the wondrous cross
on which the Prince of glory died,
my richest gain I count but loss,
and pour contempt on all my pride.

2 Forbid it, Lord, that I should boast
save in the death of Christ, my God.
All the vain things that charm me most,
I sacrifice them through his blood.

3 See, from his head, his hands, his feet,
sorrow and love flow mingled down.
Did e'er such love and sorrow meet,
or thorns compose so rich a crown?

4 Were the whole realm of nature mine,
that were a present far too small.
Love so amazing, so divine,
demands my soul, my life, my all.

Benediction & Blessing:

As you leave this place,
may God bless you with seeking.
Seek out the hungry.
Seek the weary.
Seek the good in every person you pass.
Seek out the hopeful.
Seek the faithful.
Seek God in each of us.
As you seek and as you wonder,
may you find what you are looking for.
In the name of our loving God,
who is always seeking us,
go now in peace.

And the blessing of God Almighty;
Creator, Christ and Spirit
Be upon you and remain with you always.

3-fold-Amen

Pastoral Prayers:

Acknowledgements:

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Paper lace over oil paint on linen

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