



Lent 5 Yr A – 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2026

Can these bones live?

**Leader:** *David Pigott*

**Meditation Song:** Approach my soul

Approach, my soul, the mercy seat,  
Where Jesus answers prayer;  
There humbly fall before His feet,  
For none can perish there.

Be thou my shield and hiding place,  
That, sheltered near thy side,  
I may my fierce accuser face  
And tell him thou has died.

**Welcome:**

**Greeting:**

On this fifth Sunday of Lent

May the Lord be with you  
**And also with you**

*Let us have a Moment of Stillness and be aware of the Spirit's presence within us and all around us.*

***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**

### **Hymn: TIS 387 Christ is alive!**

- 1. Christ is alive! Let Christians sing.  
The cross stands empty to the sky.  
Let streets and homes with praises ring;  
Love, drowned in death, shall never die**
- 2. Christ is alive! No longer bound  
to distant years in Palestine,  
but saving, healing, here and now,  
and touching every place and time.**
- 3. In every insult, rift and war,  
where colour, scorn or wealth divide,  
Christ suffers still, yet loves the more,  
and lives, where even hope has died.**
- 4. Women and men, in age and youth  
can feel the Spirit, hear the call,  
and find the way, the life, the truth,**

revealed in Jesus, freed for all.

**5. Christ is alive, and comes to bring  
good news to this and every age,  
till earth and sky and ocean ring  
with joy, with justice, love, and praise.**

**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: TIS 272 Come, thou long-expected Jesus**

**1 Come, thou long-expected Jesus,  
born to set thy people free,  
from our fears and sins release us,  
let us find our rest in thee.**

**2 Israel's strength and consolation,  
hope of all the earth thou art;  
dear desire of every nation,  
joy of every longing heart.**

**3 Born thy people to deliver,  
born a child and yet a king,  
born to reign in us for ever,  
now thy gracious kingdom bring.**

**4 By thine own eternal Spirit  
rule in all our hearts alone;  
by thine all-sufficient merit  
raise us to thy glorious throne.**

**Moment for the young at heart: [Jen Richardson](#)**

**Bible Readings: [Alison Burnett](#)**

**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. <sup>2</sup> He led me all around them; there were very many lying in the valley, and they were very dry. <sup>3</sup> He said to me, "Mortal, can these bones live?" I answered, "O Lord GOD, you know." <sup>4</sup> Then he said to me, "Prophecy to these bones and say to them: O dry bones, hear the word of the LORD. <sup>5</sup> Thus says the Lord GOD to these bones: I will cause breath<sup>[a]</sup> to enter you, and you shall live. <sup>6</sup> I will lay sinews on you and will cause flesh to come upon you and cover you with skin and put breath<sup>[b]</sup> in you, and you shall live, and you shall know that I am the LORD."

<sup>7</sup> 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. <sup>8</sup> 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. <sup>9</sup> Then he said to me, "Prophecy to the breath, prophesy, mortal, and say to the breath:<sup>[c]</sup> Thus says the Lord God: Come from the four winds, O breath,<sup>[d]</sup> and breathe upon these slain, that they may live." <sup>10</sup> I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived and stood on their feet, a vast multitude.

<sup>11</sup> 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.' <sup>12</sup> 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. <sup>13</sup> And you shall know that I am the Lord when I open your graves and bring you up from your graves, O my people. <sup>14</sup> 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. <sup>2</sup> Mary was the one who anointed the Lord with perfume and wiped his feet with her hair; her brother Lazarus was ill. <sup>3</sup> So the sisters sent a message to Jesus,<sup>[a]</sup> "Lord, he whom you love is ill." <sup>4</sup> 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." <sup>5</sup> Accordingly, though Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus, <sup>6</sup> after having heard that Lazarus<sup>[b]</sup> was ill, he stayed two days longer in the place where he was.

<sup>7</sup> Then after this he said to the disciples, “Let us go to Judea again.” <sup>8</sup> The disciples said to him, “Rabbi, the Jews were just now trying to stone you, and are you going there again?” <sup>9</sup> 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. <sup>10</sup> But those who walk at night stumble because the light is not in them.” <sup>11</sup> After saying this, he told them, “Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I am going there to awaken him.” <sup>12</sup> The disciples said to him, “Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will be all right.”<sup>[c]</sup> <sup>13</sup> Jesus, however, had been speaking about his death, but they thought that he was referring merely to sleep. <sup>14</sup> Then Jesus told them plainly, “Lazarus is dead. <sup>15</sup> For your sake I am glad I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him.” <sup>16</sup> Thomas, who was called the Twin,<sup>[d]</sup> said to his fellow disciples, “Let us also go, that we may die with him.”

When Jesus arrived, he found that Lazarus<sup>[e]</sup> had already been in the tomb four days. <sup>18</sup> Now Bethany was near Jerusalem, some two miles away, <sup>19</sup> and many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to console them about their brother. <sup>20</sup> When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went and met him, while Mary stayed at home. <sup>21</sup> Martha said to Jesus, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. <sup>22</sup> But even now I know that God will give you whatever you ask of him.” <sup>23</sup> Jesus said to her, “Your brother will rise again.” <sup>24</sup> Martha said to him, “I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day.” <sup>25</sup> Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life.<sup>[f]</sup> Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, <sup>26</sup> and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?” <sup>27</sup> She said to him, “Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Messiah,<sup>[g]</sup> the Son of God, the one coming into the world.”

<sup>28</sup> 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.” <sup>29</sup> And when she heard it, she got up quickly and went to him. <sup>30</sup> Now Jesus had not yet come to the village but was still at the place where Martha had met him. <sup>31</sup> 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. <sup>32</sup> 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.” <sup>33</sup> When Jesus saw her weeping and the Jews who came with her also weeping, he was greatly disturbed in spirit and deeply moved. <sup>34</sup> He said, “Where have you laid him?” They said to him, “Lord, come and see.” <sup>35</sup> Jesus began to weep. <sup>36</sup> So the Jews said, “See how he loved him!” <sup>37</sup> But some of

them said, "Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?"

<sup>38</sup> Then Jesus, again greatly disturbed, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone was lying against it. <sup>39</sup> 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." <sup>40</sup> Jesus said to her, "Did I not tell you that if you believed you would see the glory of God?" <sup>41</sup> So they took away the stone. And Jesus looked upward and said, "Father, I thank you for having heard me. <sup>42</sup> 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." <sup>43</sup> When he had said this, he cried with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!" <sup>44</sup> 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." <sup>45</sup> 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: Chris Longfoot**

***Moment of Stillness:***

**Prayers of the People: Rev Carolyn Thornley**

**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:***

**29th March Palm Sunday**

**3rd April: Good Friday**

**5th April: Easter Sunday**

**5th April: Daylight Saving ends**

**29th April: Ella 50th Anniversary Morning Tea**

***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: Here In This Place /Gather Us In**

**Here in this place, new light is streaming,  
now is the darkness vanished away,  
see, in this space, our fears and our dreamings,  
brought here to you in the light of this day.**

**Chorus**

**Gather us in, the lost and forsaken;  
gather us in, the blind and the lame;  
call to us now, and we shall awaken,  
we shall arise at the sound of our name.**

**We are the young, our lives are a mystery;  
we are the old, who yearn for your face;  
we have been sung throughout all of history,  
called to be light to the whole human race.**

### **Chorus**

**Gather us in, the rich and the haughty;  
gather us in, the proud and the strong;  
give us a heart so meek and so lowly,  
give us the courage to enter the song**

**Here we all take the wine and the water,  
here we will take the bread of new birth,  
here you shall call your sons and your daughters,  
call us anew to be salt for the earth.**

### **Chorus**

**Give us to drink the wine of compassion,  
give us to eat the bread that is you;  
nourish us well, and teach us to fashion  
lives that are holy and hearts that are true**

**Not in the dark of buildings confining,  
not in some heaven, light-years away,  
but here in this space, the new light is shining,  
now is the kingdom, now is the day**

### **Chorus**

**Gather us in, and hold us forever;  
gather us in, and make us your own;  
gather us in, all peoples together,  
fire of love in our flesh and our bone.**

### ***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:*

*Image: Unbind him by Hannah Garrity Inspired by John 11:1-45*

*Paper lace over oil paint on linen*

*Acknowledgement of Country: [pilgrimwr.unitingchurch.org.au](http://pilgrimwr.unitingchurch.org.au) - Using words from the  
Preamble to the Uniting Church Constitution*

*Other liturgy: Sanctified Art*