

KNOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, BAYFIELD

2023 03 26

May the grace of Jesus Christ be with you ... **and also with you.** Welcome to worship at Knox Presbyterian Bayfield on this 5th Sunday of Lent, March 26.

Announcements

Today is Kintal's "Kirk in the Cedars" worship service. Join in worship at 4 pm with a delicious meal. The cost is a free will offering.

This movie "Jesus Revolution" will play at The Park Theatre in Goderich from Friday March 31st to Thursday April 6th. There are evening and matinee showings.

The Presbyterian and United Church in Brussels will have an Afternoon of Music with showtunes, sacred music, and other great sounds! Featuring local talent and introducing to the area Darryn de Souza Sunday April 30th at 2 p.m. at Melville Presbyterian Church, Brussels Free will-offering

The people of Knox Bayfield acknowledge with gratitude the territory upon which we live, work, play and worship. We live on the traditional lands of the Chippewa and Haudenosaunee, 'People of the Longhouse,' Anishinabewaki, Attiwonderonk (Neutral), and Mississauga peoples within Treaty 29, of 1827. We affirm the 94 Calls to Action, refute the Doctrine of Discovery, and accept the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. There is much for us to learn. We commit to growing in healthy relationship, one based in truth, respect, and reconciliation, with the First Nations of this land.

HYMN Praise God

#306

CALL TO WORSHIP [responsive]

One: More than those who watch for the morning

All: we wait faithfully for God

One: With our questions and our cries, in our hopes and expectations

All: we wait faithfully for God

One: Come, let us worship our God together

All: We offer our prayers and praise in faithfulness

PRAYER OF ADORATION AND ASSURANCE OF PARDON¹

God in whom we live and move and have our being, we praise you. In the face of all that wearies us and worries your people, your Word echoes across the centuries with hope. As we follow the footsteps of Jesus in this Lenten season, his Cross standing before us, we trust you are walking with us in our sorrow, with our tears, and in our joy. You stand with us when we don't know which way to turn. In this time of worship, renew our trust in your resurrection promise. Draw near to us with love that will never let us go.

God who knows us through and through, we confess our memories can cause us to struggle with our faith. We remember difficult times and wonder where you were. We remember tragedies and ask ... how you could let them happen? We remember our own mistakes and wonder how you could love us. Forgive us when our memories turn us away from your goodness. Remind us that your love never lets us go and that your divine power holds us in every desperate moment. We offer you our wonder and our praise in the name of Jesus who is the Resurrection and the Life. Amen

Assurance of Pardon

Jesus said, "Come to me all you who labour and are heavy laden and I will give you rest." ... Trust that peace and forgiveness are God's gift to you, whatever burden you carry. Be renewed by the breath of the Holy Spirit that will bring you into each new day. May the peace of Jesus the Christ, which surpasses all understanding, be with you. **And also with you.**

HYMN I heard the voice of Jesus say #671

To Hear The Word Of God

Prayer For Illumination and Scripture²

Your Word, O God, comes to us in the translation of ancient scripture. Send your Holy Spirit to open our minds with understanding and our hearts with wisdom in the name of Jesus Christ, your Living Word. Amen.

¹ PCC Worship Planner Advent December 2021 Year C

² Page #'s for pew bibles with Blue or White edged pages

Scripture³

Psalm Psalm 130

[B#573/W#635]

Epistle Romans 8:6–11

[B#157/W#164]

May God bless our understanding of this, God's holy word. **The word of the Lord.**

Message

O holy One, by the power of your Holy Spirit at work in the word read and proclaimed, may the words of our mouths and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable to you. Amen.

The readings on this 5th Sunday of Lent foreshadow the death and resurrection of Jesus. They are stories of being called from death to life. Ezekiel, is a prophet raised up by God for the exiled in Babylon. God brought Ezekial to a valley full of dry, human bones. This vision reminds every generation that God gives life and restores life, that death will not have the last word, even when all signs of life have been taken away. Our God is the Creator God of life, its origin and goal.

Tanakh*

Ezekiel 37:1–14

[B#806/W#898]

Many commentaries stress that the prophet Ezekiel spoke metaphorically. His vision was about the descendants of those who had been marched to Babylon. The dry bones represent the hopelessness experienced by the exiles. This passage brings to mind the "dark night of the soul", periods of overwhelming deep doubt, hopelessness, depression, fear, and anxiety. It is possible to make the connection between Ezekial's vision of disconnected, dry bones with our own dark night of the soul.

It may be tempting to turn away, to be drawn away from the lessons buried in the dry, barren landscape. In her commentary, Katherine Amos wrote, "Maybe God's question to us this Lent is, "What can your spiritual dry bones teach you? What can you learn about yourself and your relationship with the world from the painful, difficult paths you are called to walk?" A National Geographic article, "Lost Tribes of the Green Sahara" describes the important information archaeologists discover from skeletons. The bones can reveal the sex, age, general health, diet, diseases, injuries, and habits of the community. The size and condition of the bones gave clues to lifestyles, work, and living conditions of the inhabitants.

³ Page #'s for pew bibles with Blue or White edged pages

Ezekiel's vision provides a sense of hope for all who have suffered in body, mind, and spirit. Today we hear the promise only God can give when the prophet is told to speak to the bones, "Thus says the Lord God: I will cause breath to enter you and you shall live". God promises sinews and flesh and skin, and, most importantly, God calls the breath to come from the four winds and breathe upon the slain. So it happens. The life--giving breath is the spirit of God breathed into the first human creature in the garden. God's breath moves through the Lazarus story. This same breath was breathed into Jesus crucified, lifting him up to resurrection life, and this breath of the Spirit moves among us. This Spirit breath moves through the world, raising people into new life.

Our reading from the gospel of John tells the story of illness, death, burial, and resurrection. The people receive a glimpse of the power of God, of life after death.

Gospel John 11:1-45 [B#104/W#108]

This story helps us to understand how people were led to believe in Him and the events that led to further conflict with authorities. The news of the resurrection of Nazarus would be shared with others, including the authorities. That message would heighten fear and set the events in motion that led to the crucifixion.

In our lives, we face the painful reality of unexpected illness, death, and altered social realities. We are mindful that our Christian faith points us in the direction of hope, in the promise of the resurrection.

It is helpful to read the passages just before and just after the lectionary passage. This practice helps us to better understand the context of the story. Just before our reading this week, in the gospel of John, Jesus was in Jerusalem for the feast of the Dedication. Many there opposed him and pushed Jesus to reveal whether he was the Christ, the Messiah foretold in the scriptures. Offended by his response, they gathered up stones to kill him, believing that he was a fraud. Jesus and his disciples left Jerusalem, travelling across the Jordan River to an area that was more welcoming to them. It was there that Jesus received the news about Lazarus's illness.

The disciples were constant companions throughout his ministry, traveling with him through the villages, towns, and mountainous regions. The gospels tell of how they were often concerned with limitations in their situations. Perhaps you can recognize some of their practical concerns. The disciples were learning what it meant to follow the Messiah.

As they developed their faith they also became aware of the opposition to his ministry. The disciples were discovering how to live in a way that was completely new to them. They were learning to trust that Jesus was leading them and, at times, it felt uncomfortable to follow.

The disciples are concerned with the treacherous journey to Judea. They questioned whether it was wise to return to Judea. They had barely escaped being stoned to death in that area just a short time ago. They were confused and concerned. Jesus told them the journey was for a greater purpose and that the death of Lazarus would help them to believe. Imagine the confusion as they listened to him. Then, Thomas supported Jesus when he said, "Let us also go, that we may die with him."

We can imagine the scene when they arrived in Bethany. Mourners were at the family home of Mary, Martha, and deceased Lazarus. Many had travelled from Bethlehem to mourn with the women. Mary stayed home with other mourners, while Martha went out to meet with Jesus on the road. The next part of this story seems to move in slow motion. In her grief, Martha told Jesus that he could have saved her brother and that he had the power to ask God to do so. Jesus asked and Martha affirmed her belief that Jesus is the resurrection and the life and that those who believe in him, even though they die, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in him will never die.

Martha then called Mary to join her with Jesus. Mary quickly joined them, with many of the mourners following her from the house. Mary knelt in the road, at the feet of Jesus, and said, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died." When Jesus saw Mary and others weeping, he was greatly disturbed and deeply moved. Jesus went to the cave where Lazarus was laid and then, Jesus wept. The Son of God, the Messiah, stood on the road and wept. And Jesus wept. This one sentence provides such insight. The deep pain of grief. The grief within the sisters, the community, the pain within Jesus. He wept for them all. He wept for his loss.

We can only imagine the depth of his sorrow and tears. The deep despair with his friend's death. The surge of grief experienced by Mary, Martha, and the others who had gathered. Jesus was surrounded by surging emotion throughout his journey. Perhaps, it was the knowledge that this would be his final journey into Jerusalem. Jesus wept. We can wonder over his sorrow. We can feel his tangible grief. Those who saw him weeping

remarked: "See how he loved him!" The Greek word for love is agapē—selfless, self-giving love. The word used to describe Jesus' love for his friend Lazarus is philia, the common Greek word for friendship, human affection, or deep feeling. Philia is the love we have for our friends.

Jesus ordered the tomb to open and the gathered were appalled since Lazarus had been in the tomb for 4 days. The stone was removed and Jesus cried with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!" This is the third story of ordinary people raised from death in the gospels. Mark shares the story of Jesus commanding the recently deceased daughter of Jairus to rise up (Mark 5:22-43). Luke tells of their experience in the town of Nain when the widow's dead son was told to get up (Luke 7:11-15). Ordinary people pointing the way toward the magnificence of God.

Soon, on a different day, a different Mary, will weep at a different tomb. She will ask the same question that Jesus asked: "Tell me where have you laid him?" On that day, the burial cloths will be left behind in the tomb—the face cloth rolled up in a place by itself—no longer required for the one God has raised. On that day, on Easter Sunday, the disciples will see a sign even greater than the raising of Lazarus. Here, at this tomb of Lazarus, death is denied for a time. There, at the tomb of Jesus, death was overcome for good.

The gospel of John will share the events that follow today's reading. The reader will discover, "But some of them went to the Pharisees and told them what he had done. So the chief priests and the Pharisees called a meeting of the council and said, 'What are we to do? This man is performing many signs. If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him, and the Romans will come and destroy both our holy place and our nation.' But one of them, Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, said to them, 'You know nothing at all! You do not understand that it is better for you to have one man die for the people than to have the whole nation destroyed.' ... So from that day on they planned to put him to death".

Yet, this story in our Christian faith as we believe in the power of resurrection. Our traditional worship practices recognize birth, life, death, and resurrection. We pray for the power of resurrection in the lives of those who are held captive by war, poverty, disease,

and systemic oppression. We pray for those confined in abusive households and oppressive nations.

When Jesus called Lazarus from the tomb, he urged those present to take action. The unbinding of Lazarus can also be seen as a metaphor. The bindings represent an oppressive and unforgiving way of life that was loosened and stripped away. We are called to care for others, to nurture and strengthen them until they are able to walk on their own. We are called to remove the bindings of self-doubt, social isolation, marginalization, and oppression.

We are called to connect with one another in different and creative ways. Strengthening our connections in community lessen the sense of being alone as we are mindful that others care. We carefully and lovingly remove the bindings of fear, anxiety, loss, and grief. This tender care works to unbind women, men, and children so they can walk in dignity within the world. This loving care embodies our faith as we follow in the way of Christ. Praise be to God for visions and the movement of the Spirit among us.

Hymn Breathe on me, breath of God #389

THE OFFERING OF OUR LIFE AND LABOUR TO THE LORD

Quote As we work to create light for others, we naturally light our own way.

Mary Anne Radmacher

Our lives overflow with the goodness of God. Sharing what we have so abundantly received, we bring our offerings of time, talent, and financial resources to share within God's creation with gladness and gratitude.

God breathes the power of new life into the world through Christ who is both Friend and Saviour to us. We offer our gifts in gratitude for God's renewing breath, trusting its power will move through our gifts into the world God loves.

Doxology We give Thee but Thine own, What e'er the gift may be; All that we have is
Thine alone, a trust, O Lord, from Thee.

Prayers of the People, Blessing of Gifts

God of the loving heart, you call each of us by name and unite us in the body of Christ, the Church. Help us to love your creation and take action to make a difference in your world. We place our gifts into your hands, O God. With the power of your Holy Spirit make them seeds of new life, springing up with hope and healing for weary souls.

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God of peace and promise, in Christ you call us to love our enemies and to be peacemakers in the world you love. We pray today for people and places divided by ancient bitterness and current hostility.

O God of the bruised and broken, we are grateful that, in Christ, you have taken up the cross and know by heart all that causes suffering and pain. We pray today for all those in need of healing and comfort, whatever the source of their pain.

Before we call, you answer, God. Before we speak, you know our voices. Hear our prayers. Loving God, by your Spirit, surround us with strength and love. Equip us to offer support for those who are near to us. O God of the lonely and sorrowing, in Christ you experienced the loss we know when loved ones die and the pain of betrayal by friends. We remember before you those who grieve the loss of their beloved and those who are lonely. God of light and love, draw near to those who must confront illness, loss or changing circumstances. We are thankful for healing and we are thankful for the end of suffering. God of compassion, we lift up families who travel the long journey of grief. May their memories be a blessing. We ask you to linger with all who mourn Ruth; Lyle; and Danielle.

God of hope, we ask you to linger with all who are dealing with health challenges: Brian; Stephani, Judith & Gerry; Carter, Jim & family; Rob, Valerie, Jim and Jane; Carl; Betty Lou; Ruth; and, Rudy, Audrey, & Grace.

We lift up all who are on our hearts as they face immense challenges.

O God of hope and new possibility, in Christ you opened the way into the future for us through the power of your redeeming love. Give us the courage we need to face our future, assured of your presence and power to sustain us. We offer all that we are and all that we hope for through Jesus Christ who taught us to pray together as his people: Our Father who art in heaven, hallow'ed be thy name. Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil, for thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

Hymn In suffering love #696

To Go Forth In God's Name Commissioning and Benediction

Arise, dry bones, and live! Come out, Lazarus, and give glory to God! May the Lord Jesus Christ, the resurrection and the life, bless and keep you in this life and the life to come.

Amen

Postlude

Amen

64 Be still and know

Be still and that I am God x3

I am the Lord that health thee x3

In thee, O Lord, I put my trust x 3

306 Praise God

Praise God from whom all blessings flow; Praise God all creatures high and low;
Praise God in Jesus fully known; Creator, Word and Spirit, One.

389 Breathe on me, breath of God

Breathe on me, breath of God; fill me with life anew, that I may love what thou dost love and do what thou wouldst do.

Breathe on me, breath of God, until my heart is pure, until with thee I will one will to do and to endure.

Breathe on me, breath of God, till I am wholly thine, until this earthly part of me glows with thy fire divine.

Breathe on me, breath of God, so shall I never die, but live with thee the perfect life of thine eternity.

696 In suffering love

In suffering love the thread of life Is woven through our care, For God is with us: not alone Our pain and toil we bear.

There is a rock, a place secure Within the storm's cold blast; Concealed within the suffering night God's covenant stands fast.

In love's deep womb our fears are held; There God's rich tears are sown And bring to birth, in hope new-born, The strength to journey on.

Lord, to our hearts your joy commit, Into our hands your pain, So send us out to touch the world With blessings in your name.

In suffering love our God comes now, Hope's vision born in gloom; With tears and laughter shared and blessed The desert yet will bloom.

671 I heard the voice of Jesus say

I heard the voice of Jesus say, "Come unto me and rest; Lay down, thou weary one, lay down thy head upon my breast!" I came to Jesus as I was, weary and worn and sad; I found in him a resting place, and he has made me glad.

I heard the voice of Jesus say, "Behold, I freely give The living water; thirsty one, Stoop down, and drink and live!" I came to Jesus, and I drank of that life-giving stream; My thirst was quenched, my soul revived and now I live in him.

I heard the voice of Jesus say, "I am this dark world's light; Look into me, thy morn shall rise, and all thy day be bright." I looked to Jesus, and I found in him my star, my sun, And in that light of life I'll walk till travelling days are done.