

Wesley Uniting Church
March 26th, 2023
Lent 5

The Gathering of God's People

Prelude

Twelve Duos for Two Violins: Nos 1, 3 and 7 by Reinhold Glière (1875-1956)

Introit

O Lord, increase our faith,
strengthen us and confirm us in thy true faith;
endue us with wisdom, charity, chastity and patience,
in all our adversity. Sweet Jesu, say Amen.

Music: Henry Loosemore (1607 – 70)

Welcome and Lighting of the Community Candle

Call to Worship

Welcome pilgrims on the way to the cross.

We are learning to follow Jesus.

The journey is long, and the burden of our sins and struggles feels so heavy.
Yet we will hope in God because with God, there is steadfast love.

All around us, we witness neighbours and communities who are lifeless,
despairing that they could ever be revived.

Yet God tells us that to come back to life, we must come together.

Year after year of change and struggle have taken their toll—how can
anyone bring forth life when we feel so parched and tired?

**Yet God meets the lifeless with the breath of life, reviving us again to
worship and follow God's way.**

Pilgrims on the way, come let us worship God!

We come to worship God as we learn to live inside out! Amen.

Hymn 578 (tune143) How firm a foundation, you people of God

Prayer of Adoration

Prayer of Confession

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 you.
**Remind us that your love never lets us go
and that its power holds us and heals us in every desperate moment.**
Amen.

Assurance of Forgiveness

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 this day, whatever burden you carry. Be renewed by the breath of the Holy Spirit that will bring you into each new day.

Thanks be to God.

The Peace

The Service of the Word

Prayer for Illumination

First reading: Ezekiel 37: 1 - 14 page 704

Hymn 409 O breath of life, come sweeping through us

Gospel: John 11: 1 - 45 page 873

In this is the Word of the Lord -
may we have eyes to see and ears to hear.

Anthem

Fall to the earth, small solitary seed, fall to the earth today.
The one whose hand prepares the land asks you to pass this way.
The ground is cleared, the time is near, fall to the earth today.
A gentle wind will bear you in, into the furrowed clay.
The husk must break before life wakes, fall to the earth today.
Sweet is the grief that finds the leaf green where the brown seed lay.
One small seed dies, uncounted rise, fall to the earth today.

music: Thurlow Weed (2015) words: Michael Hudson (2004)

Preaching

Offering Hymn 653 This is the day of new beginnings

Prayers of the People

We live in a world full of need and sorrow, risk and struggle, hope and despair. So, as we remember all those in need of prayer in our community and in our world, I ask you:

People of God, can these dry bones live?

These bones are hungry, thirsty, and tired. Yet only God knows if these bones can live.

People of God, can these dry bones live?

These bones are suffering and in trouble. Yet only God knows if these bones can live.

People of God, can these dry bones live?

These bones face harmful division in families and communities. Yet only God knows if these bones can live.

People of God, can these dry bones live?

These bones struggle for life in a world threatened by war and rumours of war, by violence of every kind. Yet only God knows if these bones can live.

People of God, can these dry bones live?

These bones inhabit an earth that needs attention, care, and responsible stewardship. Yet only God knows if these bones can live.

People of God, these bones are all of us. Now hear the good news: God breathes on us that we may live and that we may share this new life with our community through God's grace and love.

Thanks be to God, who gathers and breathes the Breath of Life into our dry bones. Amen.

The Sending Forth of the People of God

Announcements

Hymn 684 Love will be our Lenten calling

Commission and Blessing

Arise, dry bones, and live!

Come out, Lazarus,

and give glory to God!

May the Lord Jesus Christ,
who is the resurrection and the life,
bless and keep you in this life
and the life to come. **Amen!**

Postlude

Twelve Duos for Two Violins: No 9 by Reinhold Glière (1875-1956)

[Please refrain from applause during Lent]

Liturgist: Graeme Brown
Preacher: Rev'd Dr Geoff Dornan
Music Coordinator: Jade McFaul
Organist: Dr Lorraine Macknight
Wesley Music Scholars: Anika Chan and Brad Tham (violins)
Bible Reader: Liz Chan
Flowers arranged by: Heather Hart

Minister in Placement

Rev'd Dr Geoff Dornan

Interim Intentional Ministers

Rev'd Karyn Burchell-Thomas
Rev'd Gareth Thomas-Burchell

Some Anecdotes about Lazarus, Resurrection and Life, from Unexpected Sources

The Virgin Birth, the Resurrection, the raising of Lazarus, even the Old Testament miracles, all are freely used for religious propaganda, and they are very effective with an audience of unsophisticates and children

Richard Dawkins

Kerry O'Brien: Do you see yourself as having another chance at the leadership at some future time?

John Howard: Oh, that's Lazarus with a triple bypass... **Sunday, Channel 9, 27 July 2003**

Every parting gives a foretaste of death, every reunion a hint of the resurrection. **Arthur Schopenhauer (1788-1860)**

The New Testament thesis of John's Gospel is that the Messiah is *now*, and because the Messiah is now, the Kingdom is now, history has definitively changed. But how are we to reconcile this meaning of history transformed, bending toward life and justice, with the indisputable fact that in the nineteen centuries since the Messiah entered the world, there has been little perceptible realization of the resurrection and of justice, which is after-all what the doctrine of resurrection points us to?

José Porfirio Miranda