

**Wesley Uniting Church
Forrest**

**FIFTH SUNDAY IN LENT
THEME: "BENDING TOWARD LIFE"
Sunday, 26th March 2023
9am Contemporary Worship**



What is so appealing about the stories of Christopher Robin and his entourage of friends, is the celebration of life in and through relationships, the way in which they all – even Eeyore - *bend toward life*. The Gospel reading today is the fourth in a series that come to us from John: Nicodemus (Lent 2), the Woman at the Well (Lent 3), the Blind Man (Lent 4) and today the ultimate testimony to life, the story of the raising of Lazarus, an anticipation, a precursor to the resurrection of Jesus. Each story that we have thought about these last weeks, has carried two connected themes: the first, has been about friendship with Jesus and the degrees of belief *in* him – Nicodemus falls short, the woman at the well does better, but it is the blind man who does best. Today we focus upon Mary and Martha. The second theme has concerned what belief in Jesus actually means. For John, belief in Jesus is all about the immediacy, the *now* of life over death, and the courage to put life into practice in contexts where death has the upper hand. John invites his community to *bend toward life* in the confidence that *God is life*. John believes in life that knows no death.

Preparing Ourselves through a Musical Prelude

Welcome

Lighting the Paschal and Community Candles

Acknowledgement of Country and Safe Place Statement

Greeting

Invitation to Worship

To believe in Jesus Christ is to live life;

to know that the arc of history bends toward life!

To believe in Jesus Christ is to live life;

to live life that knows no death!

Song: Spirit of Dreaming Alison Campbell Rate

1. Spirit of truth, come to us now
Breathe your word into us
Plant in our hearts your wisdom and love,
speak your kindness through us
*Spirit of dreaming come, make of your people one,
Spirit of truth, enter our dreaming now*

2. Spirit of grace, come to us now,
break into our silence.
Nourish our hearts with healing and joy
sing your love song through us
*Spirit of dreaming come, make of your people one
Spirit of grace, enter our dreaming now*

Spirit of hope restore us, go before us
Lead us through famine and feast.
Spirit of faith uplift us, take and gift us
for loving the last and the least.

3. Spirit of light, come to us now,
shine into our darkness.
Bring to our hearts your longing for life,
kindle peace between us
*Spirit of dreaming come, make of your people one
Spirit of light, enter our dreaming now.*

Opening Prayer

Loving God of Life

Calm our insecurities which we each carry in different ways!

calm our fear of what we may find within us.

Calm our fear of what we may find within us!

calm our 'being toward death'.

Calm our 'being toward death'!

so that life knows no death.

Strengthen our resolve to live!

so that others may see the life within us.

Assurance

God is in the world to help us live this life.

even in the darkest shadows.

God will not fail us.

We trust God to help us

as we find our way.

Amen.

The Children and the Adults Dance-Out the Story of Dry Bones 🧐

Song: Dry Bones

Ezekiel cried, "Them dry bones!" x3
Oh hear the word of the Lord!

The foot bone connected to the leg bone,
The leg bone connected to the knee bone,
The knee bone connected to the thigh bone,
The thigh bone connected to the backbone,
The backbone connected to the neck bone,
The neck bone connected the head bone,
Oh hear the word of the Lord!

Them bones, them bones gonna walk around, x3
Oh hear the word of the Lord!

The head bone connected to the neck bone,
The neck bone connected to the backbone,
The backbone connected to the thigh bone,
The thigh bone connected to the knee bone,
The knee bone connected to the leg bone,
The leg bone connected to the foot bone
Oh hear the word of the Lord!

Some Anecdotal Insights about Resurrection, Lazarus and Life

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**

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

Readings

Ezekiel 37:1-14 (Pew Bible, pp. 704-705)

John 11:1-45 (Pew Bible, pp. 873-874)

In this is the Gospel of the Lord

Praise to you Lord Christ

Preaching

Offering

Song during the offering: Jesus Called Lazarus Amanda Udis-Kessler

1. Jesus called Lazarus out from his tomb,
stealing his friend from the grave,
changing the story and granting him life,
Oh what a present he gave! **Chorus**

2. Some people struggle with doubt and self-hate,
living as though they are dead,
wrapped in their worry and trapped in their fear,
tombs in their hearts and their heads. **Chorus**

3. Even as Jesus took care of his friend,
we could be Jesus today,
showing the love that called Lazarus out,
offering hope as we say:

Final Chorus

*Everyone, everyone, time to come out!
Life and its wonders are waiting.
We will unbind you, we will sustain you
We in our faith will set Lazarus free.*

Chorus

*Lazarus, Lazarus, time
to come out!
Life and its wonders
are waiting.
Mary and Martha, strip
off his binding
You and your faith
have set Lazarus free.*

Announcements

Prayers of the People

Bidding: "May we bend toward life"

Response: "May we read the signs of the times".

The Lord's Prayer

Closing Song: Thuma Mina TiS749 Trad. South African, arr. Anders Nyberg (1955-)

Blessing and dismissal

May we live...

...Go in peace to love and serve the Lord

In the name of Christ, Amen

Worship team: Rev Dr Geoff Dornan and Dr Brad Opdyke,
Jan Tarbotton (Flowers), Nancy & Brad Opdyke (Readers),
Jade McFaul (Music Coordinator)
With thanks to our A/V, elders, musicians and steward teams