

Welcome / Announcements / Land Acknowledgement

For thousands of years, First Nations people have walked on this land – a relationship that is at the centre of their lives and spirituality. We are gathered on the traditional and unceded territory of the ləkʷəŋən and the WSÁNEĆ. We acknowledge their stewardship of this land throughout the ages. As we pray, reflect, and celebrate in this place, we do so as guests lamenting the injustice in our history. We ask that the God of love and justice lead us along the path of reconciliation – inspiring new relationships of respect and solidarity.

PWS&D Message ***Responding to Drought in Somalia***

“The weather is harsh; life is more difficult for the children, they are very thin and sick due to lack of food,”

In Somalia, the general humanitarian situation is worsening, with famine alerts being declared in some parts of the country—needs are extremely high.

Siman’s eight-month-old son, Farhan, is one of the many Somali children under five who has been admitted to hospital for treatment this year. Farhan was dehydrated due to vomiting and diarrhea. At hospital, he was admitted for severe malnutrition and started medication and rehydration treatment.

Farhan is now receiving the treatment he needs to recover, including therapeutic milk, antibiotics and anti-malarial drugs.

“He had been sick and weak, but after the treatment he has improved, he can now play and run around. Thanks to all those involved for the invaluable support,” says Siman.

This life-saving project, which PWS&D supports through Canadian Foodgrains Bank, is helping treat severely malnourished children under the age of five, and lactating women.

This Lenten season, may we give thanks that we can help ensure that children have access to critical food and medical care.

➤ ***Let us build a house (verse 5)***

PWS&D Lenten Liturgy

Written by Jim Goring and the Rev. Ian Fraser (Pointe Claire, Quebec)

Just as the Spirit drove Jesus into the wilderness,

the Spirit sends us into places of uncertainty where we confront our weakness & insecurities.

Here we are taught to pay attention to those calling out for care.

Jesus knew that God is revealed at unlikely times.

Like him, sometimes we arrive too late, when tragedy has already occurred:

**after the war has torn lives apart, after the earthquake has crumbled homes,
after the drought has killed crops.**

With Lazarus already in a tomb,

Jesus cared for the grieving before turning his attention to his dead friend.

**Let us pray for and support the medics as well as the injured, the aid workers as well
as the homeless, The food providers as well as the hungry.**

Tragedies may show us the worst of humanity, when greed and malice flourish.

**Yet, we celebrate those who respond with love and compassion, bringing Christ to
the places where death has brought devastation.**

➤ *Jesus the Christ said: I am the bread*

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† Gathering Prayer / the Lord's Prayer / sung Words of Hope

You are merciful and just in the deliverance of your people, O God. You draw us up out of the depths of distress; you incline your ear as we call on your name. Our souls rest in you and in the promise of Christ's redeeming love. Lay your hand upon us, and draw us out by your Spirit, that we may recognize our sin and sing praises to your Holy name as we join our voices in prayer ...***Father, who art in heaven – hallowed 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 debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen***

➤ *How deep the peace (repeat) – please remain seated*

† Prayer for Understanding

**Stir in us an abiding trust in you, O God. Awaken us to the celebration of your word.
May we hear and be steadied as you reveal yourself to us this day. In Jesus' name
we pray. Amen**

Scripture **Ezekiel 37: 1-14** [OT 806]

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. He led me all around them; there were very many lying in the valley, and they were very dry. He said to me, "Mortal, can these bones live?"

I answered, "O Lord GOD, you know."

Then he said to me, "Prophecy to these bones, and say to them: O dry bones, hear the word of the LORD. Thus says the Lord GOD to these bones: I will cause breath to enter you, and you shall live. I will lay sinews on you, and will cause flesh to come upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and you shall live; and you shall know that I am the LORD."

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. 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.

Then he said to me, "Prophecy to the breath, prophecy, mortal, and say to the breath: Thus says the Lord GOD: Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live."

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

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.' Therefore prophecy, 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. And you shall know that I am the LORD, when I open your graves, and bring you up from your graves, O my people. 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 [NT 104]

Now a certain man was ill, Lazarus of Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. Mary was the one who anointed the Lord with perfume and wiped his feet with her hair; her brother Lazarus was ill. So the sisters sent a message to Jesus, "Lord, he whom you love is ill."

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."

Accordingly, though Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus, after having heard that Lazarus was ill, he stayed two days longer in the place where he was. Then after this he said to the disciples, "Let us go to Judea again."

The disciples said to him, "Rabbi, the Jews were just now trying to stone you, and are you going there again?"

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. But those who walk at night stumble, because the light is not in them."

After saying this, he told them, "Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I am going there to awaken him."

The disciples said to him, "Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will be all right."

Jesus, however, had been speaking about his death, but they thought that he was referring merely to sleep. Then Jesus told them plainly, "Lazarus is dead. For your sake I am glad I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him."

Thomas, who was called the Twin, said to his fellow disciples, "Let us also go, that we may die with him."

When Jesus arrived, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb four days.

Now Bethany was near Jerusalem, some two miles away, and many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to console them about their brother.

When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went and met him, while Mary stayed at home.

Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. But even now I know that God will give you whatever you ask of him."

Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again."

Martha said to him, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day."

Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?"

She said to him, "Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, the one coming into the world."

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." And when she heard it, she got up quickly and went to him.

Now Jesus had not yet come to the village, but was still at the place where Martha had met him. 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. 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."

When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her also weeping, he was greatly disturbed in spirit and deeply moved.

He said, "Where have you laid him?"

They said to him, "Lord, come and see."

Jesus began to weep.

So the Jews said, "See how he loved him!"

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

Then Jesus, again greatly disturbed, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone was lying against it. 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."

Jesus said to her, "Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?"

So they took away the stone. And Jesus looked upward and said, "Father, I thank you for having heard me. 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."

When he had said this, he cried with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!"

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."

Many of the Jews therefore, who had come with Mary and had seen what Jesus did, believed in him.

This is the Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God!**

Message

Lent is a time in which we look at life without blinders and excuses, as much as possible. We try to see life as it is, in all its wondrous chaos, and tragic beauty. Lent is a season in which we confront our limitations – sin and mortality, and their impact on our lives and the world. We are dust and to dust we return – we are finite and our finitude is the source of creativity and fear – we are sinful and sin leads to separation from God, others, and our personal destiny. Yet, there is grace, agency, and transformation in of the moral and spiritual limitations we face.

Today's readings stagger the imagination: dry bones dancing and a dead man revived. In the midst of death, resurrection bursts forth and we are challenged to expect the unexpected – to awaken to a world of wonders.

The miracle to some is not just the reviving of Lazarus, but the reality that *"Jesus wept."* Some people don't expect divinity to feel our pain because they see God on high as immune from the human – and creaturely – condition. But Jesus felt pain and grief – he enjoyed relationships and was touched by the loss of his friend. When Jesus proclaims, *"I am the resurrection and the life,"* he is not denying the pain of death, but placing our pain in God's loving care. The cost of resurrection is death – the death of old ways, the death of the familiar, and the death of our previous identity.

To be honest the story of Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead is a hard one for me. At many levels, I don't get it. I don't understand why Jesus dawdles when he first receives word of Lazarus's illness. I don't understand why he allows his friends to suffer for the sake of *"God's glory."* I don't understand why he tells his disciples that Lazarus is asleep rather than dead. I don't understand why he sidesteps Martha's tortured accusation: *"Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died."* I don't understand why Jesus raises just one man, leaving countless others in their graves. And I don't understand why Lazarus virtually disappears from the gospel narrative once his grave clothes fall off. Why is he never heard from again? How did Lazarus' life unfold after Jesus raised him back to life. Was he considered a freak? Did he gain some sort of new knowledge? Was death still a threat to him?

In many ways, the story is shrouded in mystery. But I cling to the two words in the narrative I do understand: *"Jesus wept."* Thank God – Jesus wept. For me, this is the heart of the story – that grief takes hold of Jesus and breaks him down. That Jesus – the most accurate revelation of the divine we will ever have – stands at the grave of his friend and cries just as we have done and will do again.

There is a real picture of Jesus' humanity in this passage. The image of Jesus experiencing grief for the loss of Lazarus is stark and moving and there is a tangible sense of solidarity with those who grieve. As we follow the story, we also see the grief of Mary, Martha, and the community at the centre of this story. It is into this darkness that Jesus brings the light of life.

Through his actions, Jesus creates the opportunity for belief and displays God's power to bring life. The crowd didn't come to the tomb with the belief that Jesus would raise Lazarus. Like the mud in the eyes of the blind man in the reading from last week, they, and we are offered new vision, to see fully that there is something beyond death.

Life's pivotal moments are full of experiences of being deeply disturbed and moved as Jesus was here. I remember times I have been overwhelmed by grief – by despair – by loss. I know you have too. There have also been times I have wept for joy – overcome with gratitude and love. I know you have experienced those times too. It is entirely human to be affected in this way. It is also entirely divine, for it can only happen where there is love.

How are we as a community a place where that love is known and experienced? How do we hold one another in those pivotal times? How do we nurture the faith and spiritual depth needed to receive and express divine love in the world as God hopes?

One way we do this is to engage in spiritual practices like prayer, reading scripture, fasting, singing and silent contemplation. A spiritual practice I thought we could try together today is the daily examen which can help us to consider our awareness of God's presence – God's love – in our lives and our living.

Take a moment to get comfortable with your eyes open or closed.

Notice your breathing.

As you breathe, notice the noises and movement around you, how you are feeling within and without.

Let these things fade so they are not at the front of your mind.

Invite the Holy Spirit to be with you as you open up your heart and mind to hear God and to be attentive to divine presence.

Think back over the most recent part of your Lenten journey – perhaps the past day, or the past week.

Notice moments of presence and absence. Give thanks to God for these moments and try to see how God was present in that time with you.

Now take a few moments to reflect silently on these questions...

- How did I meet God this week?
- How did someone else meet God through me this week?
- How did I experience God's love recently?
- How did I express God's love recently?
- What might God be saying to me now?

There is obvious foreshadowing in the story of Lazarus. And although the onlookers and disciples are not aware of it, perhaps they get a sense of the reality that Jesus – God – is the only one who can bring about resurrection – new life out of death. Lazarus means '*God helps*', and as we see in the actions of Jesus, we are not left in our grief or despair, but have the voice of God calling us forward to live. May it be so.

➤ *O love, how deep how broad, how high* 205

Offering and Prayer *Praise God from whom all blessings flow* 306

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

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. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen

† Pastoral Prayers

(response: *Christ of majesty and mercy, bring your compassion to this world once more.*)

God of the loving heart, thank you that in Christ, you call each of us by name and unite us in his body, the church. Give us love enough to make a difference in your world, and trust enough to follow even when the way ahead is a challenge.

Christ of majesty and mercy, **bring your compassion to this world once more.**

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

Christ of majesty and mercy, **bring your compassion to this world once more.**

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

Christ of majesty and mercy, **bring your compassion to this world once more.**

O God of the lonely and sorrowing, in Christ you faced the loss we know when loved ones die or when friends let us down. We remember before you those who grieve the loss of their beloved and those who face a lonely future...

Christ of majesty and mercy, **bring your compassion to this world once more.**

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, the Christ. **Amen**

➤ *Breathe on me, breath of God*

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Blessing

Jesus has called us from death into life – from shadows into the daylight – from sin into forgiveness – from bondage into freedom. In Jesus' name may we go out and live as the gracious love of God and the blessings of the Spirit embrace us all.

➤ *Bless the Lord (repeat)*