

Prayer of Thanksgiving: *The Lord is here. God's spirit is with us. Lift up your hearts. We lift them to the Lord. Let us give thanks to the Lord our God. It is right to give thanks and praise. Loving and gracious God who surrounds creation with abundant love, we give thanks and blessings to you. Source of life, and breath, and being, breathe into the dry dust of our existence. Nourished in body by bread and juice, may we strive for the nourishment of all bodies: may we work to end hunger in this creation that provides amply for all. Nourished in spirit by the Body which is within our own, may we strive for the incorporation of all: may we work to break the barriers that divide us from one another and from you. In the love that sustains us, and the Spirit that animates us, may we give all thanks and praise to you, O God of all.*

(Continue in prayer) *By your Spirit, make us one with Christ, one with each other, and one in ministry to the world, Come, Holy Spirit, upon us and what we do here that these your gifts of bread and wine may be for us the body and blood of Christ so that we may bring life, hope, and love to all your world. Through Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit in your holy Church, Holy Spirit, divine Advocate, guide and encourage us. Stir within our hearts, that we may speak anew the familiar words that Jesus taught us... (Our Father...)*

Hymn: Here is bread, here is wine

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Communion

Prayer following communion: Loving God, your word of life gives us a new birth. May we receive it with open hearts, share it with one another, live it with joy, and express it in love. In the spirit of Jesus Christ. Amen.

We follow our faithful Lord. These times, they are troubling. This journey, it is hard... We follow our faithful Lord.

It is God who sustains the journey, not the temptations of this world... We follow our faithful Lord. In the Lord is our trust, our protection from harm... We follow our faithful Lord. Come, let us worship the One whom we serve... We follow our faithful Lord.

Hymn: Now let us from this table rise

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WELCOME TO...

The Presbyterian Church of Saint David

April 02, 2017



CAN THESE BONES LIVE?

Gathering: *There will come a time when all around us will be gone – blown away like dust... But there will never come a time when the wind-breath of God ceases to blow, when the Spirit sleeps, when love lies lifeless. Let us worship God, who holds everything fast and breathes life into life.*

Hymn: O breath of life (1-2)

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Confession: *When our minds are on 'what is mine,' When our hearts are hardened to the needs of our sisters and brothers, When we are disconnected and indifferent to the lives around us, forgive. But do not forgive and let us forget – breathe Your challenge, Your cause, Your commitment to love into our beings and bring us back to life. We ask this in the name of the One whose body we claim to be. Amen.*

Hymn: O breath of life (1-2)

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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. 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, prophesy, 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 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. 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.

Ezekiel 37: 1-14 This is a tell-able, dramatic tale – a harrowing story, no doubt, but one that resonates when richly read... make sure the story is told and the rhythm builds and your listeners feel the life returning to those dry bones! There is power in simply hearing this well. There is no way to downplay the desolation in this text, nor should we. In 597 BCE, the first of the Jewish exiles were taken to Babylon, then 10 years later, Jerusalem was reduced to a pile of rubble when Nebuchadnezzar (King of the Babylonian Empire) ran out of patience and, in a bid to seal their submission, slaughtered all in his way. We cannot find the valley of dry bones on a map, but the imagery is starkly reflective of that time and represents the complete devastation, humiliation and hopelessness of a thoroughly defeated people. The prophet Ezekiel, caught up in that brutal exile, unveils a gory image of conquest. When Ezekiel is called to prophesy to those bones, he is symbolically called to prophesy to the scattered and shaken people of Israel, far from home and fearful. The question echoes, will they live again? Exile and return is a theme that stretches across our sacred story, and in the valley of dry bones, we find its ultimate expression – far from home, with no life left and no expectation that the present reality could change. It is for Ezekiel to breathe a life-giving word of hope that will bring these exiles back home. The powerful image of wind in the desert, of life in the deadest of places, is one to conjure with.

- Where are the dry bones today?
- Where are people fearful and forgotten?
- Where are lives barren and empty?
- What words do we have that can bring life?
- Are words enough and, if not, what else must we bring to desolate places?

Invitation: *Jesus calls us to the table, to the meal that nourishes our bodies and binds our dry bones into one Body, living in Christ. Jesus calls us, here and now. Come to this table, you who are beloved in Christ. We come, not because we must, but because we may.*

Hymn: Come ye disconsolate
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