

WORSHIP SERVICE PLAN**(Traditional & Online Service) (Purple)**March 22, 2026 • Fifth Weekend in Lent • *Wind***Ezekiel 37:1-14***"Do We Keep Going?"*

Sometimes we just don't have it. It's a good thing God has had it all along.

(online only) Preparation for Worship

Gather these items for worship. If an item unavailable, fret not:

- a piece of **purple** cloth
- an end table or stand
- a plate
- a cup
- a glass or bowl with water
- a lighter/match
- a pinwheel (for each in your household)
- a computer or internet-accessible device
- a thank you card to God for something this week

For each item you have, thank God for the provision. For each piece you do not have, thank God you don't need it. Place the table/stand in the area you plan to worship. If more than one person will be present, place the table in the middle of where you will be seated. Drape the cloth over it. Arrange the cup, plate, glass of water, and other items on the table. Keep the Bible in front of you.

Questions for the announcement loop

In preparing for Worship, consider the following:

- Which is more important: imposing your will or encouraging others?
- When boating, which is more powerful: your rowing (or motoring) or sailing?
- How willing are you to wait on God's power to arrive for you?
- Which light do you need for your journey of faith: more illumination or less weight?

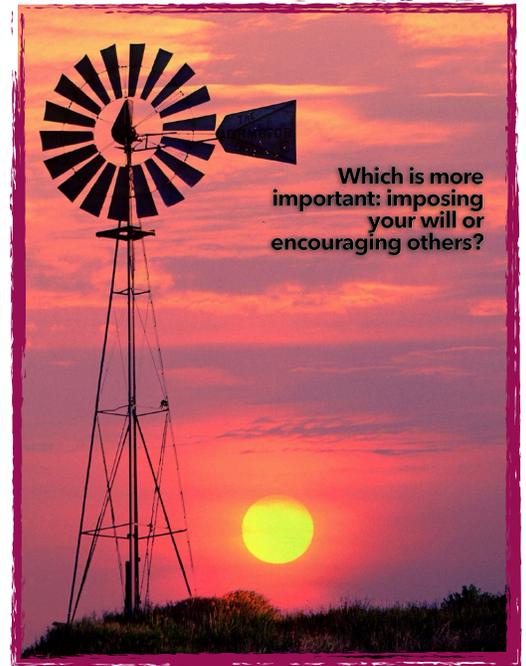
Opening Sentence**Ezekiel 37:14 (CEB)**

[The LORD said,] "I will put my breath in you, and you will live...."

Welcome! We are glad you are with us! We have a few Community Notes for you to consider as we worship throughout the week, living that Christian life...

Welcome Visitors!

We are glad you are here! Our nursery is in the Education Building and our restrooms are in the buildings other than this Sanctuary.

**Wind in Your Sails**

I believe the scariest time to be on a boat in the middle of the ocean is not during the storm but rather when you have no way to get where you're going. The winds have died, the motor won't run, and rowing just won't work. When traveling through life, even through a temporary situation, what do you do when there is no wind for your sails? What do you do when motivation eludes and the heart would rather sit this one out? God reminds us that, by God's own Spirit and *choice*, God is still in it with us. God is still moved to redeem, to bless, to seek and find. So as you move through the week, remember well to rely not on your own strength, but rather on God's. You might not be ready to meet the moment, but God is always ready to meet all our moments.

Lent 2026: "Light for the Path"

As we approach the last week in Lent and the beginning of Holy Week, we yet are pressed by God to consider not just how our paths get light, but whether we are light enough for the journey. Are we illuminated and illuminating? Are we carrying too much or are we carrying one another? Even on his passion road to Golgotha, Jesus needed someone to carry his cross. Even from his

cross, the light of forgiveness had to shine. Consider what God has been bringing to light for you these weeks. Consider the burdens God seeks to relieve you of and the ones God wants you to actually take on. Look to God as the source of your light. Look to God as the source of your strength.

We yet encourage you to share your thoughts! Take 5 minutes to gaze at yourself in the mirror (set a timer!) and then write a paragraph of what you think you see in the reflection.

An Additional Way to Support the Music

You can support our music program by participating in any of the choirs or the worship team, helping with logistics, hosting out of town guests, keeping up with your tithes and now by also contributing to a savings account devoted to supporting other aspects of the music program. Things like guest musicians, extra music scores, equipment, even water bottles.

"Who Can Come?"

Maundy Thursday (April 2nd, 7:00 p.m.), is not just about whether or not we identify with Christ. It's about the fact that God identifies with us. In all our brokenness, betrayal, and bewilderment, Jesus still hosts us, washes our feet, feeds us, and entrusts the Gospel to us. So come prepared to observe, not your own worthiness or goodness, but the goodness and worthiness of God. Come as you are, but leave as God intends for you. Come prepared to share Communion, of course, to have one of your feet (or hands, if you prefer) ritually washed, and your heart stirred.

"Shadows"

Our Good Friday Service (April 3rd, 7:00 p.m.) will center around a cantata: "Shadows." It is a sustained reflection on the passion and death of Jesus of Nazareth. As we hold this funeral service for Christ, let our common mission be two-fold. First, bring who you can with you to celebrate the life and death of Jesus. Second, be prepared to be drawn into the candlelight, the readings, the rituals, and, of course, the music.

(10am only) Greet one another in Christ!

(10am only) Gathering Song

"What Wondrous Love Is This" GTG #215, v. 1

**What wondrous love is this, O my soul, O my soul,
What wondrous love is this, O my soul!
What wondrous love is this that caused the Lord of bliss
To bear the dreadful curse for my soul, for my soul,
To bear the dreadful curse for my soul!**

(10am only) Prelude:

"Jesus Walked This Lonesome Valley"
arr. Anna Laura Page

Sometimes we just don't have it. It's a good thing God has had it all along.

In this moment, let us stand, take a deep breath, silence our devices, and continue in worship together. Let us make use of the *Call to Worship* that is before you...

(10am only) Call to Worship

God's wind moved over the watery chaos

God's breath created the Word

God's Spirit gave life to all

God's wind moved through history

God's breath empowered a nation

God's Spirit gave a Savior

And now the wind of God, the breath of God

The Spirit of God wants to move through us

Sing:

"Love Divine, All Loves Excelling" GTG #366

Prayer of Confession/Preparation

We sometimes fail to allow the breath of God to fill us up, breathing instead other kinds of spirits. It's not good that we do that. It's important to talk about our shortcomings so that we're ready to hear what God has to say. Let us begin with silent prayer...

(Please pray silently...)

Pray: Breath of God, it is your spirit that gave us life. It is your wind that moved us to become your people. It is your Spirit that makes all things possible. So forgive us, please, when we are dispirited. Forgive us when we fail to breath in your love, your encouragement, your strength, your compassion, your authority, your

goodness, your kindness. Forgive us when we fail to breath out the same. When we are lost for direction, may our sails respond only to you. When are unsure of our purpose, may our lungs fill up with your praises. When we are burned out of ideas, of efforts, of choices, may we remember, always, that you are Creator God. As the season of Lent unfolds, may your Spirit alone light our path. Thank you for listening, God. Amen.

(10am only) Assurance of Pardon

God's love can change everything, even the power of our sins over us. God's will that we have this power:

In Jesus Christ we are forgiven.

The Peace of Christ be with you

And also with you.

(10am only) Gloria Patri (Glory to God)

Glory be to the Father and to the Son

And to the Holy Ghost

As it was in the beginning

It is now and ever shall be

World without end: Amen, amen.

Reading of Scripture

Say: God's Word is a gift. And good gifts are meant to be opened. Our hearts and minds are gifts. And good gifts are meant to be opened. God offers to help us open our presents by God's own Spirit. Let us take God up on that offer and ask for help to understand. Let us pray...(everyone sings)

Pray/Sing: "Listen to the Word that God Has Spoken" GTG #455

Listen to the word that God has spoken;

Listen to the One who is close at hand;

Listen to the voice that began creation;

Listen even if you don't understand. (x2)

As a way to lead congregations from afar, church leaders like Paul would write letters. It helped address questions and anticipated problems the evolving organization of the Church experienced. And here, the congregation in Ephesus is being challenged to live transparently faithfully. Listen closely to the Word of God to us all and for God's challenge to us all...

Read: Ezekiel 37:1-14

The vision of dry bones.

¹ The LORD's power overcame me, and while I was in the LORD's spirit, he led me out and set me down in the middle of a certain valley. It was full of bones. ² He led me through them all around, and I saw that there were a great many of them on the valley floor, and they were very dry.

³ He asked me, "Human one, can these bones live again?"

I said, "LORD God, only you know."

⁴ He said to me, "Prophecy over these bones, and say to them, Dry bones, hear the LORD's word! ⁵ The LORD God proclaims to these bones: I am about to put breath in you, and you will live again. ⁶ I will put sinews on you, place flesh on you, and cover you with skin. When I put breath in you, and you come to life, you will know that I am the LORD."

⁷ I prophesied just as I was commanded. There was a great noise as I was prophesying, then a great quaking, and the bones came together, bone by bone. ⁸ When I looked, suddenly there were sinews on them. The flesh appeared, and then they were covered over with skin. But there was still no breath in them.

⁹ He said to me, "Prophecy to the breath; prophecy, human one! Say to the breath, The LORD God proclaims: Come from the four winds, breath! Breathe into these dead bodies and let them live."

¹⁰ I prophesied just as he commanded me. When the breath entered them, they came to life and stood on their feet, an extraordinarily large company.

¹¹ He said to me, "Human one, these bones are the entire house of Israel. They say, 'Our bones are dried up, and our hope has perished. We are completely finished.' ¹² So now, prophecy and say to them, The LORD God proclaims: I'm opening your graves! I will raise you up from your graves, my people, and I will bring you to Israel's fertile land. ¹³ You will know that I am the LORD, when I open your graves and raise you up from your graves, my people. ¹⁴ I will put my breath in you, and you will live. I will plant you on your fertile land, and you will know that I am the LORD. I've spoken, and I will do it. This is what the LORD says."

One: For the Word of God in Scripture, for the Word of God among us, for the Word of God within us...

All: Thanks be to God!

Children's Sermon

Adults, you'll need:

- a pinwheel or handheld windmill
- Make space for questions if you get them
"Breath-Taking"
- So, do you know what this is?...it a pinwheel! And I can't wait to play with it. I know it will show me colors and move and reflect the light. It will move and spin and be brilliant! Okay...here we go... (hold the pinwheel in place to keep the wheel itself from spinning and move the toy around)
- Huh...what's wrong with it? Ugh...mine's not working...What do I have to do?
- Oh wait! If I blow on it...it spins! That's all it needed. Not all my strength. Not all my skills. Not all my family. Not my money. Not my house. Not my other toys. Not the choir. Not even our whole church. Just a little breath and suddenly it's wonderful.
- Human beings are like that. Sometimes even though we are strong, or can do things or have a lot of family or rich or live in a big house or have lots of toys or go to a church, all we need to be God's wonders is God's breath. Just a little of God's breath to get us spinning. We call God's breath the Spirit of God.
- So when you're around the people who care about you, ask them about times they needed God's breath.
- Don't forget to pray!

(10am only) Anthem:

"Down to the River to Pray" arr. Sheldon Curry;
Soloist: Sandy Muller

"Do We Keep Going?"

Sometimes we just don't have it. It's a good thing God has had it all along.

It's not like I had a taste for it or anything. But a friend of ours had taken us out on their boat to the Caribbean. And just beyond with the Atlantic Ocean. The thought alone was breathtaking. But then there we were, just drifting, moving as the waves moved, the occasional bird overhead. The

lapping of water against the sides of the boat and the sun beaming brightly against a blue sky. It was hot. And I could easily see how sailors of old might have felt stuck. It's a big ocean. I imagine it was easy to feel like nothing against the expanse.

But suddenly, the temperature drops. We realize that the wind has picked up. Our friend makes the call and we scurry around the deck. We wind winches and connects hooks and pull on ropes. The sails rise and reach and stretch, as though waking from a nap. The wind catches them and we are MOVING. It feels for all the world like we are cutting through the ocean itself That smallness being replaced with ideas of power, purpose, direction, even destiny. With the bowing of the sail fabric and the spray of the waves, we felt like masters. Masters.

What a change, right? What a transformation. From drifting aimlessly, being beaten by the sun and the waves, to moving with speed and power and direction. All because of some wind.

Sometimes we look at the world around us. We look at the messes we've made. We look at the momentum and inertia of our lives and life-choices and can feel overwhelmed, feel stuck. We can feel out of options.

Certainly, the Exile gave the people that feeling. When we've talked about it in the past, we usually refer to what the people of God had done or what they lost. But in this case, the prophet Ezekiel, in all his crazy visions, sees a dream of God's to answer all hopes. Instead of railing against the excesses, the omissions, the apathy, the cruelties, the selfishness, the brutalities, the capitulations, even the arrogance demonstrated time and time again, God gives a vision that pries loose this sense of the aimless and, frankly, dead in the water approach to faith. God offers a little wind.

Read: Ezekiel 37:1-14 The vision of dry bones.

Dry bones. Bones left long enough to be bleached by the sun, picked over by carrion-eating scavengers. Historically, time-for-archaeological-tools dead. Life and living well into the rearview.

I mean, come ON. This passage was tailor-made for us! How many of us see that about our society? About years upon years of choices we might wish we made differently? About a planet set on an environmental course that seems inevitable? About bills that elude submission, health concerns that refuse to be tamed, culture and nostalgia-ridden memories that are fading, and money that seems to think we need reminders that it won't last forever. About corruption and war and greed that feel like cancer-causing viruses that refuse treatment and cure? Our bones can feel just as dry as theirs.

And we share the same questions. How can this happen? What did we do? What did we fail to do? What's the use?

"Humans, can these bones live again?"
"LORD God, only you know."

The scene takes me back to the second Creation story:

...The LORD God formed the human from the topsoil of the fertile land and blew life's breath into his nostrils. The human came to life. (Genesis 2:7)

Not fanfare. Not some grand, cosmic blueprint announced. Not the throes of competition or the result of some struggle or conflict. God simply breathes into the Adam and we come to life. That's it.

It's so simple. So straightforward that even armed with all their experience from the Exodus, the Promised Land, the Judges, the rise and fall of the kingdoms, Israel still missed the lesson and I think we do also.

Not for lack of trying, they did try to understand. They set up Temples and palaces and procedures. They set up tribes and rituals. They set up sacrifices and even entertained dreams. But they still had to be told:

*"Neither by power, nor by strength,
but by my spirit, says the LORD of heavenly forces."
(Zechariah 4:6)*

Jesus would even get into in John 4:23-24:

"But the time is coming—and is here!—when true worshippers will worship in spirit and truth. The Father looks for those who worship him this way. God is spirit, and it is necessary to worship God in spirit and truth."

Okay, already. Enough. Spirit of God, then. But so what? Even if I wanted to believe in Ezekiel's vision, in God's vision, that the dry bones could come back to life, that's God's breath could bring anything back, how does that happen? What am I supposed to do? What are we supposed to do?

Well, the passage mentions it several times. In fact, God, ever the reliable partner, tells us exactly what to do three times. I'm guessing once wasn't enough. But beyond our stubbornness, I think God emphasizes it so much because God wants to make sure we don't miss it.

Prophecy.

When you read the first Creation story, God's prescription here really isn't all that strange. At every point, everyday of Creation, God speaks and it is done. That's how the breath of God works. Honestly, it's how everything happens. From the parting of the Red Sea, to Communion, to events as described in Revelation, God's Word is spoken and then the interesting stuff happens.

So when confronted by all that might challenge you, all that might concern you, all that might leave you feeling like a pile of bones, what Word of God are you offering? What breath of God are you bringing to bear on those things? What kind of prophet are you practicing to be?

Look, I get it: sometimes we just don't have it. We don't have it in us to say one more prayer, to trust for one more inch, to push for one more minute. It's somebody else's turn. It's some other generation's time. There's nothing left in the tank. I just don't have it anymore. It's a good thing God has had it all along. Y'all our power has only ever had but ONE source. All we are, all we are made to be comes from one place. Breathe deeply, family. We still have work to do.

Song of Reflection

"Great Is Thy Faithfulness" GTG #39

Offering

God chooses to love us, abundantly. We should respond by choosing to be loving, abundantly. This is why we should give and share what we have and who we are. Let us reflect together on what has been given...

(10am only) Offertory

"Sit Down Servant" arr. Patsy Ford Simms;
Soloist: Lora Melton

(10am only) Doxology

**Praise God from whom all blessings flow,
Praise God all creatures here below.
Praise God above ye heavenly hosts;
Creator, Christ and Holy Ghost. Amen.**

Blessing (text is for the ONLINE service)

Let there be no doubt, Great God: you love us. And we are grateful. Let there be no doubt, Great God: we should be loving in turn. As we receive the gifts you provide, may the gifts we are meant to be emerge. In the great name of Jesus Christ, we pray this together. Amen.

Prayers of the People

- Say: God doesn't just hear our prayers. God answers. Let us pray...
- "Jesus, Remember Me" GTG#227
**Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.
Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.**
- Holy God, open our sails to you alone. Open our hopes to your promises alone. Open our hearts to your compassion alone. Open our minds to your wisdom alone. Let us live for you, Lord, alone. As you fill us and empower us to live again, help us do so moving to your rhythms, singing your songs, finding inspiration from your mercies. You have gifted us, God, with your own Spirit from the beginning. Help us not take that for granted.
- And so help us to breathe. Help us to take our responsibility to breathe in all you mean for us to. Help us accept your desire to breathe life on all, even those whose bones we think too dry. Teach us to indeed prophesy and to speak

- whatever Word you mean to place in us. And all we breathe in from you find its way out in kind.
- Thus, let us be Godly people. Let us make a habit of compassion and consolation. Let us make second nature your grace and mercy and sense of justice. Let us set aside safety and embrace risk-taking with you. May your healing balm reach through us to those around us, especially those on our prayer lists and those we will come to know. Help us love and give love. Help us value mercy as you do. Despite our collective answer of violence, of disdain, of division, of cynicism, of apathy, to your love, may we truly be washed by you and embrace hope instead... (take time to name your own prayers)
- Thank you for believing in us, Thank you for transforming us. Thank you for teaching us, even how to pray when words fail us, saying,
- **Pray: Our 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 forever. Amen.**

Hymn of Sending

(10am) "Spirit of God, Descend Upon My Heart"
GTG #688

Sending & Benediction

Let us say together our benediction...

Sometimes we just don't have it. It's a good thing God has had it all along.

(raise your hands and say) "Get up, take heart, Jesus is still calling you..."; Go, and the peace of God which surpasses all understanding guide your hearts and minds this day and forever more. Amen!

Sing: "God Lights Our Way"

(to the tune for "God Is So Good")

**God lights our way; God lights our way
God lights our way
To fulfill God's dreams**

(10am only) Postlude

"We Shall Walk Through the Valley in Peace"
arr. Victor Labenskies