



'Worship at home' Sunday March 26th 2023

This is the fifth week of Lent,
as we seek to grow our relationship with God
and prepare for Easter.

You might like to keep a **prayer space** with a
candle and **cross** set up for the duration of
Lent, for your own prayer and reflection.



Light the candle to remind you of Christ
who brings hope and new beginnings.

Opening

God of life, present and promised,

we seek you.

In the times we feel dry and lifeless,

we seek you.

When hope seems far away and our dreams are fading,

we seek you.

For you are the One who hears and responds,

bringing us new life

with your grace and love and power.

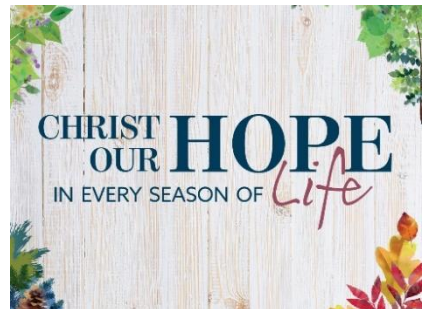
AMEN!

The central message of the
gospel is that Jesus Christ brings
hope and the promise of new life.

**When have you felt
dry and lifeless?**

John 11:17 - 45

*When Jesus arrived, he found
that Lazarus had been buried
four days before. Bethany
was less than two miles from
Jerusalem, and many
Judeans had come to see*



*Martha and Mary to comfort
them about their brother's
death. When Martha heard
that Jesus was coming, she
went out to meet him, but
Mary stayed in the house.*

Martha said to Jesus, "If you had been here, Lord, my brother would not have died! But I know that even now God will give you whatever you ask him for." "Your brother will rise to life," Jesus told her. "I know," she replied, "that he will rise to life on the last day." Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me will live, even though they die; and those who live and believe in me will never die. Do you believe this?" "Yes, Lord!" she answered. "I do believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, who was to come into the world." After Martha said this, she went back and called her sister Mary privately. "The Teacher is here," she told her, "and is asking for you." When Mary heard this, she got up and hurried out to meet him (Jesus had not yet arrived in the village, but was still in the place where Martha had met him.) The people who were in the house with Mary comforting her followed her when they saw her get up and hurry out. They thought that she was going to the grave to weep there. Mary arrived

where Jesus was, and as soon as she saw him, she fell at his feet. "Lord," she said, "if you had been here, my brother would not have died!" Jesus saw her weeping, and he saw how the people with her were weeping also; his heart was touched, and he was deeply moved. "Where have you buried him?" he asked them. "Come and see, Lord," they answered. Jesus wept. "See how much he loved him!" the people said. But some of them said, "He gave sight to the blind man, didn't he? Could he not have kept Lazarus from dying?" Deeply moved once more, Jesus went to the tomb, which was a cave with a stone placed at the entrance. "Take the stone away!" Jesus ordered. Martha, the dead man's sister, answered, "There will be a bad smell, Lord. He has been buried four days!" Jesus said to her, "Didn't I tell you that you would see God's glory if you believed?" They took the stone away. Jesus looked up and said, "I thank you, Father, that you listen to me. I know that you always listen to me, but I say this for the sake of

the people here, so that they will believe that you sent me." After he had said this, he called out in a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!" He came out, his hands and feet wrapped in grave cloths, and

with a cloth around his face. "Untie him," Jesus told them, "and let him go." Many of the people who had come to visit Mary saw what Jesus did, and they believed in him.

Good News Bible



In this story we are confronted by the reality of darkness and death, and there may be times in our lives when we identify with Lazarus in the darkness of the tomb. Jesus calls us out of our darkness, and our Christian hope is that Jesus Christ brings light and love and life, with the promise of new beginnings.

*When our hearts are wintry, grieving, or in pain,
then your touch can call us back to life again;
fields of our hearts that dead and bare have been:
love has come again, like wheat that springs up green.*

- John Macleod Campbell Crum 1872–1958 alt

Prayer

Holy God, Creator of Life,
you call us out of our dark places,
offering us the grace of new life.
When we see nothing but hopelessness,
you surprise us with the breath of your spirit.

Call us out of our complacency and routines,
set us free from our self-imposed bonds,
and fill us with your spirit of life, compassion, and peace,
In the name of Jesus, your anointed one, we pray. Amen.

~ Nancy Johnson

<http://ruminari.wordpress.com/>



Affirmation of faith

We believe in the steadfast love of God,
whose willingness to hear is greater than our despair;
whose power to forgive is greater than our sin;
we trust in this God to save us.

We believe in Jesus Christ,
who wept in anger and grief;
who faced life with hope and death with courage;
at his command the bonds of death are broken;
in him we find life and resurrection.

We believe in the Spirit of God,
who breathes new life into dead bones;
who dwells in us and brings us hope;
who forms us into the people of God,
always alive to new possibilities;
this is the Spirit who dwells in us.

Amen

Cokesbury United Methodist Church

Prayer

Name before God the situations of darkness and
despair you see around you:

- in your life
- in your community
- in the church
- in the world



Pray for the Spirit of God

to bring new life and hope to these situations.

Ask that God might work in you

to bring light and love to those around you.



Closing

Lord, unbind us from our fears and doubts.
As we go about our everyday lives,
be with us in our witness
to the power and love of Jesus Christ.
AMEN.

- adapted from

<https://www.ministrymatters.com/all/entry/4558/worship-connection-march-26-2023>