



Come Alive

We Gather

*You might want to start by lighting a candle. The candle helps to centre us.
Take some deep breaths as you gather your thoughts towards God.*

This week's reading invite us to consider what life from what seems gone might look like. Ezekiel sees dry bones come together. Jesus commands Lazarus to come out from his tomb. God breathes life into what seems gone, into what seems dried out, into what seems dead.

In this time, when we are apart from each other, and much of what was familiar is gone, what do you hope for as God breathes life into our tired (and, perhaps, just a little bit frightened or uncertain) souls?

Acknowledgement of Country

The Ancient of Days, [God the Creator], breathed life into this Land and her Peoples. From time beyond our reckoning the Wodi Wodi people of the Dharawal nation have blessed this place through their care and concern. We pay our respects to their Elders and Leaders, past and present, and we pray for the future of their communities. May we walk gently and respectfully on this Land.

(c) 2017, A.Koh-Butler, This land is God's land and God's Spirit dwells here.

Call to Worship

As we come to worship in our own homes, we think of our friends and family who are also worshipping today - around kitchen tables, in the garden, in their favourite chair.

Psalm 130:

¹ Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord.

² Lord, hear my voice!

Let your ears be attentive
to the voice of my supplications!

³ If you, O Lord, should mark iniquities,
Lord, who could stand?

⁴ But there is forgiveness with you,
so that you may be revered.

⁵ *I wait for the Lord, my soul waits,
and in his word I hope;*

⁶ *my soul waits for the Lord
more than those who watch for the morning,
more than those who watch for the morning.*

- ⁷ O Israel, hope in the Lord!
For with the Lord there is steadfast love,
and with him is great power to redeem.
- ⁸ It is he who will redeem Israel
from all its iniquities.

Prayer

Holy One, we are listening for a word from you.

We wait.

And we hope.

Speak to the dry and brittle places of our hearts.

Help us to come alive again.

Fill us with your breath, that we might proclaim the power of your Spirit with our words and with our lives. Amen.

Adapted from: Seasons of the Spirit, Worship Materials for 29 March 2020

Are you ready to sing yet? You could choose one of your favourites? Or if you are on the internet, have a look on Youtube for a range of options.

Prayer

What are you thankful for? Take a moment to look around you, look out of the window, take a fresh look at this moment and this space.

Eternal God,

We give thanks for your steadfast love that holds us in uncertain times.

We give thanks for your promise of life, even when we cannot see a way ahead.

Forgive us when we lose our grasp on the hope you hold before us.

Forgive us when we get so caught up in looking after ourselves that we forget to look out for our neighbours.

Bring us again to the wonder and mystery of life.

Breathe your life into our souls that we may be bearers of your life and hope in the world.

We pray in the name of the one who is “the resurrection and the life”, Jesus the Christ.

Amen.

Words of Assurance

Jesus said: “I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, ²⁶and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?” (John 11:25-26)

“Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, the one coming into the world.” (John 11:27)

Your statement of faith draws you into the arms of the God who forgives you and gives you life!

Thanks be to God!

We Listen for God's Voice

Reading: Ezekial 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. ²He led me all round them; there were very many lying in the valley, and they were very dry. ³He said to me, 'Mortal, can these bones live?' I answered, 'O Lord God, you know.'⁴Then he said to me, 'Prophecy to these bones, and say to them: O dry bones, hear the word of the Lord. ⁵Thus says the Lord God to these bones: I will cause breath to enter you, and you shall live. ⁶I 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.'

⁷ 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. ⁸I 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. ⁹Then 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.'¹⁰I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood on their feet, a vast multitude.

¹¹ 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."¹²Therefore 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. ¹³And you shall know that I am the Lord, when I open your graves, and bring you up from your graves, O my people. ¹⁴I 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.'

Reading: John 11:1-45

Now a certain man was ill, Lazarus of Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. ²Mary was the one who anointed the Lord with perfume and wiped his feet with her hair; her brother Lazarus was ill. ³So the sisters sent a message to Jesus, 'Lord, he whom you love is ill.'⁴But 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.'⁵Accordingly, though Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus, ⁶after having heard that Lazarus was ill, he stayed two days longer in the place where he was.

⁷ Then after this he said to the disciples, 'Let us go to Judea again.'⁸The disciples said to him, 'Rabbi, the Jews were just now trying to stone you, and are you going there again?'⁹Jesus 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. ¹⁰But those who walk at night stumble, because the light is not in them.'¹¹After saying this, he told them, 'Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I am going there to awaken him.'¹²The disciples said to him, 'Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will be all right.'¹³Jesus, however, had been speaking about his death, but they thought that he was referring merely to sleep. ¹⁴Then Jesus told them plainly, 'Lazarus is dead. ¹⁵For your sake I am glad I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him.'¹⁶Thomas, who was called the Twin, said to his fellow-disciples, 'Let us also go, that we may die with him.'

¹⁷ When Jesus arrived, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb for four days. ¹⁸Now Bethany was near Jerusalem, some two miles away, ¹⁹and many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to console them about their brother. ²⁰When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went and met him, while Mary stayed at home. ²¹Martha said to Jesus, 'Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. ²²But even now I know that God will give you whatever you ask of him.' ²³Jesus said to her, 'Your brother will rise again.' ²⁴Martha said to him, 'I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day.' ²⁵Jesus said to her, 'I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, ²⁶and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?' ²⁷She said to him, 'Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, the one coming into the world.'

²⁸ 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.' ²⁹And when she heard it, she got up quickly and went to him. ³⁰Now Jesus had not yet come to the village, but was still at the place where Martha had met him. ³¹The 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. ³²When 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.' ³³When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her also weeping, he was greatly disturbed in spirit and deeply moved. ³⁴He said, 'Where have you laid him?' They said to him, 'Lord, come and see.' ³⁵Jesus began to weep. ³⁶So the Jews said, 'See how he loved him!' ³⁷But some of them said, 'Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?'

³⁸ Then Jesus, again greatly disturbed, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone was lying against it. ³⁹Jesus 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 for four days.' ⁴⁰Jesus said to her, 'Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?' ⁴¹So they took away the stone. And Jesus looked upwards and said, 'Father, I thank you for having heard me. ⁴²I 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.' ⁴³When he had said this, he cried with a loud voice, 'Lazarus, come out!' ⁴⁴The 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.'

⁴⁵ Many of the Jews therefore, who had come with Mary and had seen what Jesus did, believed in him.

Reflection

A video can be found here:

<https://vimeo.com/401539084>

We pray...

God of life, breathe new life into our understanding of you, of ourselves and of the world we are called to serve. In the name of Christ, we pray. Amen.

The 7 Sundays leading up to Easter invite us to enter deeply into some of the stories that the gospels tell in greater length and detail. There is purpose as we listen with the people who encountered Jesus in his own time and engage deeply into who he is. We have heard stories of wilderness, of Nicodemus coming to Jesus in the darkness of night, of the woman meeting Jesus at the well, and of the blind man who had his sight restored. Each

one pointing us in different ways to Jesus, the Christ, the one promised by God to heal and restore the world.

Today we listen with Mary and Martha and their family and friends as Jesus arrives in the midst of their mourning the death of their brother. Jesus has a deep connection with this family. He has visited them before (although that story is told by Luke but left out of John's telling). He arrives to find Mary and Martha grieving.

Both of them know that if Jesus had been there earlier, the outcome would have been different. "If you had been here, he would not have died," says Martha (11:21) and Mary (11:32).

Even the crowd who has gathered to support Mary and Martha and to grieve them, think that Jesus could have done something.

"If he could open the eyes of the blind, he could have prevented this man from dying" (11:37).

But whether Jesus could have prevented this death is not the point - the point is God's ability to breathe life into what seems hopeless, gone, even dead.

As Jesus approaches the tomb and asks for the stone to be removed, the ever-practical Martha says, "but it will smell" (11:39). "He stinketh" it says in the old King James Version - one of my favourite expressions - leaving us in no doubt that Lazarus is dead and has been for 4 days.

Ezekiel, too, leaves us in no doubt about the condition of the bones he is looking upon. They are dry and brittle. Ezekiel was a priest and prophet, called by God to prophecy to the people of Israel who were in exile. He both reminds the people of God of who God calls them to be and he offers them a vision of hope. As he describes the vision in chapter 37, the valley is full of dry bones - bones that have been there a long time, long enough to dry out and become brittle.

As we confront in the story of Jesus himself, death is a harsh reality.

As Jesus confronts the death of his friend Lazarus, and is met by the grief of his sisters, Mary and Martha, Jesus enters their grief. He weeps with them.

Just as Jesus weeps with us as we encounter grief - our own, our friends', the grief of a world hurting with illness, isolation and fear.

Jesus weeps with us.

And then...

The Christian story, the Christian faith, the Christian hope, says death is not the end.

Weeping is not the end - it is necessary, it is part of our living and our loving.

But it is not the end.

Jesus says to Martha, "I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, ²⁶and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?"

God says to Ezekiel - do you believe these bones can live? (37:3)

And as Mary and Martha put their trust in Jesus, Lazarus emerges from the tomb.

As Ezekiel prophecies, the dry bones come together and are covered in sinew and flesh, God breathes God's breath and they come alive, a great multitude.

For Mary and Martha, their lives are transformed - grief turns to celebration - and “many of the Jews... believed in [Jesus].” (11:45) But it is also this that really sets the Pharisees against him.

For Ezekiel, this is a picture of God’s people, people who had lost their way, lost their connection with God, and been exiled from their homeland. As God breathes God’s breath, the bones are restored both individually and communally - this is the promise to the people of Israel - restoration both personally and communally.

This is the promise for us all - restoration and wholeness both as individuals and as communities.

Do you believe these bones can live?

I am the resurrection and the life... do you believe this?

In our isolation, in our concern for the world, do you believe?

How, then, do we offer the hope of life, the hope of restoration and wholeness, when things seem pretty grim?

As we re-affirm our belief in the Living Christ, in the God who breathes life, may we bring life to others.

May we be courageous as we sit with grief and pain.

May we look with hope to the life-breathing presence of God-with-us.

May we play our part in bringing restoration and wholeness to our communities.

Let’s pray,

Come from the four winds, Spirit of God.

Breathe new life into our tired and aching hearts.

Weep with us as we weep with a hurting world.

Call us out of our darkness.

And remind us once again of the life that you breathe. In Christ’s name, we pray. Amen.

For further reflection

For a bit of fun, you might like to search for some versions of Dem Bones:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QSADH6Ev0m4>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OCtneZbJb3Q>

*If you would like to engage in a **guided meditation** reflecting on Ezekiel 37, go here:*

<https://craigmitchell.typepad.com/files/ezekiel-1.pdf>

*You might like to **sing***

Comfort, Comfort - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B8DXPAYWr-c>

Or here is a modern song, with the text of Ezekiel 37:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MqzrTpwXTr8>

Here are the lyrics of the song:

Come Alive (Dry Bones)

Through the eyes of men it seems there's so much we have lost

As we look down the road where all the prodigals have walked

One by one the enemy has whispered lies
And led them off as slaves.

But we know that you are God, yours is the victory
We know there is more to come
That we may not yet see
So with the faith you've given us
We'll step into the valley unafraid, yeah

As we call out to dry bones come alive, come alive
We call out to dead hearts come alive, come alive
Up out of the ashes let us see an army rise
We call out to dry bones, come alive

God of endless mercy, God of unrelenting love
Rescue every daughter bring us back the wayward son
And by your spirit breathe upon them show the world that you alone can save
You alone can save

As we call out to dry bones come alive, come alive
We call out to dead hearts come alive, come alive
Up out of the ashes let us see an army rise
We call out to dry bones come alive

So breathe, oh breath of god
Now breathe, oh breath of god
Breathe, oh breath of god now breathe
Breathe, oh breath of god
Now breathe, oh breath of god
Breathe, oh breath of god, now breathe

As we call out to dry bones come alive, come alive
We call out to dead hearts come alive, come alive
Up out of the ashes let us see an army rise
We call out to dry bones, come alive
We call out to dry bones, come alive
Oh come alive

Source: [LyricFind](#)
Songwriters: Lauren Daigle / Michael Farren
Come Alive (Dry Bones) lyrics © Warner Chappell Music, Inc

We Respond

Prayer for Others

Spend some time thinking about the people around you:

- *family*
- *friends*
- *neighbours*
- *people who are ill or struggling or lonely*
- *is there anyone you could make a point of contacting this week - pray for them*

Give thanks for health workers, researchers, government officials - working to provide care, healing and organisation. Pray for them - for strength and compassion.

Pray for our leaders - for wisdom and courage.

Pray for people in other parts of the world where medical facilities are less able to provide care to people who are ill.

Pray for the church - that we will learn to be the church even when we are unable to gather. May we be light and life in our communities.

*As we settle into a new way of being, pray for patience and a deep sense of peace.
God of Life - speak to us in new ways, nudge us into new ways of being.
Without our regular groups and routines, help us to use our time wisely.
May we take time, to listen to you more deeply.*

Offering

*In responding to what we have read and how we have heard God speak to us, we commit ourselves to breathing life in the world around us.
If you make a regular financial contribution to the Kiama-Jamberoo Congregation, consider putting that amount aside now and keeping it safe.*

We pray...

God, you breathe life into dry and parched bones. Breathe your life into us that we may serve you and care for our neighbours as we face these times apart. In Christ's name, we pray. Amen.

Notices

*Keep an eye on the website, facebook page and the e-news for updates.
If you hear of or notice anyone needing a bit of extra support, please let Kath, Janice, or one of the Elders or Pastoral Partners know.*

We Go

Sending and Blessing

Go now and be light and life in the world.

Carry God's life into all the world.

Remember that always, the Spirit of Life enfolds you and releases you to be all that God has created you to be.

May the God of All-Love watch over us while we are apart.

And may you know the blessing of the Creator, Saviour and Spirit of Life, now and always.
Amen