

First Congregational Church of St. Louis, United Church of Christ
an Open & Affirming Congregation

— Let Us Dream God's Dream —



seeking:
Can these
bones live?



"Rubble"

by Carmelle Beaugelin
Inspired by Ezekiel 37:1-14

Fifth Sunday of Lent • March 26, 2023

Welcome!

*Whoever you are, and wherever you are on life's journey,
you are welcome here.*

Restrooms are located down the hall on the main floor.

All Gender Restrooms are located at the back of the sanctuary
and downstairs in the Fellowship Hall (which is accessible).

Changing tables are located in the Nursery on the main floor
and at the back of the sanctuary.

The Coffee Bar is available at the back of the sanctuary from 9:30–11:30.

***An asterisk** is an invitation to rise, in body or spirit.
Bolded text is an invitation for the congregation
to read or sing in unison.

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Our Guiding Principles

Adopted by Council – 2020

The Guiding Principles of First Congregational Church of St. Louis
describe the values that guide our church and its members throughout
our faith journey. We will...

Practice Extravagant Welcome

- Invite and honor the contributions of every member, quirks and all.
- Be grateful for the gifts and time that each of us dedicate to FCC.

Demonstrate Faithful Leadership

- Value people and our faith community over money and material things.
- Share concerns with the appropriate person and keep discussions and comments of others confidential.
- Celebrate successes, own mistakes, and fail faithfully together and in community.

Engage in Inclusive Decision Making

- Be thoughtful, respectful and transparent in our decision making.
- Value building consensus and move forward faithfully once a decision is reached.
- Listen to one another and debate with respect; honor the contributions of every member.

**Overall, we will be guided by
FCC's mission to Know God's
Word, Do God's Work, and Live
God's Love.**



Worship March 26, 2023

Can these bones live?

Welcome & Announcements

Ann Kittlaus

Prelude "Who Has Known the Mind of Jesus"

Call to the People

Leader: Have you ever felt washed up, brittle, worn-down to the bone?

People: Have you ever felt grief lay heavy on your back?

Leader: Have you ever felt like hope was out of reach?

People: Have you ever wondered, *can these bones live?*

Leader: If you have, then you are in the right place, for this is God's house.

Hope lives here.

People: So, come. Rest your weary bones.

Leader: Let us worship Holy God.

Lenten Response "Can These Bones Live?" v. 1

Text by Anna Strickland

LAUDA ANIMA

When the past is dead and buried

Lifeless in the barren ground

What good can emerge from ashes?

Where can any life be found?

Breathe in deep the rushing Spirit

Life is growing all around

(Repeat)

Prayer of Illumination

The Lord's Prayer

Our Mother, 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 sins,
as we forgive those who sin against us.**

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen.

Anthem

"I Want Jesus to Walk with Me"

David M. Cherwien

*I want Jesus to walk with me; all along my pilgrim journey,
Lord, I want Jesus to walk with me. In my trials, Lord, walk with me;
when my heart is almost breaking, Lord, I want Jesus to walk with me.
When I'm in trouble, Lord, walk with me; Lord, walk with me!
Bowed in sorrow, I want Jesus to walk with me.*

***Passing of the Peace**

Children's Moment

Michele Bryan

After the Children's Moment elementary-age children
are invited to join Chelsea Safe in the Social Hall for Faith & Fun.

Call to Confession

Lenten Response

"Can These Bones Live?" vv. 1 & 2

Text by Anna Strickland

LAUDA ANIMA

When the past is dead and buried
Lifeless in the barren ground
What good can emerge from ashes?
Where can any life be found?
Breathe in deep the rushing Spirit
Life is growing all around

When our hearts are bowed in sorrow
And the grief is newly wrought
Crying, "If you'd only been here"
Weeping for what we have lost
Resurrect our hearts and spirits
Living God whom we exalt

Prayer of Confession

Jesus of Nazareth, I confess: I forget that you know this feeling.
I forget that you, too, have wept. I forget that you, too, have lost.
I forget that you, too, have gathered at the tomb,
have grieved for a friend, have felt the sting of humanity.
Forgive me for all the times I place blame on you.
Forgive me for all the times I create distance,
imagining that you could never feel what I feel.
Forgive me for allowing the valley of dry bones to be a sea of space between us.
Pour yourself into the cracks in my heart. Bring these bones back to life.
Bring me closer to you. With gratitude I pray, amen.

Words of Forgiveness

Lenten Response "Can These Bones Live?" vv. 2 & 3 *Text by Anna Strickland*
LAUDA ANIMA

When our hearts are bowed in sorrow
And the grief is newly wrought
Crying, "If you'd only been here"
Weeping for what we have lost
Resurrect our hearts and spirits
Living God whom we exalt

When our spirits feel so broken
 Wrapped in linens and entombed
 Without hope and without feeling
 As the storm clouds 'round us loom
 Hear the words of life from Jesus
 "Come out, be unbound" and bloom

Scripture Ezekiel 37:1-14 Molly Paterson

The hand of the Lord came upon me, and brought me out by the spirit of the Lord and set me down in the middle of a valley; it was full of bones. God led me all around them; there were very many lying in the valley, and they were very dry. God said to me, "Mortal, can these bones live?" I answered, "O Lord God, you know." Then God 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 God 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 God commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived and stood on their feet, a vast multitude. Then God 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."

Anthem

"God so Loved the World"

John Stainer

*God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son,
that whoso believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.
For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world,
but that the world through Him might be saved.*

Lenten Meditation

Rev. Mia White

Poetry Prayer

"The Answer is Yes" by Rev. Sarah Speed

Adrienne Piston

***Hymn**

"Can These Bones Live?"

Text by Anna Strickland

LAUDA ANIMA

When the past is dead and buried
Lifeless in the barren ground
What good can emerge from ashes?
Where can any life be found?
Breathe in deep the rushing Spirit
Life is growing all around

When our hearts are bowed in sorrow
And the grief is newly wrought
Crying, "If you'd only been here"
Weeping for what we have lost
Resurrect our hearts and spirits
Living God whom we exalt

When our spirits feel so broken
Wrapped in linens and entombed
Without hope and without feeling
As the storm clouds 'round us loom
Hear the words of life from Jesus
"Come out, be unbound" and bloom

***Blessing**

Leader: As you leave this place, may God bless you with seeking.

People : We will seek out the hungry. We will seek the weary.

We will seek the good in every person we pass.

Leader: Seek out the hopeful. Seek the faithful. Seek God in each of us.

People: As we seek and as we wonder, may we find what we are looking for.

In the name of our loving God, who is always seeking us,
we will go now in peace. Amen.

Postlude

Thank you to those serving this morning:

Announcements

Ann Kittlaus

Ushers

Ann Kittlaus

Genie Holmes

Readers

Molly Paterson

Adrienne Piston

Chancel Choir

Jeral Becker, Wanda Becker, Marty Black,
Paul Black, Kathy Botney, Dan Brodsky,
Mary Brown, Megan Glass, Carol Klein,
Sheila Merrell, David Piston,
Nathan Ruggles, Stephanie Ruggles,
Leila Sadat, Katie Solomon,
Owen Solomon, Aiden Smith

Zoom Coffee Hour Host

Jane Feagans-King

This morning's liturgy comes from:

Prayers from Rev. Sarah A. Speed | A Sanctified Art LLC | sanctifiedart.org;

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Our bulletin cover art was inspired by today's scripture.
Here are the artist's reflections:

"Rubble" by Carmelle Beaugelin

Conté crayon, charcoal, acrylic, paprika paste, cinnamon

It has been over a decade since my family in Haiti experienced the most traumatic earthquake in the nation's history. If you were to Google, "Haiti" and "earthquake," images of collapsed concrete and rubble would emerge. The most disturbing images are those of survivors, covered in white and gray ash and rubble, reaching out for rescuers to salvage them from collapsed buildings. Endless images are found on the internet of arms stretched out, identity-less faces of horror covered in soot, and faces frozen into expressions of despair by the spectating photographer's lens. When I think of Ezekiel and the story of the dry bones, I think of those images. I've often heard sermons where pastors position God's people as the prophet to call the world into life, but what about God's people who are, as the bones, facing the despair of death? Their suffering is theologized away by those who consider themselves the righteous "Ezekiels" of the world, whose privilege weighs heavy on the bones of the suffering, like the concrete rubble in Haiti. "Rubble" speaks to the realities of being made alive and yet not being allowed to live—a nameless multitude of God's people resurrected yet still bearing the scent of burial spices on their bodies. Who are we in this story? Are we the bones seeking life? Do we perceive ourselves as spectators of suffering? Or will we choose to be participants in healing as active agents of God's resurrecting power out of the rubble?

- Announcements -

Holy Week Services

at First Congregational Church of St. Louis



seeking:
honest questions
for deeper faith

**Palm
Sunday**
April 2, 10 AM

seeking:
*Where are
you headed?*

Wave your palm branches with us on Palm Sunday! The service will include a drama called "Where Are You Headed?". Stay after worship for a petting zoo outside featuring goats, a mini donkey, pony rides, and more!

**Good
Friday**
April 7, 7 PM

seeking:
*Why have you
forsaken me?*

On Good Friday we will experience the sorrow of Jesus' crucifixion. Please join us for scripture, music, reflection, and gathering darkness.

**Easter
Sunday**
April 9, 10 AM

seeking:
*Who are you
looking for?*

Celebrate the resurrection with us on Easter with triumphant music, the Easter story, and the reassurance that as we seek God, God is also always seeking us.

Palm Sunday Drama **April 2 during Worship**

Our worship on Palm Sunday will include a drama written by Hannah Rice - "Where Are You Headed?" - continuing the theme of our Lenten series. We will rehearse this Saturday, April 1, from 10 AM - 12 PM. Everyone will have a script so nothing is memorized. This is for all ages and there's still time to participate - Contact Emily Stokes or Hannah Rice for more information.

Young Women's Leadership Conference March 30, 7:00 PM

People of all ages and genders are invited to attend the Young Women's Leadership Conference at John Burroughs School in Haertter Hall. Madeline Buchowski, daughter of FCC member Katherine Buchowski, is co-moderating the conference. The keynote speaker is Amanda Nguyen, who was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize in 2019 for her work as an advocate for survivors of sexual assault. She was also one of Time's Women of the Year last year. FCC member Robyn Wiens will be a panelist during the discussion portion. See the link in Friday's email newsletter to RSVP.

Please RSVP - Pastor Mia's Installation Sunday April 30, 3:00 PM

Pastor Mia's installation service will be Sunday April 30 at 3:00 PM in our sanctuary and streaming online, followed by a reception. Our guest preacher will be Rev. Traci Blackmon, Associate General Minister and Vice President for Justice and Local Church Ministries of the United Church of Christ. Our guest musician will be De-Rance Blaylock, who sings with the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra's In-Unison Chorus. Among other accomplishments, De-Rance will play the title role in the musical "Caroline or Change", presented by the Fly North Theatricals Company this summer in St. Louis. She is also a licensed minister at the Liberty Community Worship Center. **Please RSVP** to the office or on the sheets at each entrance to the sanctuary to aid in our planning!

This Week at FCC

Sunday March 26

10:00 AM - Worship Service
Faith & Fun (Soc. Hall)
11:20 AM - Zoom Coffee Hour
Meeting ID: 314 721 5060
Passcode: coffee
7:30 PM - AA Meeting (Social Hall)

Monday March 27

Church Office Closed Mondays
(Staff Team day off)

Tuesday March 28

10:00 AM - Sacred Studies &
Fellowship (Parlor)
7:00 PM - Charis Chorus
Rehearsal (Fell. Hall)

Wednesday March 29

8:00 AM - Wydown Men's Club
(Social Hall)
12:00 PM - Staff Team Meeting

Thursday March 30

7:30 PM - Chancel Choir Rehearsal

Friday March 31

6:00 PM - Jung Society (Soc. Hall)

Saturday April 1

10:00 AM - Palm Sunday Drama
Rehearsal (Sanctuary)
6:00 PM - Project Animal Freedom
Event (Fell. Hall)

Sunday April 2 - Palm Sunday

10:00 AM - Worship Service
11:20 AM - Zoom Coffee Hour
11:30 AM - Petting Zoo
1:00 PM - Extraneous Commas
Rehearsal (Fell. Hall)
7:30 PM - AA Meeting (Social Hall)

Address for Bonnie Wilcox

FCC member, Debbie Wilcox, died on March 14. Her mother, Bonnie Wilcox, welcomes visits from her FCC friends. She lives at Delmar Gardens West - 13550 S Outer 40 Rd, Room 415, Chesterfield MO 63017.

"Navigators" Discussion Group hosted by FCC Young Professionals Group April 19, May 17, 5:30-7 PM

FCC young professionals are invited to a monthly discussion group. These upcoming topical events give members and friends an opportunity to meet outside of the church building to discuss where faith fits in our ever-changing lives. While many topics are aimed toward young professionals, we are not limited to a single age group and encourage broader participation. Join the group for happy hour and discussion at Fallon's in Olivette (9200 Olive Blvd), once/month. Upcoming topics: Who's in your inner circle? (April 19), Self Care and Spiritual Care (May 17).

Unleashing Potential Trivia Night April 22, Doors: 6 PM, Trivia: 7 PM

Unleashing Potential, one of our mission partners, is hosting their annual trivia night fundraiser on April 22 at Sunset Hills Community Center (3915 S. Lindbergh). The mission of Unleashing Potential is to close the opportunity gap for children and youth by building on their strengths. The cost is \$250 for a table of 10, or \$300 for a VIP table of 10. Register for a table online: <https://bit.ly/3IRoHu3>.

Volunteer with Food Outreach May 13, 10 AM - 3 PM

Our Mission & Outreach Ministry Team invites us to volunteer with Food Outreach on Saturday May 13. Food Outreach's mission is to provide nutritional support and enhance the quality of life of men, women, and children living with HIV/AIDS or cancer. We will pack groceries to be given to Food Outreach clients. Jim Kemp will be there and there are three more spots reserved for FCC. To participate, register online at foodoutreach.volunteerhub.com/vv2/. If you register, please let Jim Kemp know at jimkemp314@gmail.com or 314-591-4358.

Daily Devotional for Lent Week Five: Can these bones live?

Journal or meditate on these questions each day.

Sunday March 26: Where do you find peace?

Prayer: God of peace, it's not often that I slow down to think about the things that truly calm my spirit and anchor me to you. However, with the world threatening to run us ragged, I have to ask: what is it that brings me peace? How do I find it? How do I hold onto it? Help me sift through the pieces of my life to recognize what truly brings me peace so that even in hard seasons, these bones may live. Amen.

Monday March 27: What do you worry about?

Prayer: Jesus of Nazareth, I imagine that you worried. I imagine you worried about your friend Lazarus and whether or not he would be okay. I imagine you worried about returning to Jerusalem and what would happen when you did (John 11). Maybe worry is a symptom of love, but it is not a symptom that you let control you. So give me the courage to recognize my worries and to continue moving forward, just as you did. With hope I pray, amen.

Tuesday March 28: When all seems lost, how do you hold onto hope?

Prayer: God, some days feel like dead bone days. Like Ezekiel in the desert, I'm not sure these bones can live (Ezekiel 37). I'm not sure anything good can come from those days. When those days come, remind me that you are a God who breathes life into dust. May I rest in that promise. Amen.

Wednesday March 29: Jesus weeps for his friend Lazarus (John 11). What grief do you carry?

Prayer: Jesus, friend of Lazarus, Lent has a way of stirring up the grief we carry from year-to-year. Lent brings to mind the various endings in our life—the end of relationships, identities, seasons, and opportunities. Remind us that you know what that grief feels like, which means we are not alone in the heaviness of it all. Thank you for the companionship. Amen.

Thursday March 30: Even though it is dangerous for Jesus to go to Judea, he goes in order to be with his friend Lazarus (John 11). Who in your life has gone that extra mile for you? Who would you walk the extra mile for?

Prayer: Holy God, my life would not be complete without friends and family. When I look back over the years, it is the memories created with the people I love that give me the greatest joy. Help me cherish that for the sacred gift that it is. Thank you for my people, God. Amen.

Friday March 31: What makes you weary?

Prayer: God, is there truth embedded in my weariness? Is there something for me to learn from the exhaustion that knows my name? Show me how to be gentle with myself. Show me how to sift through my weariness, and how to lift my eyes when the yoke is heavy, so that I can find you in my midst. Amen.

Saturday April 1: What relationships matter most to you in this season?

Prayer: Triune God, from the very beginning you wired us for friendship, for community, for belonging. And yet, relationships are so hard! Vulnerability and trust can take so long! Give me an open heart to pour into the people in my life that mean the most to me. Do not let me withhold my care, but instead, may the love I feel for those who matter the most to me draw me closer and closer to you. Amen.



*Whoever you are, and wherever you are on life's journey,
you are welcome here.*

Our Ministry Team:

Mehran Moslehikhah, Maintenance

Tim Clark, Minister of Music
(tclark@firstcongregational.org)

Emily Stokes (MAPS), Minister of Faith Formation
(estokes@firstcongregational.org)

Hannah Rice (MDiv), Minister of Administration and Membership
(hrice@firstcongregational.org)

Rev. Mia White (MDiv, MATS, CSD), Senior Minister
(revmia@firstcongregational.org)



**FCC
Calendar**



**News
& Events**



**Give
Online**

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