

## Fifth Sunday in Lent

March 22, 2026

United Church of Christ - Neillsville

Pastor Julie Ruegsegger

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**PRELUDE** Holly Pisors

**RINGING OF THE CARILLON**

**WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS**

**PREPARING OUR HEARTS TO HEAR THE WORD**

**HYMN:** "Gathered Here" Phil Porter

**#742 NCH (sing twice)**

Gathered here in the mystery of this hour,  
Gathered here in one strong body,  
Gathered here in the struggle and the pow'r,  
Spirit, draw near.

**MEDITATION MOMENT**

*Dry Bones by Dr. Rev. Jody Seymour (a poem based on  
Ezekiel 37: 1-14)*

**RESPONSE:** "Come and Fill Our Hearts" Taize Community  
#16 MV (sing twice)

Come and fill our hearts with your peace.  
You alone, O God are holy.  
Come and fill our hearts with your peace,  
A - - - men.

**CALL TO WORSHIP (Psalm 130)** Lexi Woods

Wait for the Lord, like those who hope in God's mercy.

**God's steadfast love endures forever.**

Watch for God, like those who eagerly await the  
morning.

**We watch for God, whose power redeems us.**

Hear God's hopeful word, like those who long for  
pardon.

**Sing praise to God and rejoice in God's love.**

**OPENING PRAYER** Lexi Woods

Loving God, we are yours. We come as we are, with  
our cares and concerns. We long to touch you and  
find healing in your embrace. Strengthen our faith  
and heal our brokenness, that we may worship you  
with joy. Amen.

**HYMN** "Breathe on Me, Breath of God"

**#292 NCH** Edwin Hatch

**1 Breathe on me, Breath of God,  
fill me with life anew,  
that I may love the way you love,  
and do what you would do.**

**2 Breathe on me, Breath of God,  
until my heart is pure,  
until with you I will one will,  
to do and to endure.**

**3 Breathe on me, Breath of God,  
Stir in me one desire:  
That every earthly part of me  
May glow with holy fire.**

**4 Breathe on me, Breath of God,  
so shall I never die,  
but live with you the perfect life  
Of your eternity.**

**PRAYER OF TRANSFORMATION** Lexi Bergemann

O God of compassion, if you kept a record of our sins,  
who could stand? We come before you with our  
brokenness and our wounds for all to see. We bring  
our anger, our bitterness, our unwholesome talk, and  
our deceitfulness. We try to do good, but sometimes  
fail. We choose to do evil, and sometimes succeed.  
Keep your promise to forgive us when we confess to  
you completely. Without you, we have no hope.

**WORDS OF GRACE** Lexi Bergemann

If we confess our sins, God is faithful and will forgive  
us. God provides freely, in the bread of heaven, all the  
mercy we need for life everlasting. The good news is  
forgiveness in the name of Christ Jesus.

**RESPONSE:** "Hold Us in Your Grace, O God"

*Lyrics: Keri K. Wehlander*

*Music: Bruce Harding and Keri K. Wehlander*

**Hold us in your grace, O God; hold us in your grace.  
Hold us in your grace, O God; hold us in your grace.  
Hold us, hold us in your grace.  
Hold us, hold us in your grace.**

## PASSING OF THE PEACE

One: The Peace of God be with you.

**Many: And also with you.**

**RESPONSE:** *“Hold Us in Your Grace, O God”*

*Lyrics: Keri K. Wehlander*

*Music: Bruce Harding and Keri K. Wehlander*

**Hold us in your grace, O God; hold us in your grace.**

**Hold us in your grace, O God; hold us in your grace.**

**Hold us, hold us in your grace.**

**Hold us, hold us in your grace.**

## HEARING THE WORD

**CHILDREN’S TIME** *Lexi Woods & Lexi Bergemann*

## SCRIPTURE READINGS

**NEW TESTAMENT** **John 11:1-45**

*Dramatic Reading: Calvin Heck, Lexi Woods,  
Lexi Bergemann, Axel Kruschke*

<sup>1</sup> A certain man, Lazarus, was ill. He was from Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. (<sup>2</sup> This was the Mary who anointed the Lord with fragrant oil and wiped his feet with her hair. Her brother Lazarus was ill.) <sup>3</sup> So the sisters sent word to Jesus, saying, “Lord, the one whom you love is ill.”

<sup>4</sup> When he heard this, Jesus said, “This illness isn’t fatal. It’s for the glory of God so that God’s Son can be glorified through it.” <sup>5</sup> Jesus loved Martha, her sister, and Lazarus. <sup>6</sup> When he heard that Lazarus was ill, he stayed where he was. After two days, <sup>7</sup> he said to his disciples, “Let’s return to Judea again.”

<sup>8</sup> The disciples replied, “Rabbi, the Jewish opposition wants to stone you, but you want to go back?”

<sup>9</sup> Jesus answered, “Aren’t there twelve hours in the day? Whoever walks in the day doesn’t stumble because they see the light of the world. <sup>10</sup> But whoever walks in the night does stumble because the light isn’t in them.”

<sup>11</sup> He continued, “Our friend Lazarus is sleeping, but I am going in order to wake him up.”

<sup>12</sup> The disciples said, “Lord, if he’s sleeping, he will get well.” <sup>13</sup> They thought Jesus meant that Lazarus was in a deep sleep, but Jesus had spoken about Lazarus’ death.

<sup>14</sup> Jesus told them plainly, “Lazarus has died. <sup>15</sup> For your sakes, I’m glad I wasn’t there so that you can believe. Let’s go to him.”

<sup>16</sup> Then Thomas (the one called Didymus) said to the other disciples, “Let us go too so that we may die with Jesus.”

Jesus with Martha and Mary

<sup>17</sup> When Jesus arrived, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb for four days. <sup>18</sup> Bethany was a little less than two miles from Jerusalem. <sup>19</sup> Many Jews had come to comfort Martha and Mary after their brother’s death. <sup>20</sup> When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went to meet him, while Mary remained in the house. <sup>21</sup> Martha said to Jesus, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother wouldn’t have died. <sup>22</sup> Even now I know that whatever you ask God, God will give you.”

<sup>23</sup> Jesus told her, “Your brother will rise again.”

<sup>24</sup> Martha replied, “I know that he will rise in the resurrection on the last day.”

<sup>25</sup> Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me will live, even though they die. <sup>26</sup> Everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?”

<sup>27</sup> She replied, “Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Christ, God’s Son, the one who is coming into the world.”

<sup>28</sup> After she said this, she went and spoke privately to her sister Mary, “The teacher is here and he’s calling for you.” <sup>29</sup> When Mary heard this, she got up quickly and went to Jesus. <sup>30</sup> He hadn’t entered the village but was still in the place where Martha had met him. <sup>31</sup> When the Jews who were comforting Mary in the house saw her get up quickly and leave, they followed her. They assumed she was going to mourn at the tomb.

<sup>32</sup> When Mary arrived where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet and said, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother wouldn’t have died.”

<sup>33</sup> When Jesus saw her crying and the Jews who had come with her crying also, he was deeply disturbed and troubled. <sup>34</sup> He asked, “Where have you laid him?”

They replied, “Lord, come and see.”

<sup>35</sup> Jesus began to cry. <sup>36</sup> The Jews said, "See how much he loved him!" <sup>37</sup> But some of them said, "He healed the eyes of the man born blind. Couldn't he have kept Lazarus from dying?"

Jesus at Lazarus' tomb

<sup>38</sup> Jesus was deeply disturbed again when he came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone covered the entrance. <sup>39</sup> Jesus said, "Remove the stone."

Martha, the sister of the dead man, said, "Lord, the smell will be awful! He's been dead four days."

<sup>40</sup> Jesus replied, "Didn't I tell you that if you believe, you will see God's glory?" <sup>41</sup> So they removed the stone. Jesus looked up and said, "Father, thank you for hearing me. <sup>42</sup> I know you always hear me. I say this for the benefit of the crowd standing here so that they will believe that you sent me." <sup>43</sup> Having said this, Jesus shouted with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!" <sup>44</sup> The dead man came out, his feet bound and his hands tied, and his face covered with a cloth. Jesus said to them, "Untie him and let him go."

<sup>45</sup> Therefore, many of the Jews who came with Mary and saw what Jesus did believed in him.

**SERMON** "Unbind Them" Pastor Julie

**HYMN** "Lord, If Only You Had Been Here"

Words: Carolyn Winfrey Gillette

Tune: BEACH SPRING 8.7.8.7 D

("God Whose Giving Knows No Ending")

**1 "Lord, if only you had been here,  
one I love would not have died."  
Martha shared her grief with Jesus  
in these words she sadly cried.  
Jesus said, "I'm resurrection.  
Martha, do you know it's true?  
I'm the life for which you're longing."  
She said, "I believe in you!"**

**2 "Lord, if only you had been here!"  
Jesus heard these words again.  
Mary, sitting home and waiting,  
spoke to Jesus of her pain.  
So our Lord was deeply troubled  
in this world of death and sin.  
Sometimes all we see is struggle;  
death and evil seem to win.**

**3 "Lord, if only you had been here,"  
we cry out when all goes wrong —  
When our grief is overwhelming,  
when life's troubles seem so strong.  
Then, O Lord, we hear your answer:  
"I am resurrection — See!  
Not just in some distant future —  
I am life! Now live in me!"**

**4 When we share your resurrection,  
when we know that you are life,  
We find courage for our living  
in this world of pain and strife.  
We your church will work for justice,  
welcome strangers, help the poor.  
Faced with death, we'll be a witness:  
you are with us, Risen Lord.**

### MORNING PRAYERS

*Calvin Heck*

Gracious God, in your mercy,  
**Hear our prayer.**

### PRAYER OF OUR SAVIOR

**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**

### RESPONDING TO THE WORD

#### THE OFFERING SERVICE

Invitation to Generosity *Axel Kruschke*

#### Offertory

#### Doxology

**Praise God throughout these forty days;  
Praise Christ, our Lord, whom God did raise;  
And praise the Spirit who imparts  
God's love in Christ into our hearts. Amen.**

#### Prayer of Dedication

**O God, accept and bless these gifts which we offer  
in response to the gracious gift of your life-giving  
Spirit to us. May these gifts and our lives be used  
to flesh out your love and justice, mercy and peace  
as they are revealed in and through Jesus, your Son  
and our Savior. Amen**

**HYMN** *“Lead Us from Death to Life”*

#581 NCH Marty Haugen

**Refrain:**

Lead us from death to life, from falsehood to truth,  
from despair to hope, from fear to trust.  
Lead us from hate to love, from war to peace;  
Let peace fill our hearts, let peace fill our world,  
let peace fill our universe.

1 Still all the angry cries, still all the angry guns,  
Still now your people die, earth’s sons and daughters.

Let justice roll, let mercy pour down,  
Come and teach us your way of compassion.  
*(Refrain)*

2 So many lonely hearts, so many broken lives,  
Longing for love to break into their anguish.  
Come, teach us love; come, teach us peace,  
Come and teach us your way of compassion.  
*(Refrain)*

3 Let justice ever roll, let mercy fill the earth,  
Let us begin to grow into your people.  
We can be love, we can bring peace,  
We can still be your way of compassion.  
*(Refrain)*

**BLESSING** *Lazarus Blessing by Jan Richardson*

**SHARING OUR BLESSINGS AND BURDENS**

*As we are gathered together as children of God, we are called to share our blessings and joys and our concerns, our deepest fears, sadnesses, griefs and needs so that we may bear one another up and support each other in prayer and Christian love.*

**SENDING OUT TO THE WORLD**

**HYMN** *“Lead Us from Death to Life”*

#581 NCH Marty Haugen

**Refrain:**

Lead us from death to life, from falsehood to truth,  
from despair to hope, from fear to trust.  
Lead us from hate to love, from war to peace;  
Let peace fill our hearts, let peace fill our world,  
let peace fill our universe.

**BENEDICTION**

Kalvin: Come out! Jesus commands,  
**And calls us from the tombs of our existence  
into the brightness of a new day.**

Lexi B: Come out! Jesus cries,  
**And unbinds us from the chains of our past.**

Lexi W: Come out! Jesus calls,  
**And entices us into a world filled with grace and possibility.**

Axel: So - Go out!  
**Into a world that needs our life, our breath, our spirit!**

Kalvin: Go out!  
**Into a world that needs the Spirit of God,  
carried on our lips and in our loving arms.**

Lexi B: Go out!  
**Into the world to live as God’s resurrected people!**

Pastor Julie: Go out and go on the breath of God’s holy wind!

**POSTLUDE**

**RADIO BROADCAST**

**11 AM Sunday radio broadcast  
on WCCN 98.5FM and 1370AM**

This week’s radio broadcast is sponsored  
anonymously by a “faithful listener”.

**WELCOME**

We welcome you to our service of worship!  
We are glad that you have joined us on site,  
through the internet or on the radio.  
We pray that you will hear God’s call,  
seek to follow Jesus, led by the Holy Spirit.

YouTube link for Sunday, March 22, 2026  
<https://youtube.com/live/VihUSu-PNy8>

## Volunteers Needed for Sunday Worship

March 15 – April 5, 2026

We are looking for volunteers to assist with Sunday worship by **reading the scriptures and/or leading the children's message**. Pastor Julie will choose the scripture readings, and volunteers will prepare and lead the children's message. Pastor Julie has online resources available and is happy to discuss ideas or offer guidance.

If you feel called to help, please add your name to the schedule below. For more specifics of questions please contact Sally Sadowska or Janice Miller.

Thank you for serving!

Sunday	Scripture	Children's message
Mar. 15	Byrl Buddenhagen	Barb Shoemaker
Mar. 22	Nancy Rodman	Debbie Perkl
Mar 29 (Palm)	Marla Raine	
April 5 (Easter)	Susie Karl	

### ANNOUNCEMENTS This Sunday, March 22nd **- 9:30 AM Worship**

Deacon – Karlene Wallace  
 Greeters – Carole Romens, Jenny Erickson  
 Ushers – Don Quicker, Jerry Quicker  
 Power Point – Barb Petkovsek  
 AV – Lydia Schumacher

*FYI - (for those who are scheduled for PowerPoint/AV it is suggested that you arrive 30 minutes prior to the church service to get the laptop turned on, allow for any updates, get screen down and start running the announcements).*

### Following Sunday, March 29th

Deacon – Janice Miller  
 Greeters – Wayne & JoAnn Voss  
 Ushers – Larry Marshall, Ken Shoemaker  
 Power Point – Janice Miller  
 AV – Crispin Hediger

### Tuesday, March 24th **- 1:00 PM Bible Study** **- 5:00 PM Leadership Council Meeting**

### Wednesday, March 25th **- 6:00 PM – viewing the “Chosen” at Calvary**

**Coffee fellowship after worship -**  
 Sign up on back bulletin board

Mar 22 – Weyer & Hamm  
 Mar 29 – Voss'  
 Apr 5 – EASTER – no fellowship after worship  
 Apr 12 –  
 Apr 19 -  
 We need people to sign up



We have Easter Lily, Hyacinth, Tulip and Daffodil plants available.

All flowers are in 6" pots and are \$20.00.

You may choose to honor/remember someone with your flower order(s).

You may take your plants home after Easter morning worship.

**ORDER NOW - due here by March 23rd.**  
 You may also call the church office at 715-743-2147 to place your order.

### GIVE TO ONE GREAT HOUR OF SHARING

