

Worship Guide for March 22, 2026

The Fifth Sunday of Lent



Welcome and Announcements

Let us prepare our hearts for worship.

Here I Am to Worship by Tim Hughes

*Light of the World, You stepped down into darkness, opened my eyes, let me see,
Beauty that made this heart adore You, hope of a life spent with You.*

*Here I am to worship, here I am to bow down, here I am to say that you're my God,
You're altogether lovely, altogether worthy, altogether wonderful to me.*

*King of all days, oh so highly exalted, glorious in heaven above,
Humbly You came to the Earth You created, all for love's sake became poor.*

*Here I am to worship, here I am to bow down, here I am to say that you're my God,
You're altogether lovely, altogether worthy, altogether wonderful to me.*

And I'll never know how much it cost to see my sin upon that cross.

*Here I am to worship, here I am to bow down, here I am to say that you're my God,
You're altogether lovely, altogether worthy, altogether wonderful to me.*

Confession and Forgiveness

Blessed be the holy Trinity, one God, who journeys with us these forty days, and sustains us with mercy and love. **Amen.**

Let us return to the Lord our God and confess our sin.

Silence for reflection.

Merciful God, we confess that we have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done and by what we have left undone. We have not loved you with our whole heart. We have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. We cling to the things of this world and resist the way of the cross. We turn inward, we hold grudges, we neglect those in need. Create in us clean hearts, O God. Teach us to walk in your ways, for the sake of Jesus Christ, our Savior. Amen.

Hear the good news: God is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love. Through Christ, your sins are forgiven. You are freed to love and serve your neighbor. In the name of Jesus Christ, you are forgiven. **Amen.**

Gathering Hymn**Here on Jesus Christ I Will Stand**

Refrain



Kwa - ke *Ye - su na - si - ma - ma,* *ndi - ye*
Here on Je - sus Christ I will stand. He's the



mwam - ba ni sa - la - ma. *Ndi - ye mwam - ba ni sa - la -*
sol - id rock of my life. He's the sol - id rock of my



ma, *ndi - ye mwam - ba ni sa - la - ma.*
life. He's the sol - id rock of my life.



1 There's no oth - er place I can hide till the
2 It is not the work of my hands that has
3 When my days on this earth are done, and I



storm that rag - es sub - sides. My voice cries to God from the
washed a - way all my sins. I'm re - deemed, and all of my
stand at God's ho - ly throne, my heart will not have an - y



flood, and I'm saved be - cause of his blood.
days, Je - sus Christ will be my heart's praise.
fear; in Christ's righ - teous - ness I am here.

Refrain

Prayer of the Day

Together we pray: ***Almighty God, your Son came into the world to free us all from sin and death. Breathe upon us the power of your Spirit, that we may be raised to new life in Christ and serve you in righteousness all our days, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.***

Reading of the Word

First Reading: Ezekiel 37:1-14

¹The 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 around 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."

⁷So 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.

¹¹Then 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."

Word of God, Word of Life. ***Thanks be to God.***

Psalm: Psalm 130

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

²**O Lord, hear my voice! Let your ears be attentive to the voice of my supplication.**

³If you were to keep watch over sins, O Lord, who could stand?

⁴**Yet with you is forgiveness, in order that you may be feared.**

⁵I wait for you, O Lord; my soul waits; in your word is my hope.

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

⁷O Israel, wait for the Lord, for with the Lord there is steadfast love; with the Lord there is plenteous redemption.

⁸**For the Lord shall redeem Israel from all their sins. R**

Second Reading: Romans 8:6-11

⁶To set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace.

⁷For this reason the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God's law—indeed, it cannot, ⁸and those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

⁹But you are not in the flesh; you are in the Spirit, since the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. ¹⁰But if Christ is in you, then the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. ¹¹If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also through his Spirit that dwells in you.

Word of God, Word of Life. ***Thanks be to God.***

Children's Message**Gospel Acclamation****Return to the Lord Your God**

Re-turn to the Lord, your God, for he is gra-cious and mer-ci-ful,



slow to an - ger, and a-bound - ing in stead - fast love.

Gospel: John 11:1-45

¹Now 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.

⁷Then 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. ¹⁵ For your sake I am glad I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him." ¹⁶ Thomas, 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 four days. ¹⁸ Now Bethany was near Jerusalem, some two miles away, ¹⁹ and many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to console them about their brother. ²⁰ When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went and met him, while Mary stayed at home. ²¹ Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. ²² But even now I know that God will give you whatever you ask of him." ²³ Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again." ²⁴ Martha said to him, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day." ²⁵ Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, ²⁶ and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?" ²⁷ She 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." ²⁹ And when she heard it, she got up quickly and went to him. ³⁰ Now Jesus had not yet come to the village but was still at the place where Martha had met him. ³¹ The 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. ³² When 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." ³³ When Jesus saw her weeping and the Jews who came with her also weeping, he was greatly disturbed in spirit and deeply moved. ³⁴ He said, "Where have you laid him?" They said to him, "Lord, come and see." ³⁵ Jesus began to weep. ³⁶ So the Jews said, "See how he loved him!" ³⁷ But 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. ³⁹ Jesus 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 four days." ⁴⁰ Jesus said to her, "Did I not tell you that if you believed you would see the glory of God?" ⁴¹ So they took away the stone. And Jesus looked upward and said, "Father, I thank you for having heard me. ⁴² I 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." ⁴³ When he had said this, he cried with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!" ⁴⁴ The 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.

The Gospel of the Lord. ***Praise to you, O Christ.***

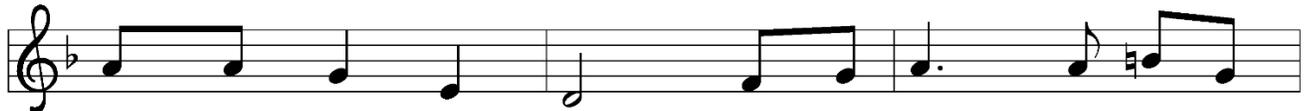
Sermon**Last Chance to Order Geraniums for Easter!**

Red geraniums (\$6.50) can be ordered for Easter Sunday in honor/memory of loved ones, or just because! Orders are due by Monday, March 23.

Forms are available on the rear table in the Fellowship Hall.

Hymn of the Day**Tree of Life and Awesome Mystery**

1 Tree of Life and awe - some mys - t'ry, in your
 2 We re - mem - ber truth once spo - ken, love passed
 3 Christ, you lead and we shall fol - low, stum - bling



death we are re - born; though you die in all of
 on through act and word; ev - 'ry per - son lost and
 though our steps may be; one with you in joy and



his - t'ry, still you rise with ev - 'ry morn, still you
 bro - ken wears the bod - y of our Lord, wears the
 sor - row, we the riv - er, you the sea, we the



rise with ev - 'ry morn.
 bod - y of our Lord.
 riv - er, you the sea.

Verse 4

God of all our fear and sorrow, God who lives beyond our death,
 Hold us close through each tomorrow, love as near as every breath,
 Love as near as every breath.

Welcome to New Salem - We are blessed to have you worship with us today!



If you are looking for a church home, please contact Traci Schanke in the church office at 218-586-2262 or via email at newsalem@paulbunyan.net. If you are a visitor, please sign our guest book outside the church office.

Website: newsalemlutheran.org

YouTube Channel: New Salem Lutheran Church, Turtle River, MN

Worship Volunteers Needed

Volunteers are needed to assist with various Sunday ministries here at New Salem! Ushers, readers/Communion assistants, helpers to set up Communion before the worship service and tidy up afterward, offering counters (we will train you!), and hosts for our coffee fellowship after worship. Sign up as a family or team up with a friend or two! **Signup sheets are available on the back table in the Fellowship Hall. Remember: If no one signs up to host coffee fellowship, THERE IS NO COFFEE FELLOWSHIP.**



Rummage and Bake Sale April 18



It's time to start assembling your rummage items - Saturday, April 18, is the date for the 2026 Spring Rummage and Bake Sale! Items for the sale can be brought to the church during office hours (noon-5, Monday-Friday; please call to make sure we haven't stepped out for a few minutes). See the activity table in the fellowship hall for a signup page for sale prep/working at the sale and foam trays/plastic bags for baked goods. All are welcome to assist with this event!

Apostles' Creed

I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended to the dead.*

On the third day, he rose again; he ascended into heaven, he is seated at the right hand of the Father, and he will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

Prayers of the People

Hear us, O God. *Your mercy is great.*

Sharing the Peace**Tithes and Offerings****Offertory Hymn****Come to the Table**

Come to the ta - ble of mer - cy, pre - pared with the wine and the bread.



All who are hun - gry and thirst - y, come, and your souls will be fed.



Come at the Lord's in - vi - ta - tion; re - ceive from his nail - scarred hand.



Eat of the bread of sal - va - tion; drink of the blood of the Lamb.

Offering Prayer

God, our provider, *you have not fed us with bread alone but with words of grace and life. Bless us and these your gifts, which we receive from your bounty, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

Words of Institution**Lord's Prayer**

Together we pray: *Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and forever. Amen.*

Sharing Christ's Meal

Communion Hymn #1**Come to Me, All Pilgrims Thirsty**

- 1 "Come to me, all pil-grims thirst - y; drink the wa - ter I will give.
- 2 "Come to me, all trav-'lers wea - ry; come that I may give you rest.
- 3 "Come to me, be - liev-ers bur-dened; find re - fresh-ment in this place.
- 4 "Come to me, re - pen-tant sin - ners; leave be - hind your guilt and shame.



If you knew what gift I of - fer, you would come to me and live."
 Drink the cup of life I of - fer; at this ta - ble be my guest."
 Come, re - ceive the gift I of - fer, turn to me and seek my face."
 Come and know di - vine com-pas - sion, turn to me, I call your name."

Refrain

Je - sus, ev - er - flow-ing foun - tain, give us wa - ter from your well.



In the gra - cious gift you of - fer there is joy no tongue can tell.

- 5 "Come to me, distressed and needy;
I would be your trusted friend.
Come and seek the gift I offer,
come, your open hands extend." *Refrain*
- 6 "Come to me, abandoned, orphaned;
lonely ways no longer roam.
Come and take the gift I offer,
let me make in you my home." *Refrain*

Upcoming @ New Salem

Wed, 3/25	Choir Practice	5 p.m.
	Final Midweek Lenten Worship Service	6:30 p.m.
Thurs, 3/26	Bible Study	9:30 a.m.
Sun, 3/29	Palm Sunday Worship Service	9:30 a.m.
Thurs, 4/2	Bible Study	9:30 a.m.
	Choir Practice	5 p.m.
	Maundy Thursday Worship Service	6:30 p.m.
Fri, 4/3	Good Friday Worship Service	6:30 p.m.
Sun, 4/5	Easter Sunday Worship Service	9:30 a.m.

Communion Hymn #2

I Am the Bread of Life (continues next page)



1 "I am the Bread of life. You who
 2 "The bread that . . . I will give is my
 3 "Un - less you eat of the
 4 "I am the res - ur - rec - tion,
 5 Yes, Lord, I be - lieve that . . .



come to me shall not hun - ger, and who be -
 flesh for the life of the world, and if you
 flesh of the Son of Man and . . .
 I am the life. If you be -
 you are the Christ, the . . .



lieve in me shall not thirst. No one can come to
 eat of this bread, you shall . . live for -
 drink of his blood, and drink of his
 lieve in . . . me, e - ven . . though you
 Son of . . . God, who have . . .



me un - less the Fa - ther beck - ons."
 ev - er, you shall live for - ev - er."
 blood, you shall not have life with - in you."
 die, you shall live for - ev - er."
 come in - to the world. . . .

"And I will raise you up, and I will raise you up,



and I will raise you up on the last day.”

Communion Blessing

Post Communion Prayer

Compassionate God, *you have fed us with the bread of heaven. Sustain us in our Lenten pilgrimage: may our fasting be a hunger for justice; our alms, a making of peace; and our prayer, the song of grateful hearts, through Jesus Christ, our Savior, and Lord. Amen.*

Benediction

Sending Hymn

In the Cross of Christ I Glory (next page)

Lent and Easter at New Salem

Final Lenten Midweek Service - March 25 at 6:30 p.m.

Holy Week



Palm Sunday, March 29 at 9:30 a.m.



Maundy (Holy) Thursday, April 2 at 6:30 p.m.



Good Friday, April 3 at 6:30 p.m.

Easter Sunday, April 5 at 9:30 a.m.





1 Je - sus lives, my sure de - fense and my ev - er - last - ing Sav - ior!
 2 Je - sus, my re - deem - er, lives; I too un - to life shall wak - en.
 3 No, too close - ly am I bound un - to him by hope for - ev - er;
 4 I am flesh and must re - turn un - to dust, whence I am tak - en.



Know - ing this, my con - fi - dence rests in hope and will not wa - ver,
 Bright the hope this prom - ise gives; shall my cour - age, then, be shak - en?
 faith's strong hand the rock has found, grasped it, and will leave it nev - er;
 But these eyes my Lord will know when from death I shall a - wak - en,



though the night of death be fraught still with man - y an anx - ious thought.
 Shall I fear then? Can the head rise and leave his mem - bers dead?
 e - ven death now can - not part from its Lord the trust - ing heart.
 with my Sav - ior to a - bide in his glo - ry, at his side.

5 Then take comfort and rejoice,
 for his people Christ will cherish.
 Fear not, you will hear his voice;
 dying, you will never perish;
 for the very grave is stirred
 when the trumpet's blast is heard.

6 Here on earth, then, let your hearts
 rise from longings vain and hollow.
 Seek what Christ your Lord imparts
 while you in his footsteps follow.
 As you now still wait to rise,
 set your hearts beyond the skies!

Today's Worship Leaders/Assistants

Presiding Clergy: Pastor Terry R. Hagensen
 Ushers: Pat Sanford and Karen Spargo
 Reader/Communion Assistant:
 Fellowship Hosts:

Social Media Coordinator: Nora Illies
 Setting the Lord's Table: Sonya & Paul Kraft
 Pianist: Cheryl Durant
 Cantor/AV Services: Traci Schanke

New Salem Lutheran Church - Terry R. Hagensen, Pastor

7491 Island View Drive NE, Turtle River, MN 56601

Office Tel: 218-586-2262/Office Email (Traci Schanke): newsalem@paulbunyan.net

Website: newsalemlutheran.org/

YouTube Channel: New Salem Lutheran Church, Turtle River, MN

February Income vs Expenses (FINAL)

Total General Fund Income for Feb: \$13,013
DEFICIT for Feb: (-\$2,243)

Total Expenses for Feb: \$15,256
 3.15 General Fund Offering: \$5,893

Attendance/Social Media Engagement (as of 3.20.26)

Sunday, Mar 15 (in person/online): 66/41 Wednesday, Mar 25 (in person/online): 17/18

YouTube Views: 586

YouTube Subscribers: 142

Facebook reach: 25,320

Announcements for the Week of March 23, 2026

Lent and Easter at New Salem: Our final Lenten Midweek Service will be on 25 at 6:30 p.m. The final schedule for Holy Week: Holy Week: Palm Sunday, March 29 at 9:30 a.m., Maundy Thursday, April 2 at 6:30 p.m. Good Friday, April 3 at 6:30 p.m., Easter Sunday, April 5 at 9:30 a.m.

Choir Rehearsal Change for Holy Week: During Holy Week, **choir rehearsal will move to THURSDAY, April 2 at 5 p.m.** (just before the Maundy Thursday worship service.)

Birthday Bag Assembly/Rummage Sale Setup on Sunday, April 12! It's time again to put together birthday bags for the Food Shelf. We are in need of cake mixes, frostings (full size please) and birthday napkins – these items can be brought to the church before April 12. Our goal is to assemble 150 bags!

Along with assembling birthday bags, we will also start setting up for the April 18 Rummage and Bake Sale. Please stay and help with these projects if you are able – many hands make light work!!!

Offering Reminder: Please remember to indicate on your check/offering envelope how you wish your gift to be credited. Unmarked offerings/those marked “general” go toward New Salem’s annual operating expenses; gifts marked for other entities are credited as such in your giving record and sent to those organizations. Thank you for supporting the missions and good works of New Salem!

Music Rights/Permissions for March 22

Permission to podcast/stream the music in this service and include the printed music in this worship guide has been obtained from *ONE LICENSE*, License #A-726224; credits are as follows:

Here on Jesus Christ I Will Stand – Text and music: Kenyan hymn; adapt. Greg Scheer (b. 1966) Text © 2007 East African Annual Conference, admin. General Board of Global Ministries GBG Musik English adapt. and arr. © 2007 Greg Scheer, admin. General Board of Global Ministries GBG Musik

Return to the Lord Your God – Text and music: © 1978 Lutheran Book of Worship and © 2006 Evangelical Lutheran Worship

Tree of Life and Awesome Mystery – Text and music: Marty Haugen (b. 1950)

Text and music © 1984 GIA Publications, Inc.

Come to the Table – Text: Claire Cloningen (b. 1942)/Music: Martin Nystrom (b, 1956)

Text and music © 1991 Integrity’s Hosanna! Music; Juniper Landing Music, admin. Word Music

Come to Me, All Pilgrims Thirsty – Text: Delores Dufner, OSB (b. 1939)

Music: *The Sacred Harp*, Philadelphina, 1844; arr. *Selected Hymns*, 1985

Text © 1992, 1996 Sisters of St. Benedict, St. Joseph MN/Arr. ©1985 Augsburg Fortress

I Am the Bread of Life – Text and music: Suzanne Toolan, RSM (b. 1927), based on John 6

Text and music © 1966, 1970, 1986, 1993 GIA Publications, Inc.

Jesus Lives, My Sure Defense – Text: Otto von Scherin (1616-1679); tr. C. Winkworth (1827-1878)

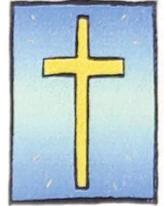
Music: attr. Johann Crüger (1598-1662)

Make a joyful noise - those who sing pray twice!

March Mission Partner: Peoples Church



*New Salem's
Highlighted Mission Partner
March 2026*



Mission

We strive to provide a sanctuary for prayerful worship within a respectful and welcoming environment and to meet the spiritual needs of our parishioners and community using Christian values while respecting the 'One God with Many Names.' After 25 years of seeing who shows up to worship with us, it is clear we are largely an indigenous church. We celebrate Cross and Feather and are very sensitive to justice issues for Native Peoples.

Peoples Church exists to help serve not only the spiritual needs but basic living needs of many who would go without. Shelter and food—that's where healing begins.

We are a multicultural and indigenous ministry of the ELCA (Evangelical Lutheran Church in America). We live out our faith by showing Creator God's love for all people by offering shelter, hot meals, and community.

Sunday Feast 12:00pm and Worship 12:30pm

Peoples Church offers overnight shelter year-round. Our hours are 5:00p to 10:00a everyday and open all day on Sundays.

Peoples Church offers overnight shelter year-round. We have a hot evening meal on Mondays, Tuesdays, Fridays, and Saturdays served beginning at 5:00pm and breakfast 7 days a week from 8-10am. Anyone in the community is welcome to share in our meals, you do not have to be a shelter guest to eat with us.

Sundays we have a feast with a hot meal at 3:00 pm 824 America Ave. NW

Food pantry with canned goods is available to everyone during our open hours: 8-10a and 5p-10p every day.



God's Work, Our Treasure—March 2026

This month New Salem is lifting up the work of a mission partner, the **Peoples Church**, and urges you to consider the various ways you might support this valuable ministry.

You can send your check to New Salem and indicate it is for the **Peoples Church**

And we will forward your gift to them. peopleschurch-elca.org

The Readings on This Day - Fifth Sunday in Lent

The last of the great signs in the gospel of John is the raising of Lazarus. The church sees in the narrative of the raising of Lazarus and in the vision of the dry bones metaphors for baptism and for the renewed life of faith that is the intention of Lent. The Vigil is coming soon.

John 11:1-45: The church has seen in this last great Johannine sign a picture of baptism: we too were dead, but the word of Christ has called us from death and restored us to life in the Spirit. Thus Lent is our annual emerging from the grave, our helping to unbind one another for vibrant life together.

Ezekiel 37:1-14: Christians have seen also in Ezekiel's vision a picture of the resurrection of the dead at the end of time. Both now and at the end we rise up in response to the word of the Lord. Through the power of the Spirit's breath, baptism begins our new life, a life that will never end.

Romans 8:6-11: In the last of our four Lenten readings from Romans, Paul uses the language of death and life to describe the radical nature of the effect of the indwelling of Christ's Spirit. We are now dead to sin, and the new life of Christ is already experienced here and now.

Images in the Readings

Many medieval churches housed burials and contain even glass-cased skeletons, but most contemporary churches avoid picturing those bones that are left after the flesh has rotted away. Our culture avoids dealing directly and honestly with death: many people are even replacing the verb "died" with the term "passed," as if with everyone going off to heaven, there really is no death. In contrast, this Sunday presents us with the images of the grave, the stink of bodily decomposition, and the pile of bones. Furthermore, Paul's use of the term "flesh" as a metaphor for the misused human life intensifies this Sunday's honesty about human mortality. These texts represent the Bible's stark attention to the reality of death, both the "death" that is sin and the finality of death when our bodies die. For this Sunday, you might borrow a skeleton from a science classroom to hang prominently in the sanctuary. When we fully acknowledge the natural fact of death, we are ready to praise God's life as gift.

Gail Ramshaw, sundaysandseasons.com

