

Wesley United Methodist Church

Serving the Community with Faith & Love Since 1927!

Rev. Nizzi Santos Digan, Pastor & Spiritual Director

10:00 AM Sunday Worship

Fifth Sunday in Lent

Last Sunday Before Holy Week

March 22, 2026



At Wesley United Methodist Church, we foster a sanctuary culture by creating a safe environment where all feel welcomed, loved, accepted, valued, and affirmed for who they are, through intentional practices such as empathy, compassion, generosity, hospitality, and inclusion.

Please let an usher know if you have questions, need assistance, or have a concern about health or safety.

Please Stand in Body or in Spirit When You See the *

Prelude

Ubi Caritas

Ronna Davis, organ
June Nixon, composer

Welcome

Pastor Nizzi

Centering

Lord Jesus Christ

Congregation

Lord Jesus Christ, Your light shines within us.
Let not our doubts nor our darkness speak to us.
Lord Jesus Christ, Your light shines within us.
Let our hearts always welcome Your love.

***Call to Worship**

One: In the stillness of the tomb, when all seemed lost, a voice broke through the silence—a voice stronger than death, a voice that called, *“Come out!”*

ALL: We come, hearts stirred by the voice of Jesus, the One who awakens the dead and breathes life into dry bones.

One: The stone is rolled away, and the darkness gives way to light. Grave clothes fall, and hope rises.

ALL: We step into the morning of God’s mercy, leaving behind the shadows of fear and despair.

One: Here stands the One who weeps with us, walks with us, and calls us by name into new life.

ALL: We worship Jesus Christ—our resurrection, our life, our Lord forever! Amen.

***Opening Hymn/Processional**

Jesus Shall Reign

UMH 157

Jesus shall reign where'er the sun
does its successive journeys run;
his kingdom spread from shore to shore,
till moons shall wax and wane no more.

To Jesus endless prayer be made,
and endless praises crown his head;
his name like sweet perfume shall rise
with every morning sacrifice.

People and realms of every tongue
dwell on his love with sweetest song;
and infant voices shall proclaim
their early blessings on his name.

Blessings abound where'er he reigns;
all prisoners leap and loose their chains;
the weary find eternal rest,
and all who suffer want are blest.

Let every creature rise and bring honors
peculiar to our King;
angels descend with songs again,
and earth repeat the loud amen!

***Praise Songs**

Ayeyi wura (You Own Our Praise) [Feel free to sing in either language]

A-ye-yi Wurae' ----A-ye-yi Wurae'
Ye yi W'aye Na ye Ma Wo so!

*You own our praise! You own our praise!
We praise you, Lord, and we lift you high!*

God You're so Good

God you're so good. God you are kind.
God you are wonderful. My God, you are excellent...

Excellent is Thy name. Excellent is Thy might.
God you are wonderful. My God you are excellent...

Opening Prayer

Out of the depths of despair, we cry to you, O God. We are lost in a world of pain and suffering. When we put our trust in weapons of war, we find no peace. When we put our faith in our own resources, we feel the ache of our true needs. When we put our hope into the health of our bodies, we suffer pain and find no healing. Come to us, O God. Forgive our doubts and fears. Heal our brokenness, that we may rejoice in your steadfast love. Amen.

(Moment of Silence for Personal Confession)

Words of Assurance

There is forgiveness and healing with God. God's steadfast love has the power to redeem our brokenness and make us whole.

Assurance of Pardon

God Is Forgiveness

Debbie O'Driscoll

God is forgiveness. Dare to forgive and God will be with you.
God is forgiveness.
Love and do not fear.

Time for the Child in Each of Us

Pastor Nizzi

Call to Prayer

Lead Us, Guide Us

TFWS 2214

Lead us, guide us, along the way, for if You lead us, we cannot stray.
Lord, let us walk each day with You. Lead us O Lord, lead us.

Prayers of the People

Pastor Nizzi

Happy birthday to you, to Jesus be true.
May God's richest blessings, now rest upon you.

The Lord's Prayer

(You are invited to pray in the language of your choice to celebrate our diversity.)

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 trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass 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.

***Gospel Reading**

John 11:1-45 (In Several Voices)

The Voice

Narrator: There was a certain man who was very ill. He was known as Lazarus from Bethany, which is the hometown of Mary and her sister Martha. *Mary did a beautiful thing for Jesus. She anointed the Lord with a pleasant-smelling oil and wiped His feet with her hair. Her brother Lazarus became deathly ill, so the sisters immediately sent a message to Jesus which said, "Lord, the one You love is very ill."* Jesus heard the message.

Jesus: His sickness will not end in his death but will bring great glory to God. As these events unfold, the Son of God will be exalted.

Narrator: Jesus *dearly* loved Mary, Martha, and Lazarus. However, after receiving this news, He waited two more days where He was.

Jesus *(speaking to the disciples):* It is time to return to Judea.

Disciples: Teacher, the last time You were there, some Jews attempted to execute You by crushing You with stones. Why would You go back?

Jesus: There are 12 hours of daylight, correct? If anyone walks in the day, that person does not stumble because he or she sees the light of the world. If anyone walks at night, he or she will trip and fall because he or she does not have the light within. (Jesus briefly pauses.) Our friend Lazarus has gone to sleep, so I will go to awaken him.

Disciples: Lord, if he is sleeping, then he will be all right.

Narrator: Jesus used "sleep" *as a metaphor* for death, but the disciples took Him literally *and did not understand*. Then Jesus spoke plainly.

Jesus: Lazarus is dead, and I am grateful for your sakes that I was not there when he died. Now you will *see and* believe. Gather yourselves, and let's go to him.

Thomas, the Twin (*to the disciples*): Let's go so we can die with Him.

Narrator: As Jesus was approaching Bethany (which is about two miles east of Jerusalem), He heard that Lazarus had been in the tomb four days. Now many people had come to comfort Mary and Martha as they mourned the loss of their brother. Martha went to meet Jesus when word arrived that He was approaching Bethany, but Mary stayed behind at the house.

Martha: Lord, if You had been with us, my brother would not have died. Even so I still believe that anything You ask of God will be done.

Jesus: Your brother will rise to life.

Martha: I know. He will rise again when everyone is resurrected on the last day.

Jesus: I am the resurrection and the source of all life; those who believe in Me will live even in death. Everyone who lives and believes in Me will never truly die. Do you believe this?

Martha: Yes, Lord, I believe that You are the Anointed, *the Liberating King*, God's own Son who *we have heard* is coming into the world.

Narrator: After this Martha ran home to Mary.

Martha (*whispering to Mary*): Come with me. The Teacher is here, and He has asked for you.

Narrator: Mary did not waste a minute. She got up and went to the same spot where Martha had found Jesus outside the village. The people gathered in her home offering support and comfort assumed she was going back to the tomb to cry and mourn, so they followed her. Mary approached Jesus, saw Him, and fell at His feet.

Mary: Lord, if only You had been here, my brother would still be alive.

Narrator: When Jesus saw *Mary's profound grief and the moaning and weeping* of her companions, He was deeply moved *by their pain* in His spirit and was intensely troubled.

Jesus: Where have you laid his body?

Others: Come and see, Lord.

Narrator: *As they walked*, Jesus wept; and everyone noticed how much Jesus must have loved Lazarus. But others were skeptical.

Others: If this man can give sight to the blind, He could have kept him from dying.

Narrator: Some are asking, if Jesus loves Lazarus so much, why didn't He get here much sooner? Then Jesus, who was intensely troubled by all of this, approached the tomb—a *small* cave covered by a *massive* stone.

Jesus: Remove the stone.

Martha: Lord, he has been dead four days; the stench will be unbearable.

Jesus: Remember, I told you that if you believe, you will see the glory of God.

Narrator: They removed the stone, and Jesus lifted His eyes toward heaven.

Jesus: Father, I am grateful that You have heard Me. I know that You are always listening, but I proclaim it loudly so that everyone here will believe You have sent Me. After these words, He called out in a thunderous voice.

Jesus: Lazarus, come out!

Narrator: Then, Lazarus who was dead walked out of his tomb bound from head to toe in a burial shroud.

Jesus: Untie him and let him go.

Narrator: Once again Jesus amazes everyone around Him. How does He raise Lazarus? What kind of man can speak life into death's darkness? Throughout His time on earth, those around Him are continually surprised by Jesus. Jesus is unique. How does He have power over death? It takes a while, but increasingly His followers become convinced this is no ordinary man. As a result, many of the Jews who had come with Mary saw what happened and believed in Him.

This is the Word of God for us, the people of God.

Thanks be to God! Amen.

Anthem

Chancel Choir
Joseph Cracolici, cello
John Rutter, composer

Out of the Deep

Out of the deep have I called unto thee, O Lord: Lord, hear my voice.
O let thine ears consider well the voice of my complaint.
If thou, Lord, wilt be extreme to mark what is done amiss:
O Lord, who may abide it?
For there is mercy with thee: therefore shalt thou be feared.
I look for the Lord: my soul doth wait for him,
and in his word is my trust.
My soul flee-eth unto the Lord: before the morning watch, I say,
before the morning watch.
O Israel, trust in the Lord, for with the Lord there is mercy;
and with him is plenteous redemption.
And he shall redeem Israel from all his sins.

Message

Renewed in God's Mercy: Come Out!

Rev. Nizzi Digan

The Offering & Offertory Music

Ghanaian Choir

Kyere me Kwan (Show Me the Way)

Justice G. Francois, composer

Show me the way, show me the way, Almighty God
Show me the way so that I may not get lost
Where are we going? Only you know. Will all be well? Only you know.
Take my hand, lead the way. Almighty God.
Take my hand, lead the way so that I may not stumble.

***Doxology**

Tune: OLD 100th

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**

Life-Giving Spirit, we come today not out of habit, but out of longing to be part of Your work that restores, renews, and redeems. Take these gifts and use them to roll away the stones that keep Your people bound. Let them be signs of trust, symbols of resurrection, and tools of transformation in a weary world. May our offering, like our living, lean into Your Spirit and testify that life—abundant, eternal, and holy—is possible in You. In Christ, who calls us out of the grave and into Your grace, we pray. Amen.

***Passing of Peace**

Shalom

Mensah Essilfie, composer

God's peace be unto you,
We wish you Shalom!
The peace of God which transcends all
understanding be with you forevermore.

Announcements

Gifty Bentum-Asante

***Closing Hymn/Recessional**

Hymn or Promise

UMH 707

In the bulb there is a flower; in the seed, an apple tree;
in cocoons, a hidden promise: butterflies will soon be free!
In the cold and snow of winter there's a spring that waits to be,
unrevealed until its season, something God alone can see.

There's a song in every silence, seeking word and melody;
there's a dawn in every darkness, bringing hope to you and me.
From the past will come the future; what it holds, a mystery,
unrevealed until its season, something God alone can see.

In our end is our beginning; in our time, infinity;
in our doubt there is believing; in our life, eternity.
In our death, a resurrection; at the last, a victory,
unrevealed until its season, something God alone can see.

***Benediction**

Rev. Nizzi Digan

Benediction Response

Congregation

Tune: LIVING GOD

May the grace and peace of Christ be with you, my friends.
Go and share the love of God, love that never ends.

Postlude

Prelude from Cello Suite No. 2 in D minor (BWV 1008)

Joseph Cracolici, cello

JS Bach, *composer*

Worship Leaders: Linda D'Acri (liturgist), Gifty Bentum-Asante,
Desmond Cheetham, Joseph Cracolici (cello) David Dagle, Ronna Davis, Deborah O'Driscoll,
Antonio Paredes, David Potts, Jennifer Quansah, Bill Robbins, Gary Robinson
Chancel Choir, Ghanaian Choir, Worship Tech Team

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