**OPENING PRAYER:**

*God who works wonders, we invite you into this place.*

*Jesus we light this candle as a sign of your presence.*

*Spirit of wisdom and understanding, enlighten us.*

*We pray that we keep our hearts and minds open to new ideas and that we may grow in our understanding of your ways. Amen.*

“Heaven knows we need never be ashamed of our tears, for they are rain upon the blinding dust of earth, overlying our hard hearts.” Charles Dickens

**BREAKING THE ICE:**

* What event in your life has affected your worldview?
* Have you ever seen or experienced a miracle?
* Do you remember a time when you lost power in a storm? Who helped?

**WRESTLING WITH THE WORD:**

*Read John 11:17-44.*

* What strikes you about this passage?
* For Lazarus to live a full life, he not only needed to be resurrected, but also unbound. His hands, face and feet were tied by grave clothes. The community unbound him. Have you ever felt bound by a situation where you didn’t believe things could get better? Who helped?
* Lazarus is going to die again. Those who mourn him will mourn again. However, now they know the hope of resurrected life. How have you found hope in difficult times?
* Jesus commands Lazarus to come out. What would Jesus’ command be for us today?

**NEXT STEPS:**

* How will your life be different based upon what you have learned in this week’s scripture, lesson and/or sermon?
* Is there a miracle that you are still praying for?
* What is binding your church from living into its fullness? What is one step you can take to unbind hope?
* In 2017, hurricanes devastated Texas, Florida and Puerto Rico. People are still suffering and bound. How are you being called to unbind those who still need hope?

 **PRAYER FOR THE WEEK:**

Dear Lord, We thank you for those who have come alongside us in our difficult times. We ask for your help us to be the compassionate people who can be called on to offer hope in the midst of devastation. We trust in your resurrection power, and trust in miracles today. In Jesus’s name we pray. Amen