



WELCOME TO FIRST MENNONITE CHURCH
of Champaign-Urbana

Following Christ. Nurturing Community. Seeking Peace with Justice.

IMAGE TITLE: *Can These Bones Live?*

MEDIUM: Oil on Baltic Birch, 18 x 18 x 2 inches, 2016

ARTIST: Josh Tiessen (www.joshtiessen.com)

ARTIST'S STATEMENT:

The Old Testament, known as the *Tanakh* to Jewish people, relays an unusual episode of the prophet Ezekiel's vision, called "The Valley of Dry Bones." I approached my painting as a modern interpretation, seeing the Monarch Butterfly as symbolic of breathing new life into lifeless human bones. This painting is a precursor to the larger work, *Rise Up*, which brings clarity to this initial macabre piece and further develops the theme of resurrection.

The Science Department at my old high school was gracious in letting me borrow their expensive full skeleton model for a weekend. I laid out "Charlie" as we called him, on our dining room table and photographed him with my studio lighting. I had previously sketched an imaginary scene of a single butterfly flitting through a cavernous rib cage, emanating light and casting radial shadows. The reference photos helped greatly for anatomical accuracy, and to see where the light and shadows would fall on the three-dimensional form.

RESOURCE/PERMISSIONS:

Josh Tiessen generously donates to Menno Media a one-time free license for *Can These Bones Live?* for this online Advent resource.



Can These Bones Live? Artist: Josh Tiessen
Information about this image is on the back of the bulletin.

Celebration of Worship

December 7, 2025



Advent 2: Peace in the Valley of Bones

Centering chimes

Prelude

Joyful is the Dark

Call to worship

Leader: God in our desert, you are our peace in all places.

Congregation: Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost; we are cut off completely.

Leader: Thus says the Lord God: "Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live."

Congregation: Can these dry bones live?

Leader: The wind of God moves among these dry bones. Stand and live! (Everyone stand*)

Congregation: We are the people of God, a vast multitude, filled with God's Spirit.

Leader: "I will put my spirit within you, and you shall live. I will place you on your own soil; then you shall know that I, the Lord, have spoken and will act," says the Lord.

ALL: You are the only source of true life, O God. You breathe new life into our dry bones and fill us with your peace. We stand before you, ready to enter your story and be amazed.

***Gathering Hymn #218** "Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus"

Welcome & prayer

Choir chimes

Joy to the World

Lighting Advent candles

Leader: We have been wandering in the dark, our spirits dry and cracked from conflict, aching for peace to pour into the crevices to revive us.

Congregation: Come, Peace of the world. Come amaze us.

ALL: May Your peace fill the cracks in our dry, brittle bones. Bind us together, strengthen and unite us, that we might dance!

Candle lighting hymn (insert) "Come Hope of the World (verses 1 & 2)"

Children's story and offering for the Mennonite Central Committee's crisis response in Gaza

Choir chimes

O Come Little Children (played as the children come forward)

Embodied Scripture

Ezekiel 37:1–14

Scripture

John 11:25-26

Sermon

*Response Hymn #205

"Light Dawns on a Weary World"

Communion

All are welcome at the Lord's Table. The bread is gluten-free. The juice is grape juice (water is also available). Come and partake as the Spirit leads. Note: We will not pass the offering plates this morning. Offerings can be placed in the plate when you come forward for communion or in the plate at the back of the sanctuary after the service. Prayer cards can also be brought forward.

Congregational sharing and prayer (use a mic or text/email prayers to Pastor Michael)

Introduction of visitors

Work of the church

*Sending Hymn #832

"The Lord Lift You Up"

*Benediction

**Stand in body or in spirit. Children are invited to wave the worship ribbons during the hymns.*

Note: Because worship is participatory and not a performance, instead of applauding please show appreciation for preludes, offertories and special music in other ways, such as ASL, silent applause, saying "Amen" or thanking musicians later.

We welcome, without exclusion, all who seek God's love and grace...

You are welcome here, inclusive of gender, race, country of origin, ethnicity, sexual orientation, sexual identity, socioeconomic status, family status, past imprisonment, education, citizenship status and physical or mental abilities. We encourage you to share in the rituals, fellowship and ministry of this congregation.

Hearing devices (T-coil and over-ear) and large print hymnals are available from the greeters.

Childcare (birth – preschool) is provided in the nursery downstairs.