

Breathe easy

Heather Smith *reflects on* Ezekiel 37:1-14

Today's bones in the reading from Ezekiel are dry and scattered. They are long dead and long past any hope of new life. Their flesh is gone and they have no lungs with which to breathe. This was the state in which Israel found itself. There was no hope. The people felt themselves to be completely cut off from God. It's so easy to slip into that state without realising that it's happening. Before we know it, God can seem a distant memory and we feel alienated, lacking energy and motivation, wondering how we will ever get it back.

But God specialises in lost causes. No matter how hopeless a situation seems, it will move forward. God breathes life into

seemingly dead situations and people breathe again. Life that seemed to have become stale and hopeless is renewed.

They say that where there's life there's hope, and breath is essential for life. The Hebrew word *ruach* means both "breath" and "spirit". God promises to breathe life into the dry bones, but in doing so God also breathes the Holy Spirit into those who are renewed, giving the energy and spirit to live again, to re-cultivate our relationship with God and with each other. Perhaps a new saying is in order: "Where there's breath there's Spirit", God's Spirit, which brings new possibilities where once there seemed none. It is the daily miracle of life. 🌸

Breathe on us the breath that brings your Spirit, Lord. Renew and reinvigorate us to move forward into new and exciting possibilities. Amen.



Leap into Lent

Ricarda Witcombe *continues her Lenten series.*

Today we enter the last two weeks of Lent, and the atmosphere of the season is changing. This is Passiontide. We begin to walk with Christ through the depths of human existence, facing the things we fear and struggle with most: our weaknesses, betrayals, failures, injuries, doubts, and ultimately death itself.

The word "passion" comes from the Latin word meaning "to suffer". The same root gives us the word "patient" and takes our minds to hospital waiting rooms and beds – places of deep fear as well as hope and healing. Passiontide tells us and shows us that Christ truly is Emmanuel – God with us.

We walk through the darkest valleys, and find that God is there too. Can we dare, in these two weeks, to face those valleys in our own lives? Perhaps we might begin simply by naming our fears as we spend time in prayer this week. 🌸

“**Have you not heard? The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth.**

Isaiah 40:28

Walking with Poppy

The trouble with bones

by Gillian Cooper

Poppy is now ten, and she has arthritis. Mostly she is fine, but every six months or so we need a visit to the vet for some injections or pills. Apparently her bones have never quite fitted together properly, and it is too late to fix them now.

The prophet Ezekiel sees bones, a huge pile of them,

and not connected at all, even badly. They look like a vast army of soldiers, their flesh long decayed. Ezekiel realises to his shock that they represent the dead nation of Israel, defeated and scattered. But as he watches, the breath of God blows and a nation is reborn.

In Lent we face our mortality. We are all destined to become a heap of bones. But the breath of God still blows through the universe. One day we will run freely in God's kingdom. One day, I dare to hope, Poppy will run freely there too. 🌸