

DEBRA NYSTROM

The Tuesday Healing Service, Saint Mark's Mission Church

*Nothing lives long,
only the earth and the mountains*

—Lakota death song

The woman with the blue felt hat and no
hair beneath it runs a finger along
each faint eyebrow. Further down the pew
a man turning his gold ring

around, around, keeps his eyes
closed until the moment
the minister lifts his head and rises
to begin the old intonations: *Who sent*

*His only and We beseech; Deliver us; then Dry bones,
dry bones. Blessed release of mind from
thought as the rhythm's crucible turns,
and behold, a rattling; and the bones came*

*together, bone to its bone. And as I looked,
there were sinews upon them, and then the skin,
the breath, the hope mended, the unlocked
graves, the people gathered whole again,*

changed. The voice descends; the sexton holds
the altar gate open for the Reverend, who, bowing
his head, passes everyone, the green and red and gold
brocade of his stole glimmering

like frost-altered leaves that hang
outside the massive chapel door he'll open—
leaves that in another week will be smoldering.