

CLARE

GALLERY

at the Franciscan Center for Urban Ministry

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Exhibition *The Minimum Bible* Opens at Clare Gallery

Hartford — The Clare Gallery is hosting the New England premiere of *The Minimum Bible*, an exhibition of graphic design artwork by Michigan artist and Presbyterian pastor, Joseph Novak. Being a pastor and a graphic designer, Novak considered whether the books of the Old and New Testament could be rendered utilizing essential symbols and themes. If successfully done, the images would visually communicate the books' overall stories. The result is the series *The Minimum Bible*. The Clare Gallery will be exhibiting 30 of the 66 images, from both the Old and New Testament series. This exhibition is free and open to the public and extends from August 11 to October 12, 2017. A reception will be held on Saturday, September 23rd from 5–7 p.m. At the reception, Novak will present via Skype from Flint, Michigan. He will discuss his intention in creating the series, his process, as well as how he hopes viewers will interact with the work.

Religious art has been around for millennia, and symbolism and narrative painting are the staples of this genre. Novak's work is refreshing and contemporary. He provides a new door for entering into conversation about the ancient texts, and some of his images encourage multiple interpretations. Some works are plot driven, but some are more mysterious. For example, the image for *Genesis* contains seven nested circles, each circle larger than the rest, balanced asymmetrically with a red emphasis point. Is this image about growth? Outward movement from a specific place? How we affect one another? Or, is it a literal translation—the world was created in six days with the seventh being a day of rest? Artwork that doesn't tell viewers what to think, but, rather, asks them to participate in the action of thinking, is what Novak desires to create for his viewers.

Novak considers himself to be a minimalist. Since we live with incessant technology and information overload, Novak wishes us to 'read' the Bible stories through the quiet reflection of essential symbols and concepts—deleting words and texts—thereby utilizing our visual literacy skills. The images seduce the viewer into an intimate space, where the formal elements and principles of design (line, shape, texture, color, pattern, etc) create a sense of curiosity and intrigue. We might first see the works as riddles, trying to figure out the meaning. We then try to decipher the symbols and make connections to the books they represent. We also wish to know more, since most of the time we want to understand what we see. Novak's labels provide a bit of clarity, but viewers can further search using the very book that inspired the artwork (Bibles will be on hand for study). After the exhibition, Novak's work will continue to be used to create questions in the Parish's Religious Education program. For more information on *The Minimum Bible* project visit his website: minimumbible.com.

The Clare Gallery primarily features exhibitions that emphasize world religions or interfaith themes, as well as social justice themes, on either a global or local level. The Gallery is housed in the Franciscan Center for Urban Ministry at 285 Church Street, Hartford, CT. The Center is part of St. Patrick – St. Anthony Church, a vibrant and active downtown faith community.

The Clare Gallery's hours are from 8:30 a.m. to 7 p.m. Mondays through Thursdays; 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. on Fridays; Saturdays from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.; and Sundays from 9 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. The Gallery and all related events are open to the public. Free parking is available directly across from the church, and the facility is handicapped accessible. More information may be found at www.spsact.org/clare2.