

office

# For Such a Time as This

(What have Christians got to offer?)

## Week 1. As the economy strengthens in financial value, Mother Earth bleeds

### Introduction to Week One

At the United Nations' (UN) summit on climate change in 2019, Greta Thunberg reprimanded the world saying, 'People are dying. Entire ecosystems are collapsing. We are in the beginning of a mass extinction, and all you can talk about is money and fairy tales of eternal economic growth. How dare you?' She prophetically said, 'You have stolen my dreams and my childhood with your empty words. This is all wrong.' Greta is not alone. Young activists around the world are enraged that their future has been 'sold' so that a small number of people may amass unimaginable fortunes. They are right to be furious.

### Opening Prayers

O Lord open our lips

**And our mouth shall declare your praise**

Let us pray together:

**Forgive us where we have failed to be good stewards and to be good neighbours. Give us and our leaders the courage to think beyond our own economies; to seek genuine partnerships so that all people can experience the fullness of life, and that our planet is known to be the common home for all creation and future generations.**

**Amen**

Lord, thank you for bringing us together for this session. We know you are with us as we join together in your name. Help us to make the best use of the time available tonight. We realise that some of the discussions may be uncomfortable, but we pray that you give us the willingness and enthusiasm to fully engage and join in the discussions. We also pray that we continue after the session to contemplate and explore the thoughts and lessons we can take away from this evening.

**Amen**

## GENESIS 9:8-13

Then God said to Noah and to his sons with him, 'As for me, I am establishing my covenant with you and your descendants after you, and with every living creature that is with you, the birds, the domestic animals, and every animal of the earth with you, as many as came out of the ark. I establish my covenant with you, that never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of a flood, and never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth.' God said, 'This is the sign of the covenant that I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all future generations: I have set my bow in the clouds, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth.'

### Discussion: For such a time

Humanity is fast approaching a time for serious introspection; a planetary Kairos where self examination is warranted from leaders of religious, social, economic, and political structures in order to identify their role in the ensuing ecological crisis. Recent history has deceived society into believing that economic growth and prosperity equal a good life. Non-material human needs, such as love, faith and spiritual needs have no rational space in humanity's striving for this. Growth remains the single objective for economic organisation, whilst this logic proposes that economic systems will collapse without the expansion of production and consumption. In this narrative, prosperity is built on the false belief that human beings are fundamentally selfish, seeking to advance personal pleasure, identity, and power. Our planet is the principal victim of this false narrative. The argument that continued economic growth is possible due to achievements in science and technology, and the efficient management in production is a partial story. Production depends on natural resources. Growth currently depends on the unrestricted extraction of resources - which in turn, results in the destruction of life-giving qualities of nature. The Earth is therefore objectified as the economy strengthens in financial value, Mother Earth bleeds. This phenomenon is often called 'cancerous capitalism'; the so-called advances are interlocked with destruction. Growth and death are therefore interrelated. In the flood narrative described in Genesis, the destruction of the Earth was the result of human sin. The author of Genesis notes these sins as the injustice and wickedness that lead to a hedonistic life. The anguish of God after the destruction of Creation was the catalyst for a new covenant of preservation. It offered a radically new set of principles for governance based on ethically grounded relationships between people, nature, and God. It rejected the hierarchical order that objectified 'the other' and specified that exploiting the Earth for consumption is a rebellion towards God. Biblical covenants are a response to the self-giving and gratuitous love of God. The covenant of preservation after the flood is not with people and God, but 'with you and your descendants after you, and with every living creature that is with you: the birds, the domestic animals, and every animal of the Earth'. The term 'covenant' reinforces the idea that God respects people and nature. The text further reminds us that people are not above nature, but an integral part of it. It reiterates the biblical theme that the restoration of the broken relationship between nature, people and God is the fundamental concern. This extract is taken from a longer article which you will find at:

[www.uspg.org.uk/forsuchatime](http://www.uspg.org.uk/forsuchatime)

## Discussion Questions:

***“You have stolen my dreams and my childhood with your empty words. This is all wrong.”***

1. What is your response to the quote from Greta Thunberg?
2. In what ways do we reinforce the idea that ‘economic growth and prosperity equals a good life’ in our personal and/or corporate lives?
3. As the economy strengthens in financial value, Mother Earth bleeds.’ What is your reaction to this statement?

## Closing Prayers

Heavenly Father, we thank you that we can come together again, to discuss views and listen to each other’s experiences. As we near the end of this evening’s session, help us to keep the thoughts and ideas we have encountered tonight, alive in our hearts.

**Amen**

Creator God, breathing your own life into being, you gave us the gift of life: you placed us on this Earth with its minerals and waters, flowers, and fruits, living creatures of grace and beauty. You gave us the care of the Earth. Teach us, Creator God of Love, that the Earth and all its fullness is yours, the world and all who dwell in it. Call us yet again to safeguard the gift of life.

**Amen.**

As our Saviour taught us, so we pray

**Our Father in heaven,  
hallowed be your name,  
your kingdom come,  
your will be done,  
on earth as in heaven.  
Give us today our daily bread.  
Forgive us our sins  
as we forgive those who sin against us.  
Lead us not into temptation  
but deliver us from evil.  
For the kingdom, the power,  
and the glory are yours  
now and for ever.  
Amen.**

The Lord bless us and watch over us;  
the Lord make his face shine upon us and be gracious to us;  
the Lord look kindly on us and give us peace.

**Amen.**

Let us bless the Lord

**Thanks be to God.**

**Amen**