

For Such a Time as This

(What have Christians got to offer?)

Week 6. Re-creation

'the entire process is one of nourishment for the body and the soul' (Rev'd Jonathan McCurley)

Introduction to Week Six

What would a radical expression of God's new Creation look like beyond our imagination? How can we enlarge our vision and creativity to glimpse what God may have in store? How can churches around the world help us in this?

Opening Prayers

O Lord open our lips
And our mouth shall declare your praise

Let us pray together:

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

Lord, thank you for bringing us together for this final 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 course ends, to contemplate and explore the thoughts and lessons we have enjoyed during the last six weeks. **Amen**

REVELATION 21:1-7

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying,
'See, the home of God is among mortals.
He will dwell with them;
they will be his peoples,
and God himself will be with them;
he will wipe every tear from their eyes.
Death will be no more;
mourning and crying and pain will be no more,
for the first things have passed away.'

And the one who was seated on the throne said, 'See, I am making all things new.' Also he said, 'Write this, for these words are trustworthy and true.' Then he said to me, 'It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give water as a gift from the spring of the water of life. Those who conquer will inherit these things, and I will be their God and they will be my children.'

Discussion: For such a time

A VIEW FROM THE ASIAN RURAL INSTITUTE IN JAPAN By the Rev'd Jonathan McCurley

Through its nine-month training programme, the Asian Rural Institute (ARI) lives out a 'three loves' theology in its community. This lifestyle is based in practical Christianity lived in a rural context, first advocated by the Rev'd Nikolai Frederik Severin Grundtvig of Denmark and brought to Japan by the Rev'd Toyohiko Kagawa. In loving God, loving one another, and loving the soil - the three loves - we seek to realise God's coming heavenly kingdom; a re-Creation of the life that God has envisioned for us. We invite rural leaders and volunteers with servant hearts from Asia, Africa, Europe, the Pacific and the Americas to rural Japan and, alongside an international staff, we train in ways of re-Creation. We face our differences as persons with different cultures, worldviews, beliefs and experiences. In diversity, we learn how to serve and love one another daily. Daily 'Foodlife' work is the foundation to this lifestyle. The word foodlife was coined by the Rev'd Dr Toshihiro Takami as a reminder that food and life are inseparable. Growing in and harvesting from the soil, we do more than just produce food. We re-create our own lives. From continuously working the soil, sowing seeds, caring for livestock, and communal harvesting, to meals shared at a common table, the entire process is one of nourishment for the body and the soul. As we gather to share the fruits of one another's labour, we remember and have our eyes opened to God's work that brings life out of Creation and, through the community, to one another. As we work the soil, as we train participants, and as we welcome visitors, we see God at work transforming each of us and Creation itself, to the image of Jesus Christ. This work is not only about joy, for as the world suffers in the midst of disease and conflict, we also suffer. We face daily difficulties with one another, with the soil and with understanding how God is working in the world. This is nothing new. St Paul reminds us that our hardships are only an echo of the groaning that Creation experiences as it waits for redemption, for re-Creation. This is our hope and goal, that as we groan along with Creation, God will transform us and the world into a new Creation. That groaning continues. After our time together, each year volunteers and rural leaders return to their homes to practice what they experienced, and the remaining community members begin to prepare again for a new community, a new year and a new manifestation of God's Kingdom.

Discussion Questions:

1. The Bible passage gives us a vision of a 'transformed' Earth, restored to its original, God-centred glory. What kind of world do we want to see post Covid-19?
2. The Asian Rural Institute gives a model for 're-Creation' in community. In what ways are we or our churches agents of 're-Creation'?
3. What has been the most significant influence on your thinking during of this course?

Closing Prayers

Heavenly Father, we thank you for bringing us together during the last six weeks to discuss views and listen to each other's experiences. As we near the end of this final session, help us to keep the thoughts and ideas we have encountered throughout this program alive in our hearts.

Amen

God our creator, as individuals and groups, may we come together in solidarity to think and act for the future, keeping sincere eyes on Christ. As you work inside of us and in Creation, may we be alert to the moving of the Holy Spirit, in order to live in ways to sustain life in the future.

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.