



Mission Horizons: New Directions in a Changing World

2014 GEMN Conference, Seattle, Washington

Group Leader Instructions: (Please read aloud to your group)

- One person should volunteer to lead the group (following the exercises in this booklet.)
- Groups will contain pre-assigned members and everyone will remain in the same group for the entire week.
- The group is asked to use the process of mutual invitation whenever you meet together. The leader begins speaking, reading, or sharing. When s/he is finished, s/he invites someone else in the group to take a turn. When that person is finished, they invite someone else, etc., until all have shared. If you are invited, you may: 1) share, 2) pass for now, or 3) pass. If the person invited passes, someone else is invited.
- Please allow people to share within the group without interruption, cross talk, or your own additions to their comments. Once everyone has spoken, additional comments may be made and more discussion may take place.
- Thank you for adhering to these guidelines for respectful communication.

Each session includes a mission-related quote or prayer, a Bible passage, and some discussion questions. We pray that your time in your small group will be a blessing!

Small Group 1: Thursday May 29, 7:30-8:30pm

Reflect: The “Mission of God”

In the Book of Common Prayer (p.855), the catechism of our church states, “The mission of the Church is to restore all people to unity with God and with each other in Christ.” This statement of mission is based on the premise that there are broken relationships between us and God and broken relationships with each other. The mission of the Church is to restore, but even before there was a need for restoration there was creation - And God said, “it was good.”

Read: Genesis 1: 1-5, 24-31 (NRSV)

- The leader reads the scripture aloud and asks, by mutual invitation: What word or phrase stood out for you in that reading? Everyone shares just the word or phrase – no explanation.
- Someone else reads it aloud again and asks, by mutual invitation: Considering your own experience of participating in God’s mission, what particularly strikes you in this reading? Please give some explanation.
- Another person reads it aloud and asks, by mutual invitation: Thinking about all that you have heard, what do you think God might be asking you to be or do in response to this scripture? Each shares his or her own thoughts on this.

“In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, ² the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. ³ Then God said, “Let there be light”; and there was light. ⁴ And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. ⁵ God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.



²⁴ And God said, "Let the earth bring forth living creatures of every kind: cattle and creeping things and wild animals of the earth of every kind." And it was so. ²⁵ God made the wild animals of the earth of every kind, and the cattle of every kind, and everything that creeps upon the ground of every kind. And God saw that it was good.

²⁶ Then God said, "Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth."

²⁷ So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.

²⁸ God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth." ²⁹ God said, "See, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit; you shall have them for food. ³⁰ And to every beast of the earth, and to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food." And it was so. ³¹ God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day."

Discuss

1. How is the mission of God revealed in this passage from Genesis?
2. When you hear the words "subdue" and "dominate," what comes to mind in terms of the way mission has been carried out historically?
3. How does this passage inform us about our role in God's mission today?
4. Based on the first plenary session, how does this reading and the issue of "sustainability" relate to your theology of mission?

Small Group 2: Friday May 30, 11:15am – 12:15pm

Reflect: Being People of God Together

"If you have come here to help me, you are wasting our time. But if you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us work together."

Lila Watson, Indigenous Australian (credited)

"Help us discover our own riches; don't judge us poor because we lack what you have.
Help us discover our chains; don't judge us slaves by the type of shackles you wear.
Be patient with us as a people; don't judge us backward simply because we don't follow your stride.

Be patient with our pace; don't judge us lazy simply because we can't follow your tempo.

Be patient with our symbols; don't judge us ignorant because we can't read your signs.

Be with us and proclaim the richness of your life which you can share with us.

Be with us and be open to what we can give.

Be with us as a companion who walks with us - neither behind nor in front - in our search for life and ultimately for God." *Henri Nouwen*



Read: 1 Peter 2:1-10 (NRSV)

- The leader reads the scripture aloud and asks, by mutual invitation: What word or phrase stood out for you in that reading? Everyone shares just the word or phrase – no explanation.
- Someone else reads it aloud again and asks, by mutual invitation: Considering your own experience of participating in God's mission, what particularly strikes you in this reading? Please give some explanation.
- Another person reads it aloud and asks, by mutual invitation: Thinking about all that you have heard, what do you think God might be asking you to be or do in response to this scripture? Each shares his or her own thoughts on this.

“Rid yourselves, therefore, of all malice, and all guile, insincerity, envy, and all slander. ² Like newborn infants, long for the pure, spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow into salvation— ³ if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good. ⁴ Come to him, a living stone, though rejected by mortals yet chosen and precious in God's sight, and ⁵ like living stones, let yourselves be built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

⁶ For it stands in scripture: “See, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious; and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.” ⁷ To you then who believe, he is precious; but for those who do not believe, “The stone that the builders rejected has become the very head of the corner,” ⁸ and “A stone that makes them stumble, and a rock that makes them fall.” They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do.

⁹ But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, ^[c] in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. ¹⁰ Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.”

Discuss

1. Reflecting on the first five lines of this passage, how do these verses inform us about how we should prepare to engage in God's mission?
2. “We are all called to be living stones, and yet we are all a little different. We are not the perfect cornerstone that Jesus is. We have odd shapes; we do not fit as perfectly alongside one another as we would hope. We have corners that are broken off, we have cracks and chips, and we are weathered by the world. We are different colors, shapes, and sizes, and yet we form one spiritual house, one community. We are all God's people, because we all have Jesus as our cornerstone.”
 - Reflecting on the above quote and the reading from 1 Peter, how are we called to live into our baptismal promise to “seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving your neighbor as yourself? And to strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being?”
3. If we're honest with ourselves, how much of our desire to engage in mission comes from our own need to feel good about ourselves?



Small Group 3: Saturday May 31, 11:15am – 12:15pm

Reflect: Daring More Boldly

“Disturb us, Lord, when
We are too pleased with ourselves,
When our dreams have come true
Because we dreamed too little,
When we arrived safely
Because we sailed too close to the shore.

Disturb us, Lord, when
with the abundance of things we possess
We have lost our thirst
For the waters of life;
Having fallen in love with life,
We have ceased to dream of eternity
And in our efforts to build a new earth,
We have allowed our vision
Of the new Heaven to dim.

Disturb us, Lord, to dare more boldly,
To venture on wilder seas
Where storms will show Your mastery;
Where losing sight of land,
We shall find the stars.

We ask you to push back
The horizons of our hopes;
And to push back the future
In strength, courage, hope, and love.

This we ask in the name of our Captain,
Who is Jesus Christ.”

Sir Francis Drake, 1577

Read: Matthew 14:22-33 (NRSV)

- The leader reads the scripture aloud and asks, by mutual invitation: What word or phrase stood out for you in that reading? Everyone shares just the word or phrase – no explanation.
- Someone else reads it aloud again and asks, by mutual invitation: Considering your own experience of participating in God's mission, what particularly strikes you in this reading? Please give some explanation.



- Another person reads it aloud and asks, by mutual invitation: Thinking about all that you have heard, what do you think God might be asking you to be or do in response to this scripture? Each shares his or her own thoughts on this.

“Immediately he made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead to the other side, while he dismissed the crowds. ²³ And after he had dismissed the crowds, he went up the mountain by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone, ²⁴ but by this time the boat, battered by the waves, was far from the land, for the wind was against them. ²⁵ And early in the morning he came walking toward them on the sea. ²⁶ But when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were terrified, saying, “It is a ghost!” And they cried out in fear. ²⁷ But immediately Jesus spoke to them and said, “Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid.”

²⁸ Peter answered him, “Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water.” ²⁹ He said, “Come.” So Peter got out of the boat, started walking on the water, and came toward Jesus.

³⁰ But when he noticed the strong wind, he became frightened, and beginning to sink, he cried out, “Lord, save me!” ³¹ Jesus immediately reached out his hand and caught him, saying to him, “You of little faith, why did you doubt?” ³² When they got into the boat, the wind ceased. ³³ And those in the boat worshiped him, saying, “Truly you are the Son of God.”

Discuss

1. Which verse in the Francis Drake prayer speaks to you most strongly about mission? Please share why you feel that way.
2. Share a time when you have felt anxious or frightened in a mission context. What helped you overcome this anxiety?
3. As an individual or as “The Church,” where are the deep waters or “wilder seas” that we/you are called to engage with that perhaps we/you are not currently doing?
4. What is holding you back personally from “daring more boldly?”

Small Group 4: Sunday June 1, 9:00-9:45am

Reflect: Do Justice

“It’s not a coincidence that in the Scriptures, poverty is mentioned more than 2,100 times. It’s not an accident. That’s a lot of air time. You know, the only time Jesus Christ is judgmental is on the subject of the poor. “As you have done it unto the least of these my brethren, you have done it unto me.”...

But justice is a higher standard. Africa makes a fool of our idea of justice; it makes a farce of our idea of equality. It mocks our pieties; it doubts our concern, and it questions our commitment. Six and a half thousand Africans are still dying every day of preventable, treatable disease, for lack of drugs we can buy at any drug store. This is not about charity: This is about Justice and Equality.

Because there's no way we can look at what's happening in Africa and, if we're honest, conclude that deep down, we would let it happen anywhere else -- if we really accepted that Africans are equal to us....



Look what happened in South East Asia with the Tsunami. 150,000 lives lost to the misnomer of all misnomers, “mother nature”. Well, in Africa, 150,000 lives are lost every month -- a tsunami every month. And it's a completely avoidable catastrophe.

It's annoying but justice and equality are mates, aren't they? Justice always wants to hang out with equality. And equality is a **real pain...**” *Bono, Keynote address at the 54th National Prayer Breakfast, 2006*¹

Read: Micah 6:6-8 (NRSV)

- The leader reads the Scripture aloud and asks, by mutual invitation: What word or phrase stood out for you in that reading? Everyone shares just the word or phrase – no explanation.
- Someone else reads it aloud again and asks, by mutual invitation: Considering your own experience of participating in God's mission, what particularly strikes you in this reading? Please give some explanation.
- Another person reads it aloud and asks, by mutual invitation: Thinking about all that you have heard, what do you think God might be asking you to be or do in response to this scripture? Each shares his or her own thoughts on this.

“With what shall I come before the LORD,
and bow myself before God on high?
Shall I come before him with burnt offerings,
with calves a year old?
⁷Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams,
with ten thousands of rivers of oil?
Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression,
the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?”
⁸He has told you, O mortal, what is good;
and what does the LORD require of you
but to do justice, and to love kindness,
and to walk humbly with your God?

Discuss

1. In the context of engaging in mission, what does it “look like” to
 - a. do justice?
 - b. To love kindness?
 - c. To walk humbly with your God?
2. Who are your models, heroes, or witnesses of this kind of life? This may be someone you have known personally or read about.
3. What will you take with you from the 2014 GEMN conference to help you do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with your God as you engage in mission?

¹¹ The full speech is available here:

<http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/bononationalprayerbreakfast.htm>



As we go out into the world:

May God bless us with discomfort at easy answers, half-truths, and superficial relationships, so that we may live deep within our hearts.

May God bless us with anger at injustice, oppression, and exploitation of people, so that we may work for justice, freedom and peace.

May God bless us with tears to shed for those who suffer from pain, rejection, starvation and war, so that we may reach out our hands to comfort them and turn their pain into joy.

And may God bless us with enough foolishness to believe that we can make a difference in this world, so that we can do what others claim cannot be done.