



Season of Creation: Jubilee for the Earth

We are living in a climate emergency. What does a 'call for Jubilee' mean for us?
By Bishop Greg
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This September, Christian communities across the globe will participate in the "Season of Creation." The theme for this year's ecumenical event is "Jubilee for the Earth."

In ancient Israel, a Jubilee year was to occur every 50 years. Slaves were set free and all debts were to be forgiven. In other words, the injustices of the past 50 years were to be restored. In many ways, Jubilee acted like a 'reset,' a turning back of the clock.

The Season of Creation is emphatic in its call for repentance and action: "Climate change is a result of the intersection of greed, inequality and destruction of God's Earth...Jubilee is a time to renounce overconsumption and economic systems based on constant economic growth at the cost of the Earth and those who are poor. Jubilee is a time when those who have consumed the most must make restitution to those who have suffered the most. Jubilee is a time of rest for the land from constant exploitation, to restore ecosystems and people" (2020 Celebration Guide, Season of Creation).

This past June, a number of us watched a webinar on "Jubilee for the Earth." It featured five guest speakers from across the globe, each reflecting on the theme.

Ruth Padilla DeBorst (Latin American Theological Fellowship) challenged us by saying that "we need to transform out of global consumerism" and that we must have a "re-casting of our imagination and our relationships."

Father Joshtrom Kureethadam (coordinator of the Sector of Ecology and Creation at the Vatican) reminded us of Jurgen Moltmann's premise that "Sabbath is God's ecological strategy to restore the land and to restore God's people."

Lutheran scholar Dr. Martin Kopp (Commission on Ecology and Climate Justice of the French Protestant Federation) presented what he playfully called his "9.5 Theses on a Jubilee for the Earth." I do not have space to list all 9.5 of them, but here are a few of his theses:

Thesis #3 — An early 21st-century Jubilee for the Earth is the last actual Jubilee for the Earth possible. We are getting closer to climate tipping points and have begun the sixth mass extinction. Our generation's Jubilee is the last possible actual Jubilee for the Earth as we know it.

Thesis #7 — A true Jubilee for the Earth by rich people would allow a Jubilee for the Poor. Degrowth by rich persons and nations would free up resources for poorer persons and nations...to live in dignity.

Thesis #8 — Our generation's Jubilee for the Earth cannot be punctual. It should be a lasting Jubilee. Our ecological predicament calls for a liberation, rest and restoration which would last not a year, but several decades. The ecological challenge demands a conversion.

These presenters challenged us and called us to reflect on our lifestyles and choices. They also said that if we are serious about Jubilee, about the care of creation, then we need to push governments and businesses for a green recovery. DeBorst echoed that assessment when she

said that there is a need for advocating and action from the top down, but she added that there also must be engagement and action from the bottom up. Both are needed.

In his closing comments, Rei Crizaldo (MicahGlobal) asked the fundamental questions: What do we actually value? Where do we place our attention and our eyes?

Perhaps your answer to those questions are the unfinished half of the 9.5 theses!

For information and resources, please visit SeasonofCreation.org