

ADULT FORUM LENTEN BOOK STUDY ON REFUGIA FAITH

Author Debra Rienstra provided the following discussion questions:

FEBRUARY 29 – *October, Introduction, January*

Questions

1. What public crises have most affected you in the last five years? What has most made your heart break?
2. Has your connection to Christian faith felt like a balm in the midst of crisis, or has Christianity been part of the crisis? Or both? Explain.
3. What are you most fearful about as you consider the future? What does it feel like to “live at an inflection point”? (p.9)
4. Have you found your “little work” in connection with the climate crisis?

MARCH 5 – Chapters 1 & 2

Questions for chapter 1

1. In what ways do you feel as if we are living in an uncomfortable between-time, bewildered in a wilderness? How do you tend to respond to “wilderness times”? Do you experience resistance? Avoidance? Hope? As far as you experience the wilderness right now, who is there with you?
2. What do you think God wants to deconstruct in the cultures and communities you are a part of right now?
3. What capacities need building and strengthening? What can you see when you “look to the margins”? (p. 43) Do you feel on the margins yourself? If so, what do you perceive that needs to be more widely understood?
4. In what ways are you experiencing these years of crisis convergence as a “severe and merciful reorientation”? (p.33) How might you understand your experience as a “pilgrimage refugium”? (pp.43-44) How might God be reshaping your community?

Questions for chapter 2

1. Of the options on p. 61, which best describe the attitudes toward “nature” that you were taught? Which ones are you drawn to now? Which ones seem wrong or incomplete?

2. Do you have “nature deficit disorder”? – feeling out of touch with and not very knowledgeable about the more-than-human creation? If so, do you experience a sense of alienation? If you do feel connected to the more-than-human world, how have you cultivated that connection?
3. When and where do you most feel kinship with the more-than-human creation?
4. Would you say that the expression of Christianity you know best is overly individualistic and/or spiritualized? Give some examples of where you see this. Or describe ways you have seen this tendency resisted.
5. If “Errand Boy Jesus” is the predominant depiction in your context, what are some possible corrections to this reductive view of Christ and the incarnation? What do you think is at stake in the way we talk about the incarnation?

MARCH 12 – Chapters 3 & 4

Questions for chapter 3

1. Try out the phrase “community of creation” as an experimental substitute for the word “kingdom” in a few familiar biblical texts. How does the substitution affect what you imagine when you hear each text?
 - a. Here are some examples to try: Matthew 5:3, 6:10, 6:33 / Mark 1:15, 10:15 / Luke 11:2, 12:31-32, 13:29, 17:21, 18:17 / John 3:5
2. What does the word “stewardship” mean to you? Have you heard the terms “steward” or “stewardship” used in Christian context to describe our proper relationship with the more-than-human creation? How have you responded to those terms?
3. What new things do you notice in Genesis 1 and 2 after reading pp. 99-103?
4. Make a list of gifts (p. 106) that the lands and waters, plants and creatures around you provide for you and your community.
5. What land – or water – healing is needed where you live, work, or worship? Are there urban neighborhoods nearby suffering from pollution or neglect or lack of green space? Commercial strips full of abandoned building and cracked parking lots? Farms with degraded and eroded soil? How can you and your community help?

Questions for chapter 4

1. In the faith communities you know, what have you been taught about how to grieve, individually and corporately? What have you been taught about how to lament? What have you been taught about how to repent? Have you noticed you or others fearing and avoiding these practices?
2. What losses have you already experienced in the ecosystems and communities you care about? Do you feel “solastalgia”? (p. 129)
3. What climate-change-related losses most move you to grieve?
4. Do you worry that mitigating climate change will mean living with greater limitations? (p. 140) If so, how do you manage that worry?
5. What attitudes or practices do your communities – faith communities, business or workplace communities, family groups, or civic communities – most need to repent from? How might repentance, as both heartfelt contrition and changed life, come about?

MARCH 19 – Chapter 5

Questions for chapter 5

1. What are some examples of life renewing itself in the more-than-human world, especially examples that are special to your region?
2. “The shape of the cross reminds us that woundedness and renewal intersect, and at that intersection, we find the very person of God.” (p. 157) Where do you see woundedness and renewal intersecting, in your own life, your community, or in nature?
3. In what real places could you and your community work to create refugia and how could you do it? Could you transform some of your lawn, or your church’s lawn, to native plantings? Is there a spot in your neighborhood or community where you could plant a garden or do some ecosystem restoration? What resources would you need to make it happen, in terms of knowledge, labor, money, and so on?
4. What do you think happens at the end of history? How does that affect your actions now?

MARCH 26 – Chapter 6: *From Passivity to Citizenship*

Questions for chapter 6

1. Consider the list of examples on p. 186 and name some refugia spaces – including cultural and spiritual ones – that you have experienced and/or are currently experiencing. What conditions make these literal or metaphorical spaces serve as refugia for you or others?
2. How are the faith communities you know doing in becoming “the people of refugia”? Where are opportunities for your faith community to create or strengthen refugia of all kinds? What would it take to shift your community culture toward a refugia model?
3. Does your faith community have a “pyramid problem” (p. 189ff) in which people depend too much on leaders? Do you and others in your community engage in the “infantile authority fantasy,” hoping someone else will fix things? If so, what has brought about this passivity? If not, how are people in your community formed so that they claim agency as citizens?
4. How have you understood what “the image of God” means? How would you describe the value of the more-than-human creation to God?
5. What opportunities could you receive for protecting the commons and engaging in “activism as refugial practice”?

APRIL 2 – Chapter 7: *From Indifference to Attention*

Questions for chapter 7

1. Have you been lucky enough to experience a “green world” or two in your life? (p. 218) If so, what were some of the freedoms and risks available there? How did those places change you so that you returned to the “real world” a different person? What made these green worlds valuable to you?
2. What does hope mean to you? How could you practice more intentionally the discipline of hope? (p. 226)
3. In the summary on pp. 226-228, which characteristics of refugia most speak to you and why?
4. Where do you most experience wonder? How might you make the practice of wonder a more integral part of your life? How about your community’s life?