

Session 5

Hunger No More (Isaiah 49:10, Revelation 7:16)

Focus

To begin to shape our vision of how the world can be, by contrasting how it is now with God's vision for the world.



Preparation

Review the suggestions, learnings and assignments in previous sessions.

Think about creative ways of setting this session up. Read the scripture passage and the stories. Can your physical environment for the session model the vision in some way? Can the session take place around the altar or table in your worship space?

Change the table setting (without too much interruption) as you move through the session. Begin with a bare table for the opening prayer, then set it with just a cross or crucifix for the stories and ending with bread and wine and non-alcoholic wine or juice enough for all (including perhaps enough for “unseen guests” for which chairs and places have been set throughout the session). If you do this you will need to have people bring the provisions and also discreetly and quietly help place them as you move along.

You will also need to decide on the best way to **record comments** and thoughts without intruding on the environment you are setting up. If the group is large, you can form concentric circles around the table.

You might use the invitatory vision of the Revelation text to invite newcomers to join the group.

Purchase the bread, wine and other juice. Also provide a variety of colors of construction paper and cut them into many different shapes as there will be people in the group, so that each person will, by the end of the session, have received a different shape.

Prepare your summary of where the group has been and where you are now going.

Welcome

Welcome the participants and briefly remind them of what has been done so far. Welcome newcomers and invite them to enter the discussion without worrying about what has gone before.

Opening Prayer

The leader (or a previously designated participant) begins the prayer, if appropriate, with the sign of the presence of the Holy Trinity.

(L) In this place, God – one and holy – is with us in power, in love and in grace.

(All) Amen.

Ask participants to turn to each other, introduce themselves with just their name, and wish each other grace and peace. Then,

(L) Let us pray together to the God of promises, who even this moment is seeking us, calling us and touching us:



(One side of the table prays) O God, you have given us your promise, a word and a covenant that brings us the touch of your favor and grace, and allows us to sip from the springs of living water and taste the bread of your salvation.

(The other side of the table prays) O God, you have made us into your promise, a covenant to all you have created, a word that drives us like a dream which gives no rest until it is pursued.

(Then all join in) As we gather we ask you to empower us with your continuing presence until we are so transformed that we have indeed become part of the level road on which all can walk with ease, to eat and drink to fullness in your reign. Amen.

God's Story

Make sure that everyone has a Bible, or can share one, and distribute the handouts titled “Hunger No More.”

Read the following information about Revelation 7:15-17 aloud or present it in your own words:

When the book of Revelation was written, it addressed Christians who were trying to be faithful to the vision of Jesus in a very difficult and hostile world. In some ways then, the book is addressed to people who are like ourselves. Some people have tried to make the book of Revelation seem hard to understand, or directed to just a very few people. The passage we are reading today, which is based in part on an earlier passage in the book of Isaiah and adapted in our opening prayer, is actually very simple. It does not describe salvation for a few people but for a vast throng beyond imagination. That is what the number 144,000 would have meant to the people John was addressing. This passage is part of what is known as the “song of victory.” The victory is God’s vision for creation – the vision that God began with in creating a world marked by peace and abundance; the vision which God has maintained and for which God gave the only Son, the lamb; and which God will see come to pass. Can we understand this as our vision as well? Let’s listen to what the Spirit is saying to us, the church.



Then read (or have a previously designated person read) the passage from Revelation 7:15-17 found in the handout.

Ask the group to reflect on the passage for a few moments. Since the passage is short ask someone else to read it again. After the passage is read the second time, **ask gently**: “Can these words live now?”

After a moment, ask the participants to say aloud a word or phrase that struck them in particular. On the newsprint record their words and phrases, and after each one, have the group repeat the question, “Can these words (or this word) live now?”

Personal Stories

Ask two persons to prepare to read the stories of Theogene and the Elderly Woman. If you are gathered at the table, remember to place the cross on it before the stories are read. Use these questions as a basis for discussion:

- Sometimes we think about salvation in very abstract ways. When you were a child how did you imagine salvation (if you did)?
- If you imagined it as “being in heaven,” what did that look like?



- How do you think Theogene Rudasingwa imagined salvation at different stages along his way? How do you think the Elderly Woman imagines salvation? Is it abstract, or can we sometimes touch it?
- What parts of the Revelation passage relate to your situation today?

Empowerment and Disempowerment Stories

Ask members of the group to read out loud the facts in the handout. Discuss the following questions:

- What factors empower or disempower people?
 - A strong spiritual life
 - Physical or mental conditions
 - Socialization
 - Money and other resources, e.g. land
 - Education
 - Participation in public life, e.g. voting, civil rights
 - Wars, civil conflict
 - Discrimination – race/ethnicity, gender, age, religion, nationality
- The Revelation passage talks about satisfying what seem to be basic needs, and the stories we have heard seem to relate to people who are in need. What does all of this have to do with empowerment and disempowerment?
- How is or might the church be a part of the empowerment process?
- In the context of these stories of empowerment and disempowerment, can the words of the Revelation passage really live? How?



Ask someone to make three columns on the board – reasons why the *church should, should not, is inevitably* involved in politics. Since this is a controversial question, caution the whole group not to comment on other peoples' views, but just briefly to state their own. If you feel that the discussion would not be too heated, ask the group to discuss the three columns.

Then ask someone to make a list on the board or on newsprint. Ask people to give short answers to the ways in which wars contribute to hunger and poverty.

Our Story

Distribute small pieces of paper (each in a different color or shape) to each participant. Read Revelation 7:15-17 aloud.

Then **go over the questions and actions** on the handout that the group will be asked to reflect on between this session and the next. Get commitments for each of these in as specific terms as possible, jotting them down on pieces of paper.

Gather them in the center of the table. Set the vessels of food and drink on the pile of paper. Invite the participants to share the food and drink which is now brought out to the table. After they partake, place the commitments on the tray where the bread had previously been set.

Reflection and Closing Prayer

Ask the group to be quiet and centered in God for the closing reflection and prayer.

(L) We believe that God is in our midst.

(All) We do believe it.

(L) We believe that God's words live.

(All) We do believe it.

(L) We believe that those who are hungry will hunger no more.

(All) We do believe it.

(L) We believe that those who thirst will be satisfied.

(All) We do believe it.

(L) We believe in the feast that is the reign of God.

(All) We do believe it.

(L) We believe that God is empowering us to help make straight the way to the feast.

(All) We do believe and we beg together for the eyes to see, the ears to hear, the hands to work and the hearts to hold us together in love until we and all creation know the fullness of the supper of the Lamb.

Then three times, with the whole group joining on the second and third repetition:

And give us – all of us – this day our daily bread.

(L) I invite you as you leave to take your commitment from this tray, and as the bread-and-drink prayers you have shared, make it part of your life until we meet again.



After the Session

Review the “after the session” suggestions in the prior sections and adapt as appropriate.

