



THE RADIX PROJECT

small groups / deep roots

FALL 2022:
CREATION, COMMUNITY, AND CONNECTION



SAINT MARK'S
EPISCOPAL CATHEDRAL



THE RADIX PROJECT ♦ www.saintmarks.org/radix

The Radix Project: Small Groups/Deep Roots is an opportunity to be part of a small group that meets over the course of six weeks to share stories, study scripture, and pray for one another. This is the eighth iteration since the project was launched in early 2020. The pandemic has not slowed us down, and, in some ways, connecting via Zoom has afforded an opportunity for some to participate who otherwise would not have. This fall we will offer both Zoom and in-person options as part of these new learnings and adaptations in gathering together.

A small group is a cohort of people who gather to get to know one another against the backdrop of shared stories, scripture, and prayer. This is not a working group; there is no task to be accomplished. It is about knowing one another, and being known, as we are known by God. And that is the root of spiritual transformation.

The name for this communal effort—The Radix Project—draws on the Latin word for “root,” which is *radix*. Jesus modeled small group relationships in his life and ministry, and the early Church was structured on small groups who worshipped, prayed, and cared for one another. Those are our roots, and in our time, when so many pressures of modern life leave us feeling alone and isolated, Christian community offers us a tangible way of entering into relationships rooted in trust and mutuality.

The root word, *radix*, also gives rise to the oft-touted word we hear a lot these days—radical. A radical is not one who goes their separate way, doing their own thing. A radical is one who is so well-grounded with deep roots that they are able to stretch out to the fringes of existence and offer us all a different way of being in the world. We speak of radical hospitality or radical welcome because we claim our deep roots of this life in Christ, and we are willing to claim a radical vision for our lives and for the world.

We don't always agree—politically, theologically, and we have different life experiences—but we care for one another, we pray for one another, and the blush of life is more full because of those relationships. It is our hope that as you reflect on these stories, you might discover how God's graceful activity is revealed in your own life as well, and in those of your group members. ♦

THE RADIX PROJECT PLANNING COMMITTEE

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Please feel free to contact radix@saintmarks.org if you have any questions or concerns along the way. Thank you for your participation.

OVERVIEW FOR SMALL GROUPS

Small groups are designed to gather people of faith in settings that foster trust so that our relationships with God and one another are strengthened. When we meet each other for earnest conversation, sharing, and prayer, we deepen the bonds of affection by which we learn how to love ourselves, each other, and God more fully. In this way, small groups are intentional about providing space for prayerful support and accountability, guided by the One we know as Jesus the Christ.

For our purposes in the Radix Project, we have designed a process for guiding 6–10 people in their season together, designed as six 90-minute sessions, with a plenary gathering before the first session. Each small group gathering is structured to open with prayer, to have time for check-in, scripture reading and reflection, sharing of stories, and check-out with prayer.

SMALL GROUP SESSIONS

In addition to the six small group meetings (which will convene at various times), there is a plenary gathering to which all are invited, whether or not they are participating in the small groups.

OPENING PLENARY

CREATION, COMMUNITY, AND CONNECTION

Sunday, September 18, 2022

6:30–8 p.m., online via Zoom *only*

The Opening Plenary will begin with a presentation by members of the Radix Project planning committee. This presentation is open to anyone, whether or not they are participating in the small groups. Following this presentation, the groups will meet individually for the first time in break-out sessions.

SESSION 1:

GENESIS 9:8–17 week of September 18, 2022

SESSION 2:

LEVITICUS 25:1–7 week of September 25, 2022

SESSION 3:

ISAIAH 55:6–11 week of October 2, 2022

SESSION 4:

PSALM 29 week of October 9, 2022

SESSION 5:

MATTHEW 6:25–34 week of October 16, 2022

SESSION 6:

REVELATION 21:1–6, 22:1–5 week of October 23, 2022

RADIX 8: CREATION, COMMUNITY, CONNECTION

“Creation—be it planets, plants, or pandas—was not just a warm-up act for the human story or the Bible. The natural world is its own good and sufficient story, if we can only learn to see it with humility and love. That takes contemplative practice, stopping our busy and superficial minds long enough to see the beauty, allow the truth, and protect the inherent goodness of what it is—whether it profits me, pleases me or not.”

—Richard Rohr, *The Universal Christ*

Radix 8 offers six scripture passages that give glimpses of creation beyond what may first come to mind in the “Creation” story. These scriptures invite us to look for rhythms of growth, care, rest and new life unfolding both in the multitude of all living things.

Many of us live in the Pacific Northwest, a region abundant with natural beauty—the wingspan of an eagle, the emerging view of Mt. Rainier, a P-patch bearing winter squash, a whale breaching in the Puget Sound or the first bloom of a dahlia.

We also sit on the ever-potential edge of nature’s forces—the risk of wildfires, earthquakes, volcanoes and mudslides—that can cause death, destruction and despair.

We witness this cycle of life and death in our own lives. COVID-19 has shown us more than ever that our worlds are closely connected—when one part of the system is disrupted, we are all impacted. We are one with all, part of the whole.

Our interconnectedness is part of the divine pattern of creation, which is eternally unfolding, not just a thing of the past. Our scriptures remind us of this truth, and our being made in God’s image invites us to see our practice of presence as a creative act of faith here and now. As we take our place in creation, we can prepare for new ways of living and growing into God’s call for continual transformation. In this series,

participants are invited to see Creation as a tapestry into which we are woven. And this Radix series is an opportunity to see the imprint of the Holy in and around you. What new thing will you notice? How might these interactions shape what you know of God and yourself, and how you might respond?

ESTABLISH GROUP NORMS

In order to grow in trust, it is important for groups to agree to norms for their time together and revisit them periodically as needed. It is important that everyone agree to abide by the same expectations for their time together. Here are some aspects of relational group culture that all groups will want to discuss as they begin their work.

CONFIDENTIALITY

- ◆ What is allowed to be shared outside the group?
- ◆ What may be shared on social media?

RESPECT AND MUTUALITY

- ◆ Let others finish without being interrupted.
- ◆ Resist the temptation to problem-solve.
- ◆ Mutual respect is essential.
- ◆ Give everyone a chance to speak.

LOGISTICS

- ◆ What are expectations about beginning and ending on time?
- ◆ ...about informing others of an expected absence?

ATTENDANCE

- ◆ Be punctual.
- ◆ Commit to regular attendance and participation.

PREPARATION

- ◆ What, if anything, are group members expected to do to prepare for their meetings?

COMMITMENT TO PRAYER

- ◆ What are expectations that each group member commits to pray for the others daily during this time as a small group?

ZOOM ETIQUETTE

Keep your microphone on mute when not speaking.

Take responsibility to practice using the technology ahead of the meeting, and ask for help as needed. Zoom resources are available at *support.zoom.us*

FLOW OF THE SMALL GROUP MEETINGS

A key to the flourishing of small groups is some consistency week to week so folks will know what to expect. A group facilitator will encourage the group to stay on track, but everyone has a part in making that happen. Here is the suggested format for all Radix Project groups which are designed to meet for 90 minutes each week:

GATHERING	5 minutes
OPEN IN PRAYER	5 minutes
CHECK-IN QUESTION10 minutes
SCRIPTURE REFLECTION20 minutes
GROUP DISCUSSION30 minutes
CHECK-OUT INCLUDING PRAYER REQUESTS10 minutes
CLOSING PRAYER/WORSHIP10 minutes

IDEAS FOR CHECK-IN QUESTIONS

Pick one for each week.

- ◆ Describe a park or outdoor spot that you find renewing or a place of connection.
- ◆ What is an outside activity that you enjoy?
- ◆ Do you prefer mountains or the beach? Why or why not?
- ◆ What is a prayer or spiritual practice that you are currently using?
- ◆ What is something in nature that you have seen or experienced recently that you are grateful for?
- ◆ What is a sound in nature that you enjoy or try to listen for?
- ◆ Describe your ideal weather day - what would the temperature and conditions be?
- ◆ Have you had an experience of prayer or deep connection in nature?
- ◆ What is your favorite season?
- ◆ Does the sunshine energize you or overwhelm you?

OPENING AND CLOSING PRAYERS/CHECK-OUT

Leading one another in prayer is a responsibility that is meant to be shared among the group—it's not just for the facilitator. Decide how your group will share taking turns with opening and closing prayers. Prayers may be extemporaneous, or sourced from the rich variety of resources, some of which are listed below:

- ◆ Daily Devotions, BCP, p. 137–140
- ◆ Compline, BCP, p. 127
- ◆ A brief hymn, chant, or Taizé prayer
- ◆ A poem that connects to a theme in the scripture selection
- ◆ Lectionary-based Prayers from Vanderbilt Divinity School
<https://lectionary.library.vanderbilt.edu/prayers.php?id=154>
- ◆ The Book of Common Prayer Online
<https://www.bcponline.org/>
- ◆ The New Zealand Prayer Book Online
<https://anglicanprayerbook.nz/>
Here are three that might work well:
<https://anglicanprayerbook.nz/138.html>
- ◆ The Work of the People
<https://www.theworkofthepeople.com/visual-liturgy>
<https://www.theworkofthepeople.com/be-still>

- ◆ Closing prayer is an opportunity for each member of the group to reflect on the time together, articulating what they learned, and to ask the group to hold them in prayer with special intention. That intention may have arisen in the context of the meeting, or it could be that you are asking for prayers for some prevailing part of your life (e.g., my child has surgery next week, or I am retiring from work, etc.). The important thing is that the prayers of the group gather all those intentions up as the meeting comes to an end, AND that each person commits to holding those prayers through the week, until you meet again.

In addition to including a prayer from one of the above resources, consider the following:

- ◆ The group may choose to go around and allow each person to pray for the person sitting to their right, with the facilitator opening and closing.
- ◆ Alternatively, after the intentions are named, sit in silent prayer, centered on God's mercy and presence.

SCRIPTURE STUDY GUIDES



WEEK 1

SCRIPTURE

Genesis 9:8–17

After the flood, God's covenant with creation

THEN God said to Noah and to his sons with him, “As for me, I am establishing my covenant with you and your descendants after you and with every living creature that is with you, the birds, the domestic animals, and every animal of the earth with you, as many as came out of the ark. I establish my covenant with you, that never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of a flood, and never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth.” God said, “This is the sign of the covenant that I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all future generations: I have set my bow in the clouds, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth. When I bring clouds over the earth and the bow is seen in the clouds, I will remember my covenant that is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh, and the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh. When the bow is in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth.” God said to Noah, “This is the sign of the covenant that I have established between me and all flesh that is on the earth.” ♦

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. What word or phrase stands out to you or strikes you? What questions do you have about the passage?
2. Why do you think God uses a rainbow as a reminder?
3. God uses the word “covenant” six times in this passage. Can you think of another instance in Genesis where something is repeated six times?

GROUP DISCUSSION

1. God created a flood that affected the entire planet and all its inhabitants. And God created a covenant with the entire planet and all its inhabitants. As people of faith, how does this inform how we think about the living things that share the planet with us?
2. Think about the last time you saw a rainbow. Where were you and what were you doing? After considering this passage, how might you experience the next rainbow you see?
3. How could this passage be used to strengthen an argument that the Bible promotes the importance of biodiversity?
4. What do creation, community, and connection mean in light of this passage?



Noah's Ark on Mount Ararat

oil painting on canvas by Simon de Myle, 1570

Very little is known about de Myle, who may have been from Holland. This is the only work of his that is known to historians.

1. There are animals we can identify in this painting as well as ones we might find fantastical. How might this affect the way we think about the painting, and the passage?
2. Rather than the usual artistic depictions of Noah's story (the building of the ark, the animals embarking, the rainbow), de Myle has painted creatures disembarking, or leaving the ark. What do you like or dislike about his approach?

NOTES

WEEK 2

SCRIPTURE

Leviticus 25:1-7

The sabbath year for the fields

THE LORD spoke to Moses on Mount Sinai, saying: Speak to the people of Israel and say to them: When you enter the land that I am giving you, the land shall observe a sabbath for the LORD. For six years you shall sow your field, and for six years you shall prune your vineyard, and gather in their yield; but in the seventh year there shall be a sabbath of complete rest for the land, a sabbath for the LORD: you shall not sow your field or prune your vineyard. You shall not reap the aftergrowth of your harvest or gather the grapes of your unpruned vine: it shall be a year of complete rest for the land. You may eat what the land yields during its sabbath—you, your male and female slaves, your hired and your bound laborers who live with you; for your livestock also, and for the wild animals in your land all its yield shall be for food. ♦

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. What word or phrase stands out to you or strikes you? What questions do you have about the passage?
2. The Levitical code was intended to guide the common life of ancient Israel in ways that ordered (structured). What has been your experience of Leviticus? Have you seen it used to “proof text” positions on certain topics (e.g., human sexuality, food laws, etc.)?
3. How does this passage about sabbath rest for the land relate to other parts of the Levitical code?

GROUP DISCUSSION

1. Most of us are no longer closely connected to the land as our agrarian ancestors were. How do you find connections to the land in your life today?
2. How do you experience the land as source of abundance which provokes gratitude? How is this perhaps more difficult in our time?
3. “Sabbath” is not just a time of rest and renewal for humans; this passage reminds us all creation is ordered with this need for sabbath. How do you keep sabbath? How do you honor sabbath in the resources supporting you in life?



The Gleaners (Des glaneuses)

Jean-Francois Millet, 1857

During the sabbath year (Hebrew: *Shmita*), landowners were to open their gates and allow gleaners to take what grew in the uncultivated field. No payment was allowed, and debts were forgiven. Millet painted this on the eve of the Industrial Revolution and the advent of the modern economy.

1. What strikes you about this piece of art?
2. Who are gleaners of our day?

NOTES

WEEK 3

SCRIPTURE

Isaiah 55:6–11

“For as the rain and snow return water to the earth...”

SEEK the LORD while he may be found,
call upon him while he is near;
let the wicked forsake their way,
and the unrighteous their thoughts;
let them return to the LORD, that he may have mercy on them,
and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.
For my thoughts are not your thoughts,
nor are your ways my ways, says the LORD.
For as the heavens are higher than the earth,
so are my ways higher than your ways
and my thoughts than your thoughts.

For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven,
and do not return there until they have watered the earth,
making it bring forth and sprout,
giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater,
so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth;
it shall not return to me empty,
but it shall accomplish that which I purpose,
and succeed in the thing for which I sent it. ♦

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. What word or phrase stands out to you or strikes you? What questions do you have about the passage?
2. This scripture forms a canticle in the Book of Common Prayer known as the Second Song of Isaiah that is often used in the Daily Office. How might the repetition of saying these words over the course of a month in prayer be impactful?
3. What image comes to mind when you read “so shall my word that goes out from my mouth”?

GROUP DISCUSSION

1. Seattle is known for its rainy days. How does Isaiah’s description of rain compare and contrast with your response to rain?
2. Describe a time in your life when your words helped others flourish or a time when they did not achieve the intended purpose. How do your words reflect your “purpose” or intention?
3. What interconnections do you notice?



Macro photography puts a small subject in great focus, often representing a greater size than what is actual. In this image, the photographer provides a glimpse of a raindrop freshly landed on a leaf in the forest. As you reflect on the photo, imagine a time when you felt rain and what senses you may have experienced.

1. What strikes you about the raindrop?
2. What ways do you receive refreshment?

NOTES

WEEK 4

SCRIPTURE

Psalm 29

A Psalm of Creation

ASCRIBE to the LORD, you gods, *
Ascribe to the Lord glory and strength.

Ascribe to the LORD the glory due his Name; *
worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness.

The voice of the LORD is upon the waters;
the God of glory thunders; *
the LORD is upon the mighty waters.

The voice of the LORD is a powerful voice; *
the voice of the LORD is a voice of splendor.

The voice of the LORD breaks the cedar trees; *
the LORD breaks the cedars of Lebanon;

He makes Lebanon skip like a calf, *
and Mount Hermon like a young wild ox.

The voice of the LORD splits the flames of fire;
the voice of the LORD shakes the wilderness; *
the Lord shakes the wilderness of Kadesh.

The voice of the LORD makes the oak trees writhe *
and strips the forests bare.

And in the temple of the LORD *
all are crying, "Glory!"

The LORD sits enthroned above the flood; *
the LORD sits enthroned as King for evermore.

The LORD shall give strength to his people; *
the LORD shall give his people the blessing of peace. ♦

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. What word or phrase stands out to you or strikes you? What questions do you have about the passage? What phrase(s) would you repeat if you were setting this Psalm to music?
2. How is God's relationship with the natural world described in this Psalm? What does it suggest about God's relationship with human beings and their actions?
3. How do you reconcile the God who is inconceivably powerful with the God who will give strength and the blessing of peace to His people?
4. Why do you think it's God's *voice* that is the instrument of creation and not, for example, God's hands?

GROUP DISCUSSION

1. Psalm 29 celebrates the power of God, as revealed in God's relationship with the natural world. How have you experienced God in nature? How has that experience shifted your understanding of God?
2. The language used suggests that God is over the natural world in this scripture. How does this knowledge inform your faith at a time when the earth is in peril?
3. How do you reconcile the God who is inconceivably powerful with the God who will "bless his people with peace"? How do you experience it in your own journey with God?



Perennial Perseids

Image credit: NASA/Bill Ingalls

August 11, 2021, in Spruce Knob, West Virginia.

The Perseids are debris remnants of Comet Swift-Tuttle, which takes 133 years to orbit the Sun once. The meteors often leave long “wakes” of light and color behind them as they streak through Earth’s atmosphere. They’re also known for their fireballs, which are larger explosions of light and color that can persist longer than an average meteor streak.

1. How does the earthly foreground with the stand of trees, the Perseid meteor shower and the universe beyond echo the themes of creation in the Psalm?
2. What does a magnificent sight like a meteor shower make you feel about God? How does it make you feel about yourself?

NOTES

WEEK 5

SCRIPTURE

Matthew 6:25–34

“Consider the lilies of the field...”

JESUS said, “Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?”

And which of you by worrying can add a single hour to your span of life? And why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith?

Therefore do not worry, saying, ‘What will we eat?’ or ‘What will we drink?’ or ‘What will we wear?’ For it is the gentiles who seek all these things, and indeed your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first the kingdom of God and its righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. So do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring worries of its own. Today’s trouble is enough for today.” ♦

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. What word or phrase stands out to you or strikes you? What questions do you have about the passage?
2. This passage belongs to the Sermon on the Mount, in a section about how members of the kingdom/kin-dom/ realm of God should deal with wealth and material possessions. How does the pursuit of our own needs distract us from what's important in the kingdom of God?
3. God's righteousness is a key theme in Matthew's Gospel, and something we must actively seek, not passively receive. What does it look like to hold the value of non-anxiousness with working towards God's righteousness/justice?

GROUP DISCUSSION

1. What helps you let go of worry?
2. How does the animal and plant world serve as a model for us and our behavior?
3. Describe a time when you have experienced a sense of interconnectedness with all Creation.

THE SUMMER DAY

by Mary Oliver

Who made the world?
Who made the swan, and the black bear?
Who made the grasshopper?
This grasshopper, I mean—
the one who has flung herself out of the grass,
the one who is eating sugar out of my hand,
who is moving her jaws back and forth instead of up and down—
who is gazing around with her enormous and complicated eyes.
Now she lifts her pale forearms and thoroughly washes her face.
Now she snaps her wings open, and floats away.
I don't know exactly what a prayer is.
I do know how to pay attention, how to fall down
into the grass, how to kneel down in the grass,
how to be idle and blessed, how to stroll through the fields,
which is what I have been doing all day.
Tell me, what else should I have done?
Doesn't everything die at last, and too soon?
Tell me, what is it you plan to do
with your one wild and precious life?

*from New and Selected Poems, 1992
Beacon Press, Boston, MA*

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American poet Mary Oliver (September 10, 1935–January 17, 2019) took nature and spirituality as her predominant themes. The last two lines of this poem are among her most quoted. In a 2011 interview, Oliver told Maria Shriver, “I am not very hopeful about the Earth remaining as it was when I was a child. It’s already greatly changed. But I think when we lose the connection with the natural world, we tend to forget that we’re animals, that we need the Earth.”

1. How does the attention the poet pays to the grasshopper help us connect to the Creator and the created?
2. What makes for a day well-lived? What makes for a life well-lived?

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WEEK 6

SCRIPTURE

Revelation 21:1–6, 22:1–5

The River of Life

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 as their God; 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.

Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb, through the middle of the street of the city. On either side of the river is the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, producing its fruit each month; and the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. Nothing accursed will be found there any more. But the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him; they will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. And there will be no more night; they need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever. ♦

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. What word or phrase stands out to you or strikes you? What questions do you have about the passage?
2. How has the Book of Revelation informed and influenced your view of the Christian faith (either in reading it or how you have heard it described)?

GROUP DISCUSSION

1. Although written for a specific time and place, the Book of Revelation is often referenced in popular culture and religion. What do you find inspiring, challenging, or both?
2. Have you ever been in a place where all things seemed suddenly new and fresh? What was that experience like for you?
3. What would it be like to have “God dwell with you?”



Make All Things New

James B. Janknegt (b.1966)

1. What image or section of this work stands out the most for you?
2. How does the artist's use of color contribute to how you experience this painting?

CLOSING DISCUSSION

This is the end of six weeks of study and reflection together. Take time to pray together about next steps, both as individuals and as a group.

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