

WORLD PRAYER DAY Written by the Surinamese Committee WGD March 2, 2018 "All God's Creation is Very Good!" Bible Study - Genesis 1 *

Introduction

In recent years, there has been a lot of talk about climate change. Suriname, along with many other countries in the world, is feeling the effects of climate change due to global warming. Our capital Paramaribo is located on the Atlantic Ocean and many places are now flooded in the rainy season. Many other countries are facing droughts, hurricanes and floods. Scientists believe that underlying changes in the environment can have serious consequences. We see the devastating effects of natural disasters on the environment or man-made disasters, such as polluting the rivers with mercury when mining gold. The harmonious life of people, animals and nature is completely out of balance. Many agree that we as human beings are responsible for this. At the same time, we are the ones who can bring the solutions to restore harmony between humanity and the creation of God.

As women in Suriname, we believe that the Christian faith community can make a major contribution to maintaining a liveable, healthy and safe environment. Actually, the future of the earth until the next generations is important to us. We see this as one of the most important elements of the Christian faith. We are reminded of the relationship between God and creation, God and humanity. It's about respect for every living thing.

As a Christian community, it is very important to be aware that we are living in the 21st century, a period marked by rapid advances in technology. Given that we now live in a 24-hour economy and people strive for excellence, we are all challenged to uphold our moral and ethical principles. We need to ask ourselves how to strike the balance between keeping up with technology on the one hand and minimizing the negative side effects of technology in our environment, on the other.

What does it mean for us to affirm the Apostle confession: "I believe in God the Father, Creator of heaven and earth, I believe in Jesus Christ, His only Son, and I believe in the Holy Spirit?" How does this affirmation relate to our belief in God as creator? What is our role as Christians in the world of God? How do we live responsibly in the 21st century?

We will be guided by the theme "All God's creation is very good!" (Genesis 1:1-31)

Background explanation for Genesis 1:1-31

The word Genesis means origin, beginning, or becoming. The book of Genesis opens the Bible to us, in which the divine revelations of God are recorded by people of faith. Genesis testifies to the beginning of life on earth, the creation of humanity, and their responsibility for creation.

In the creation story, God creates out of chaos, heaven and earth. God creates a cosmos, a living world (1-26). God ends creation by creating mankind in God's image and likeness (27). They then receive God's command to take care of god's creation, which God said was very good (28-31). God does all this by speaking, separating, differentiating, and creating. In Genesis there are statements about the beauty of creation and the place and function of each creature in all creation. "And God saw all that he had made, and indeed, it was very good."

In Psalm 8, the psalmist looks at the heavens, the moon, and the stars and asks God, "What is man that

you remember his?" And continues to praise "Yet thou hast made him almost divine, and crowned him with glory and splendor. You make him rule over the works of your hands, all that you have put under his feet: "(5-8).

However, the Psalm does not imply that man has the right to use God's creation without worrying about taking care of it. Don't bring development to the communities without taking sustainability into account. And certainly not consume what nature offers without the preservation and renewal of natural resources. We, male and female beings, must be aware that we are created in the image and likeness of God, and we are called to live in peace and justice with creation.

Like the animals, man also receives God's blessings, and a command: be responsible, be a good steward, protect and care for all of God's creation. We live in the world, so we must not damage what God has created. Nor should we ever place ourselves above God, because the earth and all that lives on it belongs to the Lord (Psalm 24:1). It means so much to be a partner of God!

Method: Bible Study Group

This Bible study method is known as contextual Bible reading. We want to establish a dialogue between our current context and the Bible. We begin to read the Bible, aware of our situation, so that we can listen to the word of God from the past to the present. This approach shines new light on our questions and actions.

The method has four phases. Choose an intermediary/discussion leader who maintains a lively interaction with the participants.

1. Perception:

What does the text say (read the text several times or in multiple versions to start the conversation)? What words stand out? Are there repetitions, is there action in the text? What has been written about creation? What has been written about man?

2. Interpretation:

- a. What images come to your fore when you hear the words that stand out to you? (Participants should make associations between what is being said and their own experience)
- b. In Genesis 1:22, 28, God blesses the animals and mankind. How do you hear the blessing of creation in the face of environmental pollution, natural disasters, advanced technology, and abuse of people and nature?
- c. How do we as humans use our gift in caring for creation? What are our duties to bring God's blessing into context?
- d. How can we ensure the future of the earth for future generations? Consider, for example:
 - growing crops (organic, chemical fertilizers, small-scale farm, agribusiness)
 - extraction of minerals (gold, bauxite, etc.), deforestation (logging leads to less oxygen), harvesting, hunting and poaching of endangered species such as sea turtles.
 - Waste management (landfilling, recycling, reuse, composting).
 - All forms of violence against children, young people and women.

3. Plenary:

Conclude the conversation, which summarizes what the theme "All of God's creation is very good!" means to you and to your communities as you receive the blessing of the caretaker of God's creation.

4. Application:

- The participants can share the lessons they have learned from the Bible text and the conversation in the groups.
- The participants can work together on an environmental project.
- The participants can write a poem or a prayer or make a drawing based on the theme.
- Participants can write a personal devotion to the care of God's creation.

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