

Resilience Keeps Us Going

We are held captive by the consumer culture ...

What's next? These continue to be unsettling times in rural communities. We are put upon by strong forces that mask the qualities that would otherwise give our lives vitality and purpose.

At a recent conference on rural communities and the church, Dittmar Muendel compared our situation with that of the people of Israel who were taken into captivity in Babylon (587-539 B.C.E.) and were held there for 50 years.

Removed from the land and culture they knew, they became disoriented and depressed.

Rural folks suffer a similar fate. Industrialization and the consumer culture have imprisoned our psyche and disconnected us from the land. Technological instruments dictate how we should farm. Food and services are transported from long distances into our communities by corporations. Our work is measured in terms of "efficiencies". We are held captive by the consumer culture. We fear that endless demands like a cancer, will devour us.

While both we and the land feel our strength being drained, it is amazing how resilient we can be. When the Israelite captives were released to return to their homeland, they encouraged each other to rebuild their land and communities and their spirits were restored.

If we can once again feel the restorative powers of nature and creation, we will reconnect with our deeper potential. To live with our hands in the soil, to give attention to the songs of the Creator, to re-build our relationships with the land and with our neighbours, is to re-discover our God-given restorative and re-creative powers.

The local church (members and clergy) can help community members keep focused on what is life-giving, re-discover glimmers of hope, and work together for the good of all.

Significant questions that need to be addressed include: How do we strengthen local economic roots? What are the ecological impacts that threaten us? Who has a voice, and who can give a voice to the voiceless?

Our God-given resilience keeps us going!