

The Importance of Art in Troubled Times

During catastrophic times some may view art as a luxury, not a necessity. Others insist that art is never needed more. What does this mean? What needs do we all share? What needs can artists meet? How have artists responded throughout history during trials and tribulations? What can we do today? “Art reminds us of the things that really matter. It lifts our eyes to eternity and shows us the importance of the here and now.” (Alastair Gordon)

Charles David Kelley is Latvian-American, citizen of both countries. Born in Los Angeles, he has lived in Oregon since 1980. His professional training is in Bible, theology, and missiology. He began ministering in Latvia in 1985. Before founding Bridge Builders International, an Oregon based mission that focuses on Latvia, in 1994, Charles served in pastoral ministry in California, Texas, and Oregon for 21 years. He is chairman and director of BBI’s Latvian affiliate, “Partners.” He serves as Dean of International Relations at Baltic Pastoral Institute in Riga. Charles is founder of the Imago Dei Artists Network in Latvia and co-founder of the imagiNATIONS Annual Art Festival for Estonia and Latvia. He is a member of the Arts Centre Group in London and is the LausanneARTS Advocate at Large for Europe. Charles is an author, pianist, and painter, having studied at the feet of two masters, professors both, from the Latvian Academy of the Arts. He lives in Latvia 4-5 months per year. He has been married to Nancy for 40 years and has four grown children and nine young grandchildren.

I. What human needs do we all share? (Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs)

- A. We all have basic needs
- B. We all have psychological needs
- C. We all have fulfillment needs

II. What spiritual needs do we all share?

- A. We need a relationship with God
- B. We need each other
- C. We need to know Scripture

III. What needs can artists meet during troubled times?

- A. We can help people grieve and lament
- B. We can convey spiritual truth

- C. We can provide insight and understanding
- D. We can inspire worship
- E. We can impact society and bring about change

“The arts do not just illustrate theology but are themselves modes of theological expression. Art shapes the imagination of faith communities and provides the forms through which many people encounter the Gospel.” – Jeremy Begbie

Suggested Readings: