

The Power of Art in Troubled Times

We will never forget this global crisis. Just like our forefathers told us about WWII, the fall of the Soviet Union, or the tsunamis in Indonesia, Thailand, and Japan; the covid-19 pandemic is something we will speak about with future generations. We will also remember the various great artistic expressions created in the middle of crisis. This includes our own artistic responses. For some of us, our creativity is being unleashed in our families and churches while for others it is directed toward society at large. Let us reflect on how artists have responded throughout history during trials and tribulations. What can we do today?

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. How have artists historically responded to crisis?
 - A. During famines and pestilence
 - B. During natural disasters
 - C. During unthinkable tragedies
 - D. During economic insecurity
 - E. During times of public mourning
 - F. During times of war
- II. What are some powerful examples of creative expression during this pandemic?
 - A. Innovative worship

B. Spiritual renewal

C. Solace and comfort

D. Social action

III. How are you using your art form to meet needs during today's catastrophe?

“In a world of turmoil, I believe art matters more than ever. Art can bring about positive change, economic resilience, political action, even social revolution. Art reminds us of the things that really matter.” – Alastair Gordon

Suggested Readings: