

A photograph showing the silhouettes of several children playing on a grassy hill. The children are in various poses: one is crouching, another is running, and others are standing or walking. The background is a vibrant sunset sky with shades of orange, red, and purple. The overall mood is peaceful and nostalgic.

By Linda Nicholls

PRIMATE OF THE ANGLICAN CHURCH OF CANADA

# FINDING JOY IN OUR CHALLENGED ASSUMPTIONS

When life is stable and all its interlocking parts are running relatively smoothly, we simply assume it will always be that way. We make plans for the future based on present expectations. Then suddenly our lives are turned upside down by something unexpected. The plans are jettisoned, and all our assumptions are in doubt. What worked in the past will no longer be helpful in the present and future, or we are invited to consider new ways that may yet be life-giving. ▶

PHOTO: RENE BERNAL

▶ This can occur on a global scale, as we are now experiencing, or in our own lives and families due to a personal tragedy or a chosen transition. I remember well my first months living in India, where assumptions were challenged daily! The lack of consistent—and clean—water supply changed daily routines and woke me up to the privileges I took for granted at home. It is a lesson I carry with me to this day. Others find their lives reoriented by the death of a loved one or an illness that reframes all expectations about the future.

Jesus challenged the assumptions of a settled community through his teaching and actions in every encounter. He invited people to look at God's love and its demands in new ways. He reoriented living into the law of God through the lens of God's love and compassion. The disciples were invited to reframe their expectations. When they saw only the lack of enough food for the 5,000, Jesus invited them to see what they had as enough for all. When they wanted to send away children as inconvenient, Jesus gathered them and invited the disciples to see the world through their eyes. Religious leaders were invited to stop seeing the letter of the law regarding the Sabbath and open their hearts and minds

to what gives life through healing. The woman at the well was invited to see beyond cultural limitations and find living water. And the resurrection was the disruption that radically altered everything.

We are in the maelstrom of a global reframing of assumptions right now as we re-evaluate our lives and expectations. Generations past have experienced similar upheavals that have changed the world. Now we are invited into a time of unsettling renegotiation of what is important and what needs to change. Will online worship continue? Will we pay attention to the cracks in our society opened up in these months—inequalities, racial injustice, continued effects of colonialism? Will we let go of assumptions that are no longer life-giving in our life as a church, especially those that are destructive of others and of creation? Will the voice of God be heard in our midst in new ways?

We may experience this time as frightening in its uncertainty. Or we can enter into it with a sense of excitement at the possibilities for something more life-giving than we have had in the past. We will need courage with open hearts, minds and wills trusting in God. Let the adventure begin in the name of Christ! ■