

# Staying Human

## Reimagining the Spirit of the Commons

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# What is a commons?

- A commons is made up of a shared social and material good (a mountain pasture),
- A human community (shepherds and the villages of which they are a part), and
- A set of formal and informal customary practices, rules, processes, and priorities for governing and administering that good (practices for rotating access to the pasture between shepherds).





# Three types of commons

1. **The natural commons** of fisheries, forests, watersheds, irrigation systems, etc
2. **The cultural and knowledge commons** of a community's language, ancestral wisdom, stories, scientific techniques, rituals, and cultural practices such as games; and now
3. **The digital commons** of open-source software, information, and technologies (e.g., Wikipedia, Linux, and TCP/IP protocols).

# The commons and political economy

## Distinct from:

- Market
- State and public goods
- Household
- Corporation



# The commons vs enclosure

## An origin story of capitalism

“Let us not be satisfied with the liberation of Egypt, or the subjugation of Malta, but let us subdue Finchley Common; let us conquer Hounslow Heath, let us compel Epping Forest to submit to the yoke of improvement.”

*John Sinclair, first President of the Board of Agriculture  
Speech given in 1803*



# The commons vs enclosure

The continuing story of capitalism





# The technocratic paradigm vs. humanity as a commons

- A wholly instrumental view of nature, separating and alienating us from creation.
- Operates with a “tyrannical anthropocentrism” as well as a hyper individualism (Laudato Si’ #68)
- Equates scientific and technological progress with human progress
- Denies any moral or transcendent basis to life such that everything is subject to a will to power without moral limits save for a cursory utilitarian calculus.

# Counter movements to disenclose life and re-embed economy in a moral life

## An act of reclaiming land as commons available to all

“Not only this Common, or Heath should be taken in and Manured by the People, but all the Commons and waste Ground in England, and in the whole World, shall be taken in by the People in righteousness, not owning any Proprierty; but taking the Earth to be a Common Treasury, as it was first made for all.”

*“The True Levellers Standard,” Sabine Works, 260*



# Counter movements to disenclose life and re-embed economy in a moral life

The new enclosures make mobile and migrant labor the dominant form of labor... Capital keeps us constantly on the move, separating us from our countries, farms, gardens, homes, and workplaces, because this guarantees cheap wages, communal disorganization, and maximum vulnerability in front of the law, the courts, and the police.

*Slivia Federuci*



# Counter movements to disenclose life and re-embed economy in a moral life



# Commons as an embodiment of a theological vision of what it means to be human

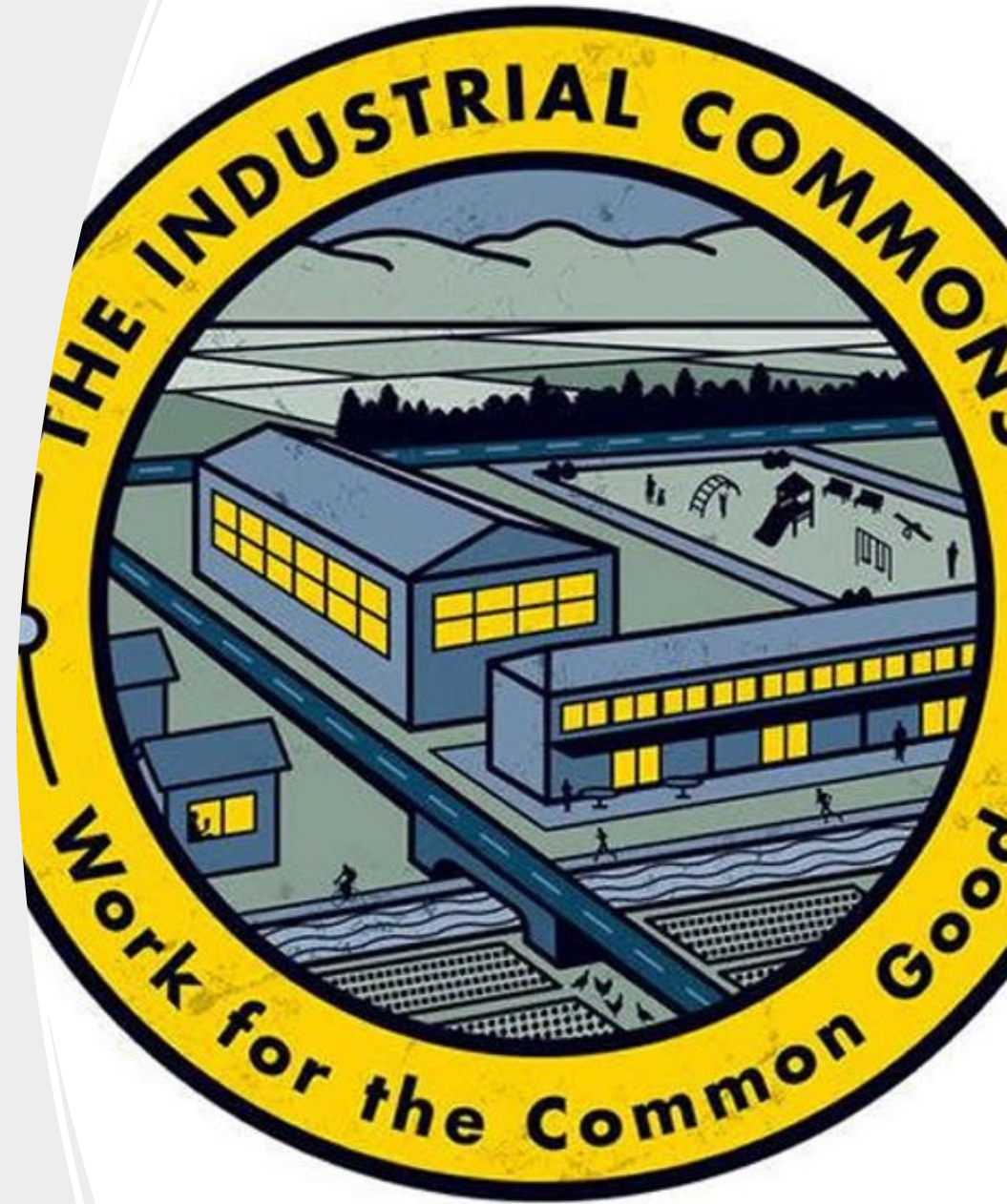
## Commons embodies and enacts:

- Neighbour love
- Christological humanism
- Means of realising human personhood as one made in the image of God
- Integral ecology and a holistic conception of salvation
- Witnessing to Pentecostal communion



# The commons as a form of mission and ministry

- The parish as a commons
- Building the solidarity economy
- The disenclosure of crown and church lands



**Q & A**

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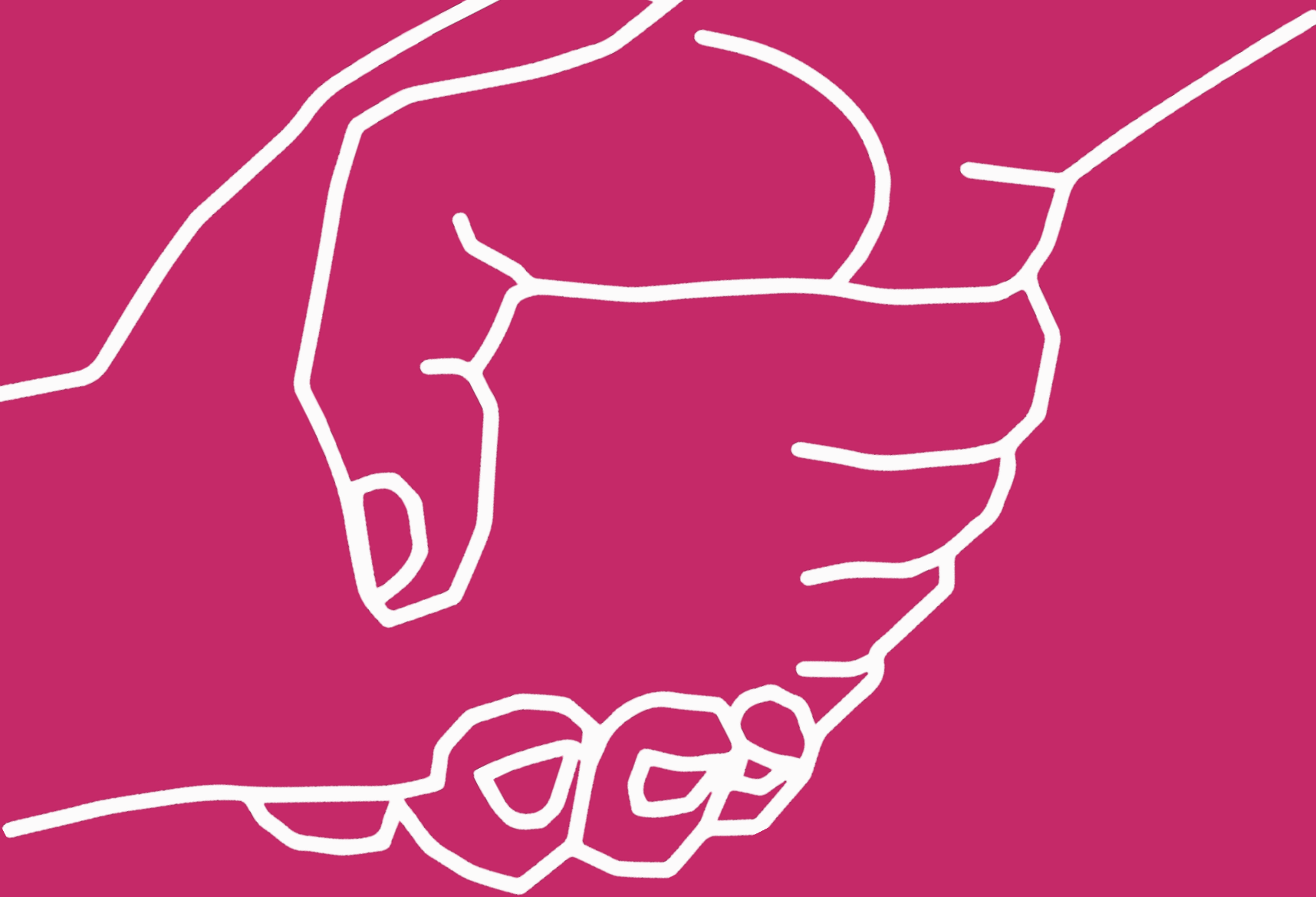
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