

*The Ministry Development Committee  
of the Anglican Diocese of Ballarat  
are pleased to present a  
Lenten Study Guide to accompany*

# **Renewing the Life of the Earth:**

Christian Discipleship  
and Environmental Action



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### **Study Notes**

These notes are designed to be used with Rachel Mach's booklet, *Renewing the Life of the Earth*.

They can be used for individual reflection, or as a group session.

# SESSION 1

## The Urgency of Caring for the Whole of Creation

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### *Step ONE:*

Read pages 1-5.

### *Step TWO:*

Notice:

- Something that surprised you
- Something that made you wonder or something you disagreed with
- Something you would like to think more about.

### *Step Four:*

Record the things you notice and/or discuss in your group.

### *Step Five:*

Read Romans 8.22

“We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labour pains until now;”

Think about and/or discuss in your group the following questions:

- Rachel mentions the Pandemic. How might this verse relate to the pandemic?
- How did the pandemic affect you and your community? In what ways did it affect the environment? What positives came from this experience?

*Step Six:*

Read Matthew 25.35

"for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me,"

Think about and/or discuss in your group the following question:

- What are three things that we can do to help prevent the disasters that are devastating food security and increasing homelessness?

*Step Seven:*

Read Romans 8.19

"For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God."

Thinking about the response of the Church, consider that Rachel says that Christians have contributed to environmental degradation and climate change.

- Why might she say this?
- In what ways might this be true/untrue?
- What might our parish do about this?

### **Go Deeper**

'Caring for creation is becoming more mainstream in the church; we are seeing movements flourishing across the world'(p5) What creation care activities are taking place in your community? Would you like to see these activities expanded?

# SESSION 2

## The Old Testament and Creation *Creation*

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### *Step ONE:*

Read pages 6-9a.

Notice three ideas that interested you. Share in the group or write something about them.

### *Step TWO:*

Read the creation story in Genesis 1 and Genesis 2

Consider:

- What should our relationship with creation be?
- What can we learn from our first nations people and their relationship to creation?

*Step THREE:*

Think about the idea that Rachel suggests that Christianity has lost its way and fails to properly care for creation.

- How might this be true/untrue?
- The Genesis stories speak of people having dominion over creation. What do you think this means?
- Do you think that the Old Testament stories of Creation are still relevant today?
- What are some ways that we can "replenish the earth"?

# SESSION 3

## The Old Testament and Creation

### *The Fall*

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#### *Step ONE:*

Read pages 9b-10a

#### *Step TWO:*

Consider, what interested you or caused you to wonder? Discuss or write down your thoughts.

#### *Step THREE:*

Read Genesis 3

In pp9-10, Rachel speaks of three breakdowns of relationships:

- between God and humans,
- between human and human,
- between humanity and creation.

Think about how we are currently experiencing the consequences of this third breakdown:

- What are the consequences for you and the world?
- What is something you can do about this?



# The Old Testament and Creation

## *The Land*

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### *Step ONE:*

Read pages 10-12

### *Step TWO:*

List three things that interested you or caused you to wonder as you read this section. Discuss or write about these ideas.

### *Step THREE:*

Consider that Rachel says that the people of Israel had to learn that the land was their home.

- What do we have to learn about the land?
- What can we learn from the Old Testament concept of Jubilee?
- What can we learn from first nations people and their care for the land?
- What does it mean to steward the earth rather than have "dominion over it?"

### *Step FOUR:*

Write a prayer for the earth. (You might read Psalm 24 to gain inspiration.)

# SESSION 4

## The New Testament

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### *Step ONE:*

Read pages 13-17

### *Step TWO:*

Notice that Rachel divides this chapter into four sections – The Incarnation, The Kingdom of God, The Cross and The New Earth.

### *Step THREE:*

Make a note of something that interests you or puzzles you from each section. Discuss or make some notes about these things.

### *Step FOUR:*

Consider that Rachel suggests that the nature miracles are a foretaste of the renewal of creation. Choose a miracle (or read the three miracles in [Luke 5](#)) and think about how this might be true.

*Step FIVE:*

Read Tom Wright's quote on p14:

"We are not building the kingdom by our own efforts... we are building *for* God's Kingdom."

Discuss or record the ways in which Jesus' death on the cross affects all creation.

*Go Deeper:* When you think of Jesus and His example, when did Jesus spend time with God in nature? Can we learn from His example?

*Step SIX:*

Rachel talks about the difference between "escapist" theology and the vision for a renewed, restored and redeemed world. Read again The Lausanne Cape Town Commitment on p17.

Record or discuss what does this says about how I live my life and what we do in our churches?

# SESSION 5

## Lifestyle Change

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### *Step ONE:*

Read pages 18-21

### *Step TWO:*

Choose something from each section (Jesus' Spirituality, Biodiversity, Energy and Fuel Reduction, Save Water and Clothing) that interests or challenges you. Discuss or write about this.

### *Step THREE:*

Read the story of Jesus in the garden in [Matthew 26](#).

### *Step FOUR:*

Consider how Jesus' example might effect our own worship?

### *Step FIVE:*

Rachel suggests we ought to "fall in love with creation." If we did, how will this change our lifestyle and the life of our church? Discuss our record your ideas.

*Step SIX:*

The food we eat, the water and energy we use, the clothes we wear all impact our planet. Think about one thing that would be easy to change, and then about one thing that would be very difficult. Write a prayer about these two things. What do you think God is saying to you/ to your church?

# SESSION 6

## Tackling the Big Issues

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### *Step ONE:*

Think back over the last five sessions. What has really challenged you? Share with the group or write something about this.

### *Step TWO:*

Read pages 24-26

### *Step THREE:*

Rachel challenges us to identify where God is calling us as individuals, then partner with others who have similar passions. With whom might we partner?

### *Step FOUR:*

Read the story of Jesus in the temple. Matthew 21:12-13 Is there a place for anger about what is happening in our world? How might we use anger constructively?

### *Step FIVE:*

"Share the good news" What are some good news stories about caring for creation in your community? How can we encourage those involved. How will we pray about these things? How might Jesus example inspire us? How might the Church lead?

*Step SIX:*

As disciples of Jesus, we are called to mission, and we need to emphasise the Fifth Mark of Mission: "What happens in the next ten years can change the course of history". Read the final paragraph on p26: Discuss, encourage one another and/or write a prayer to conclude the study.



*Revd Dr Rachel Mash visiting the Ballarat Grammar Farm Campus with Year 4 students who are exploring ideas around sustainability and Creation Care.*