

WASTE

Rich Living

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Rich Living:

Sustainability as integral to lives of faith



Welcome to 'Waste', the fourth in the Rich Living series of study booklets produced by A Rocha Aotearoa New Zealand. Other titles available in the Rich Living series are: *Climate Change*, *Water* and *Food*. This is a study guide, designed for individuals, groups or churches to engage with what one of the video presenters featured in this booklet calls "the biggest issue of our generation".

As you read this study, watch the recommended videos, reflect on and discuss the questions posed, read the Bible, and try out some activities. You will be challenged to expand your understanding of the issues, and connect it with your personal life. May this be a 'rich' and transformational experience for you, even as you face some tough issues and choices.

The Rich Living series is one of the resources offered by A Rocha Aotearoa New Zealand as part of the Eco Church NZ project. Through the Eco Church NZ project, our goal is to support churches across Aotearoa New Zealand to actively care for God’s earth as an integral part of their mission. Our role is to resource, empower and build relationships among all those wanting to integrate creation care and sustainability into the life of the church in Aotearoa New Zealand. We work collaboratively with the A Rocha International family and in partnership with local NZ churches, denominations, creation care groups and individuals.

We passionately believe that Christian faith communities have the potential to offer glimpses of authentic life – living in sustainable ways that cares for the long-term wellbeing of our broader communities and neighbours – both human and nature. We’re glad you have joined us!

www.ecochurch.org.nz

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AN A ROCHA AOTEAROA NZ PROJECT

Study 1 – Rubbish : Facing the problem of waste

Rubbish! Facing the problem of waste

Congratulations – you have taken your courage in your hands and decided to look at the least appealing of subjects. Good for you. The whole thing with rubbish is that we would like it to disappear. We like new things, fresh food, new clothes, gadgets that work. Once we've finished with things, we want them to be someone else's problem, not ours.

I'm guessing you've decided to do this study because you know that this is not working. You will have seen photos of plastic filling beaches or turtles strangled by plastic. You will have gone into eco-shops and tried to remember your shopping bags. The problem is getting harder to ignore.



I'm hoping that you come to this study asking what faith has to do with it. You'll need your Bible on hand; you'll be surprised how much it has to say about rubbish. I hope you will hear from our creating, judging, restoring God, and make some real connections that help you live with integrity, courage and hope in our troubled world.

Silvia Purdie

“The average person throws away their body weight in waste every three months. We can easily feel that this rubbish has disappeared and we need no longer think about it. But this could not be further from the truth: there is no such thing as throwing our rubbish away.”

Ruth Valerio, *‘L is for Lifestyle: Christian living that doesn’t cost the earth’* (Inter-Varsity Press, 2004), p.127



Research: **Your Local Waste**

Find out from your local Council how much waste is produced by your town, and how it is processed.



Discuss:
What are the top issues with waste in your area?



Watch:
“Day at work”
2.5 minutes excerpt from Disney-Pixar 2008 movie Wall-E
www.youtube.com/watch?v=WB8LrCWmGYw.

Reflect on little Wall-E’s job of squashing and stacking human waste left behind by people long departed.

- What are the things he treasures?
- What emotions come up for you as you imagine our world utterly engulfed in rubbish?

“To reduce, re-use and recycle is our responsibility, and part of how we take care of God’s creation. After all, there is no such thing as waste in nature – the output from one organism is the input for another.”

Ruth Valerio, *‘L is for Lifestyle: Christian living that doesn’t cost the earth’* (Inter-Varsity Press, 2004), p.131

The Bible on Rubbish

The word 'rubbish' can be found four times in the Bible (NRSV, other translations use similar words such as 'rubble' or 'garbage').



Read: Nehemiah chapter 4

- Nehemiah is organising the rebuilding of the wall of Jerusalem. He is doing well against the odds, with a huge willingness from his people to get stuck in. However, there is a problem, which causes their enemies to poke fun at them: there are piles of rubbish in the way.



Discuss:

- What was it like for the returning exiles? Try to picture the conditions that the people were working in, the constant threat of attack, and the blackened rubble cluttering their rebuild efforts.
- How might they have felt emotionally about the burned remains of their temple?
- What was required of them?
- Try putting the song in verse 10 to music.
- Can you relate to having to clear away rubbish from the past? How are you doing this (either literally or symbolically):

- in your personal life?

- in your church?



Comment: Simon Kingham

Why do the poor suffer from the rubbish of the rich?

“Hands up who wants a landfill or contaminated waste site just round the corner from where they live?” Not a lot of hands up I imagine. Nobody wants to live near rubbish tips, or coal or nuclear power stations, large polluting factories, or even right on a busy main road. But as we need power and transport, and produce rubbish, someone has to. And the research shows that invariably it is the poor, and marginalised who tend to.

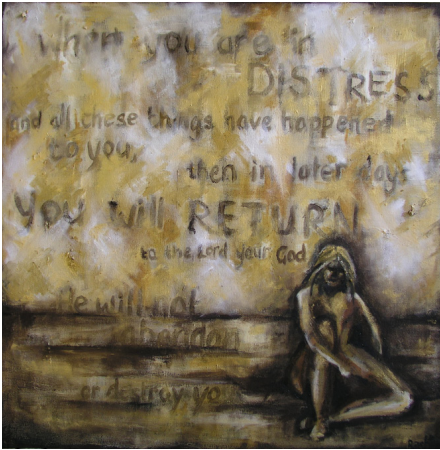
So why? It really comes down to money, power and influence. Firstly poorer people tend to live on the cheaper less valuable land. But it is more than this; and this is where power and influence come in. Wealthier, more educated people are able to influence decisions more. They hold power, or know people who hold power. They can afford to pay for lawyers, planners and researchers and push their case. They have the power to stop rubbish being ‘dumped’ in their communities. And where does it end up? In areas where poor, less educated people live. This is sometime referred to as Environmental Justice (or injustice), and is another example of how bad stuff keeps happening to poor people.



Read: Lamentations 3:31-58

Lamentations is a cry of despair after national disaster. The people are defeated and enslaved. They have lost everything. In their lament they feel like trash, “filth and rubbish among the nations”, or in the Good News Bible, “the garbage dump of the world” (Lam 3:45).





"When you are in distress and all these things have happened to you, then in later days you will return to the Lord your God . . . he will not abandon or destroy you . . ." Deuteronomy 4:30-31



Discuss:

- Who are the people who are the 'garbage dump of the world' in our times? What is life like for them?
 - Have you ever felt like you were 'filth and rubbish' in the eyes of others?
 - Lamentations 3 is considered to be one of the Old Testament prophecies of the death and resurrection of Jesus. Read it with the cross in mind. How did Jesus become 'rubbish' for us?
- The apostle Paul picks up a similar theme in 1 Corinthians 4:13. Do you think that Christians are sometimes seen in this way?



Watch:

A glimpse into the lives of the children who live on rubbish dumps in Cambodia:

- video: www.youtube.com/watch?v=9DzbbEcFwOc
- Photos by Spanish photojournalist Omar Havana: www.abc.net.au/news/2011-11-11/life-at-a-cambodian-rubbish-dump/3659920



Discuss:

What are Christian mission agencies doing to help those living in the world's rubbish?



Read: Philippians 3:1-11

Paul confronts head-on the values of the church in Philippi. They want to be respected and be seen to be doing all the right things.

‘It’s all nothing compared to Christ’, writes Paul. ‘In fact, it’s all rubbish!’ The word he uses in verse 8 is practically a swear-word, literally excrement. The Message translation:

“Yes, all the things I once thought were so important are gone from my life. Compared to the high privilege of knowing Christ Jesus as my Master, firsthand, everything I once thought I had going for me is insignificant—dog dung. I’ve dumped it all in the trash so that I could embrace Christ and be embraced by him.”

The Message



Discuss:

- How do you decide what is rubbish and what has value? When does your family disagree about what to keep and what to throw away?
- Does Paul mean that all we should care about is our spiritual lives? Is he saying that he sees the natural environment as rubbish, or should be treated as rubbish?

Study 2 – Plastic : The dream and the nightmare of plastic

Every time I open a plastic wrapper and chuck it in the bin I feel a pang of guilt. I see my rubbish bin filling up, and the City Council kindly takes it away. Every piece of plastic that I add into the mix contributes to the massive problem facing our world, the problem that is forming a layer of plastic over the whole planet that will be visible in the geological structure of planetary history in millennia to come, a problem that is killing other living things at a shocking rate.



Much is being said in the media, advertising and politics about this problem. Many people are working on this problem, but it seems that more businesses are trying to add to the problem with ever more ways to package things in plastic, even plastic tea bags.



It seems like the world has produced more rubbish in my lifetime than in every other human generation combined! We pile it up, bury it, burn it, squash it. But more keeps coming, more and more! When we throw it away, it might be out of sight but it changes slowly, with glacial horror, turning from a crinkly colourful gingernut wrapper into chemical sludge which will eventually drip toxins into the water that my great-great-great-grandchildren will drink.

Plastic, the dream substance for designers, manufacturers and marketers has become the nightmare of the future. Every corner shop and supermarket in the world is full of plastic. It's hard to feed and clothe the family without getting a

side-serve of plastic. Our homes, floors and seats are coated and padded by poly-this and poly-that, all of which will eventually become a waste problem, because it is not bio-degradable. Every foam mattress and nylon sock will add to the layer of chemical covering our planet.

The problems with plastic:

- a) it takes a long time to break down
- b) it gets progressively reduced to smaller bits (microplastic) which accumulates on beaches etc.
- c) it enters food chains when animals eat it
- d) it kills directly when animals get tangled in it
- e) it can leach toxic waste like PBAs which can interfere with endocrine (hormone) systems
- f) visual pollution and environment damage



Watch:

A Plastic Wave - A documentary film on plastic pollution
(24 minutes)

www.youtube.com/watch?v=9-dpv2xbFyk

Think about the following quotes:

“Plastic is becoming the biggest issue of our generation, and we are trying our hardest to do something about it. The problem with plastic is that it survives for hundreds and hundreds of years.”

The presenter goes to India to a place where people throw their rubbish straight into a polluted river, and meets a local man who explains (in translation with sub-titles):

“If we could afford to, we would live somewhere else. Who wants to live right next to this? We have used plastic for many years. If it goes in the river and the sea, the government should think about it. It’s not my problem. It’s their duty, not ours. There is no garbage collection here. We just wrap all the garbage and throw it in the river. These problems can’t be solved by Allah – it’s the government’s job, only they can do something about it.”



Discuss:

- Do you recognise this attitude of ‘It’s not my problem’?
- Why does poverty often go hand-in-hand with pollution?
- Compare this with the Biblical convictions of the Farming God’s Way project: “Once we understand that God is our source and that His all sufficiency is truly available to us, we can look at giving our way out of dependency and into His promise. ... God’s way is that people should develop according to His principles, where He rewards based on sowing and reaping, on stewardship and being faithful with what you have been entrusted with.” (Grant Dryden, *Farming God’s Way Trainers Reference Guide* www.farming-gods-way.org, p57.)
- What would you name as the biblical principles that apply to our plastic waste?
- How might you answer someone who says “God can’t solve the plastic problem and neither can we; only the government can.”?



Watch & Discuss:

What really happens to the plastic you throw away? (4 minutes TedX)

www.youtube.com/watch?v=_6xINyWPpB8

The Story of Bottled Water
(The Story of Stuff, 4 minutes)

www.youtube.com/watch?v=X8jF-LBxxdl





Research: How many bottles?

- How many plastic bottles are in your home? Count them.
- What could you do to reduce the amount of plastic
 - in your home?
 - in your church?



Activity: Praying with plastic

Put various types of plastic on your table (including some out of the rubbish bin). Sit in silence and look at it for a while. Invite each person to choose one piece to hold.

Pray

God of all creation, thank you for this plastic.

*Thank you for gift of oil that you made deep inside the earth,
made from ancient plants and the bones of animals long gone.*

*Thank you for the gift of human intelligence and skill,
for scientists and engineers who work the oil rigs and machines.*

*Thank you for the gift of creativity,
for designers who invent a million uses for plastic.*

Thank you for the gift of plastic.

It is so very useful and it makes our lives easier.

*God of all creation, we confess to you this plastic;
we like the convenience of colourful waterproof things.*

*But we do not like what happens to our plastic when we throw it away.
We hate that it floats out to sea and gets eaten by fish.*

We hate that it releases chemicals that poison our land and our water.

We like this stuff and we hate it.

Help us, God of all creation.

We've made a huge problem and we don't know how to fix it.

We confess to you our need for cheap easy things.

*We commit ourselves to buy less plastic,
and to fight against plastic production and pollution.*

God of all creation, renew the face of the earth.

*Spirit of our Lord Jesus Christ, save us from all that threatens to destroy
this beautiful world you have given us. Amen.*



Research: Poly-what?

Choose one item in your home, and find out how it was made. Research the type of plastic that went into it, and how that was mixed with other things. What might happen to this object when it breaks and you throw it away?



Action: Consumer voice

Choose a time you bought something that came in plastic or styrofoam packaging. Write a letter/email to the shop. Say that you like their business and their products but you don't like the plastic it came in. Ask what their policies are to reduce plastic waste.

Idols and immortality



Read: Exodus 20:1-4

The first two of the Ten Commandments declare that God alone is to be worshiped. All through the Old Testament God asks for exclusive devotion. The people kept on getting side-tracked by making idols. Their God was too brilliant to be seen, so they made objects they could look at. Their God was too powerful to be contained, so they made objects that they could hold. Their God was too wonderful, too holy, too magnificent, too demanding, so they made objects they could manipulate and control.

Time and time again the prophets called the people to bust their idols. 'What's the good of a statue?', they cried, 'It'll just rust and rot. It has arms but can't move, eyes but can't see. It's just a pretend thing, not the real thing! Come back to the Lord, Yahweh, the one true living God!'

The Bible calls us to honour the God who is the only eternal reality. So, when we create objects that can practically live forever we are creating idols, created in our image and for our own convenience. This is a profoundly spiritual challenge, since Scripture defines idolatry as rebellion, and the source of sin.



Discuss:

- What are the idols in the world around us?
- Which are your favourite ones?
- How has plastic become the idol of the 21st century?



Study 3 – Decay : *Biodegrade-ability and faith*

People have always tried to make things that don't rot. We want our tools and homes to last. Recently we have become really good at it. With the invention of a plethora of plastics, laminates and coatings we can protect our stuff from decay. The problem is, once we're finished using it, then what? Our water-proof, anti-bacterial, anti-fungal materials cannot re-enter the cycle of decay and regeneration of matter that is fundamental to the way God created the planet. They are stuck in limbo and just clutter up the place.



We have to re-think and re-appreciate the processes of decay, which goes against the grain because people find them distasteful. We don't like dealing with rot, fire, mould or worms. The Christian faith is all about new life, new creation, isn't it!? But what about the death of the old that must come before the birth of the new?

For the first time in human history, we have to deliberately choose to make things that will decay and break down. This starts by honouring God's processes of a 'zero-waste' system where nothing is abandoned, nothing is wasted, everything is recycled, even our own bodies, to fuel new life.



Research: The agents of decomposition

What are the God-designed ways by which creatures and objects end their life and become raw material for other life?

Research the agents of decay. How do things biodegrade?

Discuss what you know and find out more about:

- micro-organisms, bacteria and fungi: what do they need to function?
- water (hydrolysis) and salt
- rust (oxidisation) and how metals decay
- sunshine and UV light
- small creatures: ants, worms, flies etc. What role do they play?
- fire and incineration

Can you describe what happens to molecules and atoms when something decomposes?

Try this at home:

- Leave some fruit on the bench for a couple of weeks. Notice the changes that occur naturally. Take a photo every day.
- Notice your own emotional reactions – are you revolted or intrigued?
- Does the process of decay tell you anything about God?
- Get outside and find some of God's little creatures whose job is to clean up the planet. Watch them at work.





Read: Proverbs 6:6 — Honouring the ant

Ants enrich the earth

Grant Dryden leads the faith-based agriculture training programme, Farming God's Way in Uganda and throughout Africa. He writes:

Solomon taught us saying "go to the ant you sluggard, consider her ways and become wise" (Prov 6:6).

I always thought that Solomon was referring to the activity, government and order of the ants, but take a moment to consider that many ants are collecting God's Blanket [i.e. top soil] for a living. They bring it into their burrows, and create an ideal cool, moist environment for bacteria and fungi to flourish. This anthill soil is more fertile than the surrounding soil ... as well as a higher clay and organic matter content which would allow it to hold more moisture. The benefit to utilising anthill soil can be seen in fields where the plants grown on the slopes of the anthills far surpass their competitors. Simply by breaking down anthill mounds and applying the soil into the planting stations can be a ready solution for the poorest of the poor. We have testimony from widows who have adopted this all sufficiency value with amazing crop yields as a result of working faithfully with what is in their hand.

Grant Dryden, *Farming God's Way Trainers Reference Guide*.
www.farming-gods-way.org, p57.



Laid Waste and Wasting Away

The Bible has a lot to say about destruction and decay, in a wide range of ways. Towns or communities can be ‘laid waste’ by deliberate destruction and violence.



Read:

Judges 6:1-6, Midianites destroy the environment.

Jeremiah 49, prophecies of judgement on various regions.

People can ‘waste away’ by illness, debilitating disease or grief (Psalms 6:7, 31:10). Things ‘rot’: human skin through infection, a decaying tree (Isaiah 5:24), rotten fruit which is bad to eat (Jeremiah 29:17). Rot is used as a metaphor for inner turmoil in Proverbs 14:30.



Read:

Job 13:28. Everything that mattered to Job was destroyed, including his health.

In the Old Testament these images of decay are used to describe the destructive action of God as the Lord works out his judgement, whether on the enemies of Israel (as in Jeremiah 49), Israel collectively (e.g. Ezekiel 6), or individuals (e.g. Lamentations 3:4).



Discuss:

- How do you understand God’s judgement?
- How might the Old Testament experience speak into our current issues of the earth being ‘laid waste’ by our waste?





Fire

Fire is a common means of destruction in Scripture. Jesus often spoke about fire. He saw how people and nature worked together, such as people pruning dead branches off a vine to promote the health of the vine, and burning the prunings. For Jesus this became a powerful metaphor of how God promotes Kingdom living in human community; it is not all-accepting, some things are rejected and judged (burned as rubbish) in a process of purifying and refining.



Read: John 15:1-11

The ultimate description of suffering, death and judgement in the Bible is ‘Hell’; in the gospels the word translated as ‘hell’ is Gehenna. Gehenna was the name for the rubbish dump down in a gully outside the walls of Jerusalem. Gehenna had “the fire that cannot be put out” (Mark 9:43). These days this valley is a pleasant public park, but its ancient history was a place of child sacrifice and terror (Jeremiah 19:2-6). Jesus spoke about Gehenna as a metaphor for God’s judgement: a person ‘cast into Gehenna’ receives the ultimate punishment and suffering.



Discuss:

- What is a Gospel understanding of God’s judgement?
- As we are thinking about disposal of rubbish, what can we learn from the (seemingly harsh) Biblical teaching about hell?

Ash and repentance

To place ash onto your body and clothes is a powerful expression of grief and repentance in Scripture (Esther 4:1-4, Luke 10:13). This symbolised human mortality in the face of God’s glory (Genesis 18:27). What a stark contrast to our culture’s denial of mortality and limitation! What could be less appealing to us than the Biblical call to cover yourself in ash?



Praying with ash

Make a small bowl of ash by (safely!) burning a bit of cardboard. Pass this around and invite everyone to smear some ash onto their body (e.g. the back of their hands).

*We grieve for the
destruction of your Creation.
Lord, have mercy.
We repent the wrong
we have done.
Christ, have mercy.*

Comment: Don Jellyman

Like all of life, we are pre-programmed to wear out and die. As the writer of Ecclesiastes said “There is a time for everything.....a time to be born and a time to die..”(Eccl 3: 1-3). In biological terms, death and decay are essential for recycling of nutrients – the death of a plant or animal makes food and space available for others while decay makes carbon and other minerals available for growth. A Māori proverb says of the death of an important person “A mighty Tōtara has fallen in the forest of Tāne” and when such a forest giant falls, it provides light and room for new trees to grow. Atoms are eternal and are released after we die to be taken up by other forms of life.

So, while our body decays, hopefully memories of us and our heritage live on. As Christians, we believe that death is not the end of life, only the end of this present life.

With the exception of poisons and nuclear waste, it is important that we allow nutrients to become available to be recycled. Talk to any keen gardener about the importance of compost to find out how much this product of plant decay nourishes and enriches the soil and promotes plant growth. However, we often wrap our waste in plastic and bury it in long term dumps, where it may not rot for decades, or we release it in high concentrations where it overwhelms normal processes of decay and causes pollution. Nature (God's creation) has a wonderful capacity to process waste, but we must recognise its limits and work within those. In New Zealand we produce about one tonne of waste per person each year – that's high by world standards, and we are running out of safe and convenient places for land disposal; we need to work harder at reducing waste and recycling as much as possible.





Read: John 12:23-25

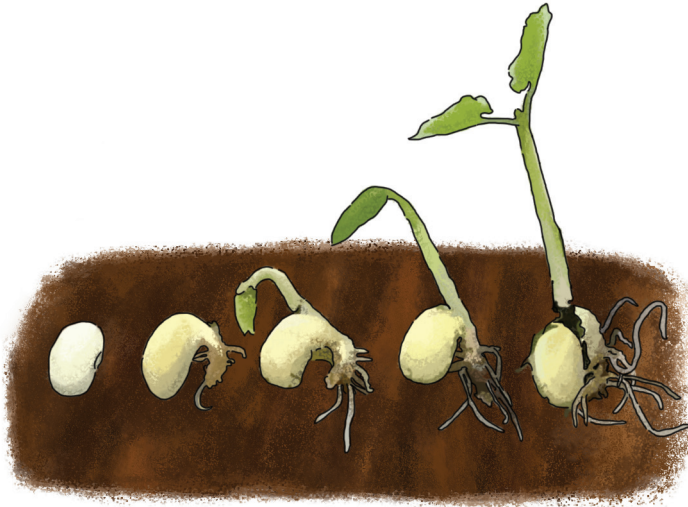
Perhaps the most powerful picture of God's way of death and new life was given to us by Jesus, who spoke of himself this way. He used the image of a grain of wheat disappearing into the ground; it is not gone, it is changing!



Discuss: 'Losing your life to find it'.

How might this apply to:

- Jesus
- yourself
- your church
- our rubbish
- maybe even the whole world?



Study 4 – Less is more : Let’s do something about it!

Comment: Waveney Warth

My husband and I have been living (or trying to live!) zero waste for over a decade. We believe this is one of the most powerful, transformative actions we can take to foster a flourishing future. The key to understanding the impact of zero waste lies in understanding the foundational problem of waste. Avoiding waste isn't just avoiding landfills, leachate, methane, litter, and crisis of plastic and micro plastics in the marine and terrestrial environments. Avoiding waste is the key to reducing or completely eliminating the environmental cost of felling forests, mining, oil extraction, cotton farming etc. which together drive climate change, environmental degradation, biodiversity loss, and use of toxic chemicals. Waste isn't just a sector, it's the sum total of the entire by-product of industrial processes. When we avoid waste, we are actually redesigning the global economy from linear (extract-use-throw) to circular (repurpose-use-repeat).



Watch:

The Xtreme Zero Waste Raglan story (45 mins)
www.youtube.com/watch?v=6RSyxYQgpNA

“Waste is often regarded as an engineering issue. However, we feel that it is a social issue that demands changes in actions and changes in perception.”

A Rocha believes that waste is also a spiritual issue.

“There are two ways to effect change. You can enforce it with laws and regulations. Or, you can inspire change from within the community.”



Read: James 5:1-6

The Bible says that true wealth is not held by material objects, but in the Kingdom of God, e.g. James criticises rich people for valuing their 'stuff' rather than giving to the poor.



Read: Matthew 6:19-21

Jesus called people to not invest in tangible things.



Discuss:

- What does our way of life look like to Jesus?
- What might he have to say to us personally? As churches?



The Para Kore story

Para Kore is a Māori organisation working with marae and other groups towards zero waste. Take a look at their videos:



Watch: Zero Waste with Para Kore (5 mins)

www.youtube.com/watch?v=gMFOLZqmAXI

“When I look back in our history, this isn't something new. This para kore way of living is not a new thing. It is actually a very very old way of living, and it is just being reawakened. Our hope is to engage with whānau, at marae, and remind them how we used to function; this is how the cycle is supposed to be.”



Watch: Para Kore video 2017 (3 mins)

www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=119&v=3H81vWK4CXg



“It’s our responsibility to keep Mother Earth clean and beautiful. It’s an on-the-ground thing. It’s not about politicians and all those big-time people. It’s about ordinary people doing ordinary things, looking after what’s around them so that the place is a nicer place to live in.”

“I want my kids to inherit a world and a lifestyle that is thriving, surrounded by good values like manaakitanga and aroha and tiaki, whether that is tiaki tangata or tiaki Papatūānuku.”





Song: Para Kore waiata (2 mins)

www.youtube.com/watch?v=g2BQ-HAw4CQ

“Sort your rubbish, don't be lazy, sort your rubbish.
Look after mother earth, put your rubbish in the bin,
sorting out my waste – littering, that's a sin!
Divert it to a bin, landfill last,
we're trying to change our old habits from the past!”



Discuss:

What are your thoughts about zero waste from a Māori perspective?

How to cut back on rubbish

Para Kore:

Heaps of resources for reducing waste

<http://parakore.maori.nz/resources>

Zero Waste Network:

Includes information on recycling businesses and groups near you

<http://zerowaste.co.nz>





Watch: He Whare Whai Para Kore (4 mins)

A simple guide to dealing with rubbish at home.

www.youtube.com/watch?v=GoJkrSNnf2I&list=WL&index=9&t=196s

Plastic Free July

Explore the resources on the global website: www.plasticfreejuly.org

“... being part of Plastic Free July will help you to find great alternatives that can become new habits forever.”

Shopping smart:

Learn more about where to shop at the Zero Waste Spot:

www.ecospot.nz/zero-waste-spot

To consider when purchasing:

- Do I need or want this product?
- What has given rise to my desire for this product? (Advertising? Peer-pressure?)
- How often am I going to use this product?
- Do I need to purchase it, or can I borrow/hire it?
- What is the carbon footprint? Water footprint? Ecological footprint of this product?
- How was the product transported?
- Who produced it? What was the level of pollution from this manufacturing?
- Treatment of workers? (Fair-wage, healthy working conditions etc.?)
- What is life of this product? (Longevity? Ruskin’s law: “You get what you pay.” Cheap products don’t generally last long – built-in obsolescence.)



A Rocha / Para Kore Zero Waste Programme for Churches

Para Kore is A Rocha's partner organisation in promoting Zero Waste in New Zealand. They are a national organisation with over a decade of experience working with community groups, marae and schools. Together, we are offering a church-based zero waste programme to support churches to minimise waste and create new systems that work.

A Rocha and Para Kore are starting with a pilot Zero Waste programme in Christchurch, with the goal of rolling out a process for local churches to join nationally.

This will include:

- commitment from your church leadership to the Zero Waste project
- a training workshop (either in person or online) – the workshops will combine theology, knowledge and practical advice on reducing waste – reusing, recycling, composting and wise purchasing as well as setting up systems that address the needs of individual churches.
- a 'waste audit' to assess current practice
- Para Kore will produce a report for your church with goals and strategies
- you will be provided with resources as required (e.g. signage, bins)
- your congregation, staff and other users of your facilities get onboard the new systems
- a follow-up waste audit to measure progress
- annual review and ongoing encouragement



Action: Reduce!

- Sign up to Plastic Free July. Make a pledge (it can be helpful to do something with others) and stick to it!
 - Buy or make some reusable, natural fruit and vegetable bags.
- Take your own containers to the butcher or Bin Inn.

- Make your own household products.
- Use simpler products that can be bought in bulk, e.g. vinegar, baking soda.
- Buy quality products that last longer.
- Choose cotton and wool over acrylic and polyester fabrics.

Little steps add up to a big impact!

An enthusiastic team at Grace Vineyard Church in Christchurch reviewed the products it uses. Changes included:

- changing to bulk Trade Aid drinking chocolate (and getting a discount!)
- sourcing compostable cups (and even the cup lids)
- buying biscuits from a bakery to reduce plastic packaging
- buying washable reusable communion cups (which were expensive but cheaper over a year than plastic)
- reducing office printing
- changing to recycled paper towels and toilet paper

The Creation Care team at Grace Vineyard reports, “Most of these changes save us money which is amazing, but we are also so pleased that these changes improve our stewardship of your generosity and our environment. We have a massive impact on the environment around us, we’re a church of more than 3,000 people – that’s a lot of waste produced each week both at church and at home. Becoming more sustainable is something that we’re really passionate about and we are keen to see changes in this area.”

Check out the full story on the Eco Church NZ website.
www.ecochurch.org.nz



Read: Psalm 148

In the Bible we are told that every tree, every rock, every creature returns to God its song of praise. All creation glories God! When humans spew toxins into the air and water, and when we cover the ground with our waste, we are silencing the song of creation. How can a turtle praise the Lord when its stomach is full of plastic? How can a river praise the Lord when it is sluggish with trash? Our worship of God is weakened when Creation is choking on our rubbish.



Pray: For the song of praise of all Creation

Listen for the voice of the birds, the animals, and the earth itself, giving glory to their Creator.

Write and share your own prayers of praise, confession and commitment.



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The existing Western lifestyle is unsustainable – our consumption habits impact on the wellbeing of our human and non-human neighbours. But Christian faith communities have the potential to be agents of hope.

This booklet is one of five in the Rich Living series (*Climate Change, Water, Food, Waste, Transport*). Designed for small groups, each booklet consists of four studies designed to assist communities make sustainability integral to their lives of faith.