

**MODEL UNIT
BAND D
LEVEL 1**

WHO'S RESPONSIBLE?

LIFE CONCEPT: GOD CREATED THE UNIVERSE

YEAR:..... DATE OF USE:..... FAITH STATEMENTS: ① ② ③

SUGGESTED DURATION OF UNIT: 10–12 hours

UNIT-SPECIFIC GOALS (highlighted)

1. GOD CREATED ALL THINGS

1a contrast biblical accounts and beliefs about creation with those of other religions

1b investigate Christian beliefs concerning the existence of a spiritual, unseen world

1c identify and evaluate the different roles of science and religion in understanding creation

2. GOD TAKES CARE OF HIS CREATION

2a consider what can be learnt from nature about God's sustaining, preserving care for creation

2b explore the Christian understanding of grace in relation to God's care for his creation

2c examine how Christians resolve the tension between God as carer and protector and the observable state of the world

3. GOD WANTS PEOPLE TO TAKE CARE OF HIS CREATION

3a examine the biblical teaching on people's responsibility for the natural environment

3b explore the relationship between a person's beliefs and care for the environment

3c explore ways in which individuals can be coworkers with God in caring for the world

3d evaluate and reflect on their use of resources and care for the environment

Goal **1a** can be incorporated into this unit by using TRS D1/EXTRA.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

ASSESSABLE STUDENT OUTCOMES

Response to explanations of the first part of the Apostles' Creed (TRS D1/1). (1)

Summarise on a poster biblical teaching about creation and care for the environment. (1,2b,3a)

Be involved in a practical project for care of the environment. (3c,3d)

Write personal responses. (1,2b,3a,3c,3d)

ASSESSMENT STRATEGIES

⇒ individual work sample

⇒ work sample TRS D1/2

⇒ individual and group work samples

⇒ journal entries

UNIT SUMMARY

Students explore the implications of the Christian belief that God is the owner and maker of the universe. They read and reflect on two responses to the first part of the Apostles' Creed and examine the biblical motivation for people's involvement in environmental issues. Students research the work of groups which work to conserve the environment, evaluating the motivation for and approach to their work. Students complete the unit with a practical project. Throughout the unit there will be opportunity for personal reflection on students' own beliefs about creation and approach to the environment.

UNIT NOTES

Faith Statement 1: *God created all things* is the foundation for all that is done in this unit.

Students can be passionate about environmental issues. This unit will show them the biblical motivation for involvement in these issues. In his studies on the environment Aubrey Podlich states that Christians' care and concern for the environment is 'a response to the cross of Jesus'. It is not optional; a renewed relationship with God is a renewed relationship with the rest of creation. However, the reconciliation of people with God does not rest in saving the environment; rather the hope of the eventual salvation of the whole creation rests in God's saving grace extended to all people.

Journal responses at the end of each section can be incorporated into general class discussion or used as focus points at the beginning of a lesson.

INTRODUCTION

1. WHAT IS YOUR WORLD LIKE?

Students make a display of posters, pictures, and articles which demonstrate the beauty, diversity, interdependence and complexity of the universe. They list words which summarise their feelings and thoughts on nature.

Listen to contemporary songs about the environment, eg Tracey Chapman's *Subcity* and *Why?* Midnight Oil's *Beds are Burning*. Students may have other songs they can bring to class. Discuss the songs:

- What are the dominant images of nature and the environment in the songs? How do they compare with images the class collected?
- What concerns about the environment are expressed in the songs?
- Who or what is seen to be responsible for the problems of the world?
- What is valued about the environment?
- What are the songs urging people to do?

Journal response: Write about your concerns for the environment.

DEVELOPMENT

2. TO WHOM DOES IT BELONG?

A key issue for Christians is the ownership of the world. Christians believe the biblical message that God made and owns the universe and they have been called to work in partnership with God in the care of the environment.

Students brainstorm what it means to be a maker and an owner, giving examples of each.

Students list their most prized possessions. Working in small groups students share

- how they take care of their possessions;
- how they would feel if any item were damaged by themselves or carelessly or deliberately by another person;
- what action they would take if someone damaged their prized possession;
- what a person needs to do to prevent their possessions from ever being damaged.

Students identify what additional feelings they have for the possessions they have made with their own hands.

In groups students write a code of respect for the care of other people's property.

Students read comments about the first part of the Apostles' Creed (see Teacher Resource Sheet [TRS] D1/1). They

1. underline what God has made (Luther);
2. summarise Rick Strelan's understanding of God as Maker and the difference this makes to his approach to the environment.

Journal response: What difference would it make if people believed that whatever they touched, used or managed belonged to God?

3. IN THE BEGINNING . . .

To help them understand Christians' motivation and involvement in the care and preservation of the environment, students investigate biblical teaching about the creation of the universe and the relationship of human beings to God's creation.

Divide students into groups. Each group works through one set of Bible passages, questions and activities from TRS D1/2. It is suggested that the teacher and class work together on the first activity to provide a model/approach for students. Alternatively, do some of the activities as a whole class, others in groups and set some as individual work.

Each group makes a poster which presents:

- their statement/topic clearly written
- pictures, symbols and words that illustrate the main message of the Bible passages
- their activity.

Display the group posters and discuss: What does the Bible teach

- about God's relationship with his creation?
- about the purpose the earth serves?
- about what is expected of human beings?
- about the condition of the world today?

Emphasise that creation is a gift from God. Jesus took on the suffering of all humanity and all creation for humans who fail God, each other and creation. God forgives them for Jesus' sake. Because of God's love and mercy, humans remain caretakers who can be transformed by God's love and the gift of Jesus and can in turn bring hope and renewal to creation.

Journal response: How would you describe your attitude towards the environment? Are there changes you need to make? What encouragement and challenge does the Bible provide for your care of the environment?

4. WHAT IS BEING DONE?

There are many groups which care for the environment. The beliefs of the groups determine the course of action they advocate. Students compare with biblical teaching the values and beliefs which motivate the work of these groups.

Groups of students choose and investigate a group which works to conserve the environment, eg *Friends of the Earth*, *Greenpeace*, *Worldwide Fund for Nature*. Students present a short report in which they

1. describe the work done by the group;
2. state what the group wants to achieve;
3. state the group's beliefs about the environment and human responsibility;
4. state the group's motivation for the work;
5. give information on how people can get involved with the group's work.

Discuss:

- Do the groups see people as caretakers? as owners? as equal inhabitants with the rest of nature? How do their beliefs compare with biblical teaching?
- Who or what is blamed for the condition of the world?
- What gives the groups hope to work for change? How different is this from the reason the Bible gives for caring for the environment?
- How do the groups address the concerns of the songs heard at the beginning of the unit?
- Which of these groups can Christians support?

In his studies on Christian life in the environment Aubrey Podlich encourages Christians to keep things in perspective. Concern for the environment is a fruit of faith

not the centre of faith. There are many issues other than the environment in which Christians can be involved. Christians need to guard against unnecessary guilt and use their gifts and strengths appropriately.

Journal response: Which group would you be interested in joining? Give your reasons.

RESPONSE

5. WHAT CAN I DO?

Since Christians are called into partnership with God, Christian schools have a responsibility to be examples of good stewards of resources. In this final activity students are encouraged to plan practical ways they can be involved in the care of their environment at school and at home.

Remind students of the Christian foundation of the school. Brainstorm how the school grounds could reflect a love for God and for his creation and an understanding that God is the maker and owner of the universe.

Students select one of their suggestions (eg a campaign to reduce litter, vandalism or graffiti) to act upon in a practical way. Students lead by example and promote the campaign in the school community, eg

- Make a photographic display for the library with 'before' (clean) and 'after' (littered) photos of different areas of the school.
- Deliver a speech at school assembly in which they outline their reasons for the campaign.
- Create bookmarks with snappy slogans which students are given when they borrow books from the library.
- Write a weekly progress report in the school newsletter.
- Display around the school illustrated portions of the psalms as a reminder of God's gift of creation to people.

Students either begin or end their campaign with a worship service focusing on the gift of the environment (refer to TRS D1/3).

Encourage students to participate where they feel comfortable about it.

Journal response: Write your own belief statement about the environment. Write down two things you will do to help care for the environment. Read this resolution in two weeks' time. How well did you keep to it?

YOU WILL NEED

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|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> TRS D1/1, D1/2, D1/3 | <input type="checkbox"/> access to library for research |
| <input type="checkbox"/> a personal journal for each student | <input type="checkbox"/> pamphlets from various environmental groups (optional helps) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> CDs, tapes and sound system | <input type="checkbox"/> materials for Bible activity |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bibles | |

INTEGRATING INTO OTHER CURRICULUM AREAS

Find out what students are doing in other curriculum areas in relation to

Topics

- the physical world, biology, botany, astronomy, geography, etc.....
- management and conservation of the natural environment
- responsibility (personal and communal)

Skills

- journalling
- campaign planning and organisation

UNIT EVALUATION

Which activities worked well in this unit?

Which resources were useful in the implementation of this unit?

How did I respond to the range of students' interest and skills and attitudes in relation to environmental issues?

How did I respond to the range of students' understanding of the Bible and Christian beliefs?

What would I do differently if I was teaching this unit again?

How will I use and build on knowledge, understandings, skills, attitudes, and values students have developed in this unit?

I believe in God the Father almighty, Maker of heaven and earth.

Creator

(from *The Large Catechism of Martin Luther* [1529], translated by Friedemann Hebart)

... we should concentrate on the words 'Creator of heaven and earth'. What do these words mean? 'I believe in God, almighty Father, Creator' and so on? The answer is this: I firmly believe that I am God's creature. This means that he has given me — and keeps on looking after — my body an, soul, and life, my limbs large and small, all my senses, my mind and my understanding, and so on, food and drink, clothing, sustenance, wife and children, servants, home and garden, and so on.

In addition he makes the whole of creation help to provide whatever we need to live, and whatever is useful for us — sun, moon, and stars in the sky, day and night, air, fire, water, the earth and everything it produces, birds and fish, animals, grain, and all kinds of plants.

He also gives us all the other good things we have here on earth: good government, peace, security.

So we learn from this article that none of us has given himself life or anything else that has been listed here or could be listed, no matter how small and unimportant, nor can he look after it by himself. All this is contained in the word 'Creator'.

MAKER

(from *Fair Dinkum: An Aussie Creed* by R Strelan 1988)

I believe God does something. He is Maker. Not just a maker but Maker. All other makers are just little replicas of God-Maker.

... God is not the only one involved in this manufacturing business — he has asked us humans to be partners with him in it all. So we are makers as well.

... If God and we are supposed to be partners ... then maybe it's time we sat down together and worked things out again. There's not much point if God-Maker has one idea and we go off on our own track.

... It's time to remember that things do not just happen. The laws of physics and mathematics are not gods. God is not removed from what he has created, but he still works on it, still reshapes and reforms things. He is constantly doing repairs and putting pieces together again after we have smashed them.

... 'God the maker' also implies that he is a worker. Work is also an area in which God asks us to share with him, so that he and people cooperate.

... It beats me that grain can be dumped in the sea, fruit ploughed back onto the ground, cattle and sheep killed and dumped, when hundreds of people in the world literally starve to death. I think that we should not need to have appeals for relief from famine, but appeals for relief from that system which causes these situations to exist in the first place. That's if I believe in God the maker. If I believe that, then I cannot create and manufacture and work so that I put someone else in debt and keep them in economic bondage.

God has given more than enough to go around. It's my responsibility to see that it goes around as it is intended.








... Australia. Like the rest of the world is a very precious country. It is a gift. We have responsibility for it. In this sense the word 'conservation' is a very good one, because it means 'serving with'. God asks me to work with this land — not against it. It is a gift — not to be raped and destroyed and plundered for what can be got out of it, but to be cared for, loved, and tended. The land depends on us for its survival. So I have got into the habit of talking to the trees! I believe that when a tree sees me coming, it says: 'Hurray! Here comes m master. Here comes the one who cares for me and keeps me strong and well'. I, in turn, call on the tree to join with me in praising the God who made us both. Am I crazy? I think not. I believe in God, maker of earth.

... Believe in God as maker of this earth also means that it is not possible to believe that, and yet to sit back in this lucky country and ignore what is happening in the world of nuclear power and struggle for supremacy.

... I believe this is God's world, and he is God. And when I pray to God, 'Your will be done on earth, just as it is being done in heaven', I mean that as Martin Luther said five hundred years ago: 'God's will is done without us asking for it, but what we are praying for here is that we might be the ones who do it! God's will is clear; he wants harmony, peace, justice and unity. If all this sounds so serious, it is. We cannot sit on our bottoms and literally let the world go by into oblivion. The maker requires us to get up and into action.

WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS ABOUT NATURE

Teachers please note that the Bible passages always correspond to the statement and question listed below the passages. You may wish to enlarge the work sheet, glue the sheet on cardboard, have it laminated and cut into separate cards to keep for future use. At the end of each set of questions is an activity to help each group apply the message of the biblical text to their experience of life. Refer to this in your synthesis of the biblical study.






 Genesis 1: 3-5	 Genesis 1:27	 Psalm 24:1	 Psalm 95:3-5	 Psalm 104:24
 Psalm 147:4	 Acts 17:28			



THE WORLD BELONGS TO GOD.

1. What evidence is there that God is separate from his creation?
2. With whom does God have a relationship?
3. What evidence is there that God is in control?
4. If the world belongs to God, what should be our attitude to it?

ACTIVITY: Write a 30-second commercial which draws people's attention to all the things about the world which give hope for the future






 Genesis 1:11-14	 Genesis 1:20-23	 Psalm 19:1	 Psalm 148:3-13	 Colossians 1:15-17
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THE WORLD IS CREATED ACCORDING TO GOD'S INTENTION AND PURPOSE.

1. What was God's intention for his creation?
2. What do you think is meant by 'and God saw that it was good'?
3. For whom was the world created?
4. For what does creation praise God?

ACTIVITY: Write the speech the earth would give to people if it could speak.

 Genesis 1:11-13	 Genesis 1:24,25	 Genesis 1:29,30	 Psalms 104:21	 Psalms 145:15-17
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 Psalms 147:9	 Mathew 10:29	
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GOD TAKES CARE OF HIS CREATION.

3

1. How did God provide for the continuation and preservation of his creation?
2. What evidence is there from the texts that God cares for individual creature?
3. What words do the writers use to describe God's care?

ACTIVITY Present the atmosphere, soil, ocean, vegetation, animal life as products which have much to offer to the world and its peoples

 Genesis 1:28	 Genesis 2:15	 Genesis 2:19,20	 Leviticus 25:3-7, 18, 19	 Deuteronomy 20:19; 22:6,7
 Deuteronomy 24:19,20; 25:4	 Psalms 8:4-8	 Mathew 15:14-30		





HUMAN BEINGS AND THE WORLD ARE CLOSELY BOUND.

1. What special task did God give to human beings?
2. What different words have the writers used to describe what the task involves?
3. What sort of care for the environment does God expect from human beings?
4. What happens when human beings do not take responsibility for their environment?

ACTIVITY: Draw two signs (like traffic signs)

1. good uses of resources
2. wrong uses of resources

 Genesis 3:8-24	 Genesis 4:8-16	33 Numbers 35:33,34	Isaiah 24:4-6
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TRS D1/2b



THE BROKEN BOND BETWEEN HUMAN BEINGS AND GOD HAS SERIOUS CONSEQUENCES FOR THE WORLD.

- 1 How did God use the earth to care for Adam and Eve?
2. How did Adam's, Eve's and Cain's disobedience of God's command affect the relationships
 - between human beings and God
 - among human beings
 - between human beings and the world?

ACTIVITY: Create a mix-and-match quiz which matches the relationship between people's attitude and decisions about the environment and the effect that has on the environment..

 Isaiah 11:6-9	 Matthew 28:20	 Romans 8:19-21	 I Corinthians 6:19	 1 Corinthians 12:27
 2 Corinthians 5:17-21	 Ephesians 1:10	 Ephesians 2:4,5,10	 Philippians 2:5-8	 Revelation 21:1-5



GOD SENT JESUS TO MEND THE BROKEN RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN HUMAN BEINGS AND HIMSELF. ALL CREATION BENEFITS FROM THIS.

1. What examples does Jesus give to his followers for the role of caretakers of the world?
2. What is creation looking forward to?
3. What enables Christians to work for the restoration of the world?
4. How can Christians bring the message of God’s love and forgiveness to creation?

ACTIVITY: Draw up a crossword puzzle (5 down, 5 across) which gives ten ways students can be actively involved in the care of the environment.

PLANNING A CLASS WORSHIP SERVICE

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TRS D1/2c

There are many ways different groups of students can be involved in preparing a worship time for the whole school. Here are some starting points.

PERFORM

- a **dramatic reading** of Genesis 1 or select portions of psalm 104, job 38,39, Deuteronomy 8. This could be done in the form of question and answer, eg *Who cuts a path for the rainstorm to water a land where no-one lives? God does.*
- a **skit** contrasting good and bad stewardship of the environment, a scene in the year 2025’
- a conversation between an ancient tree and a young tree, giving the history of the forest
- a **dance** illustrating an aspect of your theme, eg creation of a flower
- a **litany** of prayer in which you confess wrongful use of the environment. leader names things to be confessed. worshippers respond: lord have mercy
- a **responsive prayer** of praise in which the leader names things for which god can be praised and worshippers reply with all the world, give god your praises
- **reflection** on the bible text. your teacher or chaplain can offer you guidance

DECORATE the worship area

- posters depicting the beauty, diversity and grandeur of nature
- pictures of other cultures’ and religions’ view and appreciation of nature
- plants, fruit, vegetables products made from natural resources
- posters from different environmental groups in the community

A CELTIC BLESSING

Deep peace of the running wave to you.
 Deep peace of the flowing air to you.
 Deep peace of the quiet earth to you.
 Deep peace of the swirling stars to you.
 Deep peace of the God of peace to you.
 Deep peace to you. Amen.

WRITE YOUR OWN

- **songs** — use a tune you know and write your own verses, eg all to the glory of god, 169, a time for building bridges 180, these good gifts 330 (all together series)

BANNERS

- depicting the creation story from the Bible
- depicting ways of caring for the environment
- like traffic signs baring harmful ways of treating the environment'

SELECT

a theme and a Bible text

- the world belongs to God and humans have the privilege of looking after it
- humans have made a mess but God is still in control — he hasn't stopped loving them and the world
- nothing we do is too small

USE

prayers, songs, hymns, poems that others have written

- *The canticle of the sun* by Francis of Assisi

- prayers written by Chief Seattle (1854)
- search through different prayer books for prayers that support your theme
- look for nature poems written by John Keats, William Wordsworth, Robert Frost, indigenous poets etc
- model your worship time on a harvest thanksgiving service — ask your local pastor for an example

WHAT RELIGIONS SAY ABOUT NATURE

	BELIEFS (about God, human beings, environment)	PRACTICES (which flow from beliefs)
BUDDHISM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • no teaching on how world began • no creator god • relationship between cause and effect • ignorance + selfishness + nastiness = misery and suffering • compassion + loving kindness + usefulness = light and happiness for living beings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • place importance on wild life • protect the environment • do not force change on nature • seek to live in harmony with nature
HINDUISM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • God, lesser gods, spiritual beings, human beings, nature are all part of each other • nature is sacred • the earth is the universal Mother 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reverence for life • forests and groves seen as sacred • various animals are associated with gods and goddesses and seen as sacred, eg cows • see a need to prevent the destructive course of human intervention
ABORIGINAL SPIRITUALITY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the environment is the work of the Creator Spirit • Ancestor Beings present at the beginning of time continue to exist • patterns of living and laws were laid down at the beginning • land is alive, filled with life forces of species. • land is the spiritual home, gives a person's identity and holds a person's and a community's story • different areas of land are the rights and responsibilities of different peoples • ceremonies and rituals activate and sustain life on the land • land owns the people, people are caretakers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • maintain sacred sites through traditional ceremonies • collective responsibility' • share resources among kin • use available resources but don't take more than you need • keep land clean (burn off in correct season) • protect species • provide a new generation of caretakers • educate new caretakers in knowledge of and responsibilities for the land
HUMANISM*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • no belief in God • important to behave in a loving manner to one another • objective and scientific approach to earth • the earth is a resource for human beings to use to their advantage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • should protect the planet from destruction • science and technology will provide better health, wealth, resources, environment • education makes people act more responsibly

* Humanism is not so much a religion as a common way of thinking in many countries.