

Overview for leading a worship & discussion series or book study based on Debra Rienstra's *Refugia Faith: Seeking Hidden Shelters, Ordinary Wonders, and the Healing of the Earth*

Why *Refugia Faith*?

"Refugia Faith: Seeking Hidden Shelters, Ordinary Wonders, and the Healing of the Earth explores how Christian spirituality and practice must adapt to prepare for life on a climate-altered planet.

Refugia (reh-FEW-jee-ah) is a biological term describing places of shelter where life endures in times of crisis, such as a volcanic eruption, fire, or stressed climate. Ideally, these refugia endure, expand, and connect so that new life emerges.

Debra Rienstra applies this concept to human culture and faith, asking, in this era of ecological devastation, how can Christians become people of refugia? Refugia are “neither bunkers nor beachheads” but places for healing, renewal and new growth, “microcountercultures” that can connect to other refugia so that new life can grow.

How can we find and nurture these refugia, not only in the biomes of the earth, but in our human cultural systems and in our spiritual lives? How can we apply all our love and creativity to this task as never before?”

The concept of *Refugia* can be really powerful for the times we live in, when applied to communities of faith (or other communities as well). The refugia we need are not just ones to address the climate crisis, but the “polycrisis” as some are calling it, in which multiple crises (political, economic, environmental) overlap and intersect. And although the book does take the climate crisis as a primary focus, Rienstra definitely attends to all the intersecting crises we face.

How can I use *Refugia Faith* with my community?

- 1) *Refugia Faith* could be used as a book study over a one or two month period of time. If you want to cover just one chapter a week, plan on 8 weeks. If you only have 4 weeks, you will need to cover two chapters per week but that's doable with good planning.
- 2) *Refugia Faith* could form the basis for a worship & discussion series during a season of the church year, such as Advent, Epiphany or Lent. (See below for more details.) In this case, we recommend selecting excerpts from the book to share with those attending the series, and then preparing worship services and

discussion questions based on the themes in those excerpts. For a template that you could adapt for your own worship services, see the Advent Evening Prayer Worship Template on the [Refugia Faith webpage](#) at www.EcoFaithRecovery.org.

You could prepare a 30 minute worship service using the template referenced above followed by a 30, 45, or 60 minute small group discussion on the themes of that week's book excerpt. *Please contact the author, Debra Rienstra, to gain permission to distribute excerpts from her book. You can reach her at debra.renstra@calvin.edu* We suggest purchasing a few copies of the book for your planning team to ensure that she receives some proceeds from the use of her book. And hopefully your use of excerpts of the book will inspire others to want to purchase and read it.

Does my group need to be Christian to use this book?

Refugia Faith is written from a Christian perspective for the Christian community. However, many themes in the book are applicable to people outside the Christian church as well. With some interpretation for your context, could prove valuable to groups who are not coming from a Christian perspective, as long as people don't mind reading some Christian theology and biblical interpretation.

How can I access the discussion guide for *Refugia Faith*?

You can find Debra Rienstra's discussion guide to the book at this [link](#).

Possibilities for using *Refugia Faith* during Advent, Epiphany or Lent:

- For Advent, please see the resources we have already developed for this purpose on the [Refugia Faith webpage](#) of EcoFaith Recovery.
- For use during Epiphany, we suggest drawing on the chapters in the Advent resources relevant to Advent and Christmas (chapters 1, 2, 6) but reframing it with an Epiphany lens of how the light of Christ that came into the world at Christmas shines forth in our lives as we become a people of Refugia Faith. In particular, see Rienstra's treatment of Epiphany in chapter 3, "From Consuming to Healing," pp. 91-94.
- For use during Lent, the following chapters may be particularly useful as you choose excerpts and themes from the book:
 - Chapter 1: From Despair to Preparation
 - Chapter 3: From Consuming to Healing
 - Chapter 4: From Avoiding to Lamenting
 - Chapter 7: From Indifference to Attention