



SEASON OF CREATION

September 1st-29th

Te Hāhi Weteriana o Aotearoa / The Methodist Church of NZ

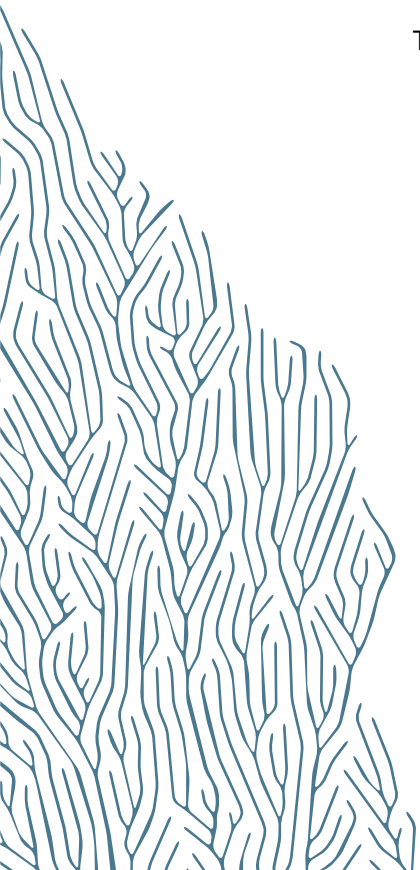
Theme:

IN FULL CONNECTION

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Theme: 'In Full Connection'



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Introduction

Tēnā koutou katoa! Welcome to this kete of resources created especially for the 2024 celebration of the Season of Creation in Te Hāhi Weteriana o Aotearoa.

A key focus of the resources is to provide a contextual response to the season that reflects the commitment of Te Hāhi to the decade for climate justice and our theme: Rekindle the Vā of Papatūānuku, and current focus: Para Kore/Zero Waste. So, it is intentionally connected to this place, Aotearoa New Zealand.

The theme of these resources is “In Full Connection” – it flows within and through the decade theme. It is a new take on a recognisable Methodist term. Hopefully it will stretch our understanding of what being in “full connection” might mean through the lens of creation.

The Season of Creation is nested within the Season of Pentecost – so there is a strong focus on a creation-affirming spirituality within the kete. Spirituality is primarily about the strengthening of connectedness.

The kete is designed for congregational, whānau and personal use. So, it can be used to resource corporate worship or devotional time.

The material includes numerous references to the flora and fauna of our motu. However, there are regional nuances that may be overlooked so you

are encouraged to adapt to your locality and change these references to ones more relevant to your rohe.

Worship elements – like suggested hymns and children’s books – have all been written in our context.

The kete resources follow the designated lectionary readings for the season and the cycle of foci for 2024 but are grounded in Aotearoa New Zealand. On the 5th Sunday however we shift focus to Kākāriki/Green Sunday. Our church created this Sunday focus several years ago. Alternative readings have been chosen for this Sunday to reflect the focus.

Part of the local grounding also means the kete is influenced by the natural season of spring that we celebrate the liturgical season within. Within the month of September significant national weeks are observed – Conservation Week (September 2nd-8th), Te Wiki o te Reo Māori Language Week (September 16th-23rd), and Mental Health Awareness Week (September 23rd-29th). This is also the month that Daylight Saving begins (September 29th). So, there is an attempt within the resources to incorporate and honour some of these threads.

A communion liturgy is provided for the first Sunday – Planet Earth Sunday. But could be used on any of the Sundays. There are many different karakia/prayers offered. It enables a selection to be chosen appropriate to your setting. You may decide to change the Sunday on which a particular prayer is used.

While the written resources have been created by myself, I would like to acknowledge and thank two other generous people for their contribution to the project.

Unless otherwise attributed, Greg Hughson from Dunedin has provided exquisite photographs to enhance the written material. His photos all celebrate and speak of Aotearoa New Zealand. Each image speaks strongly of connection.

Melanie Koster has provided the list of stories for tamariki that once again celebrate our context and explore what it might mean to be kaitiaki of our motu. These stories could be used in a variety of ways within or beyond worship to enhance children’s ministry.

During the season I want to encourage Te Hāhi to incorporate walking into your daily life. Make it a spiritual discipline to enhance and deepen your inner journey. Find a time of the day that works for you. Walk with a sense of openness to what is happening in the natural world. Seeking connection with it. This could be a personal and whānau activity. Faith communities could plan a walk in a local natural place.

You might like to make use of this prayer to enhance your sense of walking with God.

A Prayer for Walking in the Season of Creation

God of Earth and sea and sky,
we give thanks for the gift of life,
for the goodness and wonder of all creation.
As we walk in this Season of Creation
may we walk with joy and gratitude in our hearts,
for the whole community of life.

May we walk with humility,
with all our senses open,
so that we grow in awareness,
and in our sense of connection
with the natural world.

May we also notice the ways,
in which humanity is hurting creation.

May our walk help us to change the way that we live,
and to live in right relationship with the Earth.

Let us walk for a more hopeful future,
and sow seeds that create justice and healing.

Amen

Ngā manaakitanga. Blessings of the season!

Mark Gibson



Papatūānuku

Planet Earth Sunday

SEPTEMBER 1

Feast of Creation

September 1st has become recognised in recent decades as the Feast of Creation or the World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation. It is now a significant day on which Christian communities, globally, celebrate and pray for Creation. It marks the beginning of the Season of Creation or Creationtide.

It has rich ecumenical roots. The day was first established by Ecumenical Patriarch Dimitrios 1 of the Eastern Orthodox churches in 1989. He proclaimed September 1st, the start of the Eastern Orthodox church year, to be a day of prayer for creation.

The World Council of Churches then played a leading role in making the special day a season, extending the celebration from September 1st to October 4th, the Feast Day of St Francis of Assisi. Pope Francis gave the season official Roman Catholic recognition in 2015.

Symbols

There is the possibility of dovetailing this Sunday with the annual Spring Flower service.

This could work well with it being the first day of spring in the Aotearoa context.

If you decide to do this, where possible we encourage gathering and displaying indigenous flowers as well as traditional introduced ones.

Other symbols of spring relevant to your region could also be featured in the sanctuary.

You might also consider processing in a globe of the Earth to start the service or during the first hymn. A variation on this would be to show an *Earthrise* photograph of planet Earth on a data projector screen. This was the first photo taken of our planet from space by an astronaut.



'Earthrise' Image Credit: NASA
www.nasa.gov/image-article/apollo-8-earthrise

Aotearoa New Zealand Childrens' Stories

(These books could be used on any of the Sundays in the season)

Hauraki Broo, by Nikki Slade Robinson; David Ling Publishing

Luther and the Cloud-makers, by Kyle Mewburn and Sarah Nelisiwe Anderson; Scholastic

Watson the Detective Dog, by Susan Brocker and Jenny Cooper, Scholastic

Granny McFlitter, the Champion Knitter, by Heather Haylock & Lael Chisholm; Puffin

Kōwhai and the Giants, by Kate Parker; Mary Egan Publishing

Whetu the Little Blue Duck, by Jennifer Beck & Renee Haggō; Duck Creek Press

Inside Bubble Earth, by Des Hunt; OneTree House (non-fiction, recycling)

Ultrawild, by Steve Mushin; Allen & Unwin (not so much a read aloud, but great ideas to use as a springboard for activities and discussion)

A Creation Narrative... Words of Gathering

When God began to create the heavens and the Earth, the Earth was complete chaos, and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters.

Then God said, "Kia marama: nā ka marama. Let there be light," and there was light.

And God saw that the light was good, and God separated the light from the darkness.

God called the light Ko te Awatea/Day, and the darkness he called Ko te Pō/Night.

And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.

(Genesis 1:1-5, in NRSVUE & Paipera Tapu)

OR

First this: God created the Heavens and Earth – all you see, all you don't see. Earth was a soup of nothingness, a bottomless emptiness, an inky blackness. God's Spirit brooded like a bird above the watery abyss.

God spoke: "Kia marama."

And light appeared.

God saw that the light was good,
and separated light from dark.
God named the light Ko te Awatea,
he named the dark Ko te Pō.
It was evening, it was morning –
Day One.

(Genesis 1:1-5, in The Message & Paipera Tapu)

Note: In this telling of the first day of creation God speaks in te Reo Māori. To add to the drama and power of the reading two voices could be used. One as the narrator in English, the other voice as God speaking in our indigenous language.

Call to Worship

As the strengthening sun
rises above breaking cloud
and floods the whenua
with spring light;

As tūi and korimako
feast on the sweet nectar
of kōwhai and kākābeak blooms;

**Draw us into your light, O God,
that we might drink deeply
from your living waters,
and suck honey out of your rock,
that we might be strengthened
to live regeneratively
within your living Earth.**

Suggested Hīmene/Hymns for the whole season

(These are all English language hymns. For those faith communities worshipping in te Reo Māori or other languages please choose hymns appropriate to your tradition and the season)

God of Our Island Home (Hope is Our Song, no. 43)

God Bless Our Land (Hope is Our Song, no. 37)

Look in Wonder (Suggested tune: Yr Hun Gan. Hope is Our Song, no. 93)

Come to Our Land (AA 26)

Honour the Earth (AA 54)

Sing Green (AA 119)

Touch the Earth Lightly (AA 143)

The Spring Has Come (AA 140)

Jesus, I Sing Your Praise (AA 80)

One Justice for Land and People (The Mystery Telling – William L. Wallace, no. 42)

God Molds the Shapes of Life (The Mystery Telling – William L. Wallace, no. 38)

All Things of Earth (The Mystery Telling – William L. Wallace, no. 49)

Where are the Voices for the Earth? (Faith Forever Singing, no. 75)

Let There Be Respect for the Earth (Faith Forever Singing, no. 43)

Where Mountains Rise (AA 155)

Once All Was Born in Darkness (Rob Ferguson. Tune: Aurelia)

Cosmic Celebration (Ian Cairns. Tune: Hymn to Joy)

May the Mystery of God Enfold Us (AA 95)

A Selection of Karakia/Prayers

A PRAYER FOR PAPATŪĀNUKU

Creator and Creating God,
from the highest maunga, to the depths of moana,
Papatūānuku Mother Earth

speaks of your beauty and aroha.

Every shining glacier, every bubbling spring,
every singing forest bird, every scampering gecko

speaks of your beauty and aroha.

Every lumbering sea lion, every waddling hoiho,
every swaying kelp forest, every gliding albatross

speaks of your beauty and aroha.

The loamy soil of alluvial plains,
the rich quiet wetlands,
the wind-lashed headlands,
the snow-kissed tussock slopes

speaks of your beauty and aroha.

This glorious season of springtime,
time of new life, blossoming and unfurling,
time of reconnection,
time of planting and sowing
speaks of your beauty and aroha.

E te Atua.
Through your blessed Earth,
You nourish and restore our bodies,
You nourish and restore our soul.
You have made us for love.

**We belong to the Earth,
we belong to you.**

But we confess that we have not always cherished the Earth:
**we have taken her for granted,
we have seen her as something separate
that we can do what we want with,
we have taken more than we have given back,
we have too often exploited rather than nurtured her.**

Forgive our broken relationship with Papatūānuku:
**turn us back towards your well-being and wholeness.
Help us to walk anew in your healing ways.
Rekindle our love for Papatūānuku again,
so that we might cherish and care for her every day.**

In this season of creation,
help us to live in the power of Te Wairua Tapu.
In the name of the One who came to make all things new, we pray.
Amen

A PRAYER OF ADORATION FOR PLANET EARTH SUNDAY

Creator God,
Life-Giver,
Earth-Maker,
so wondrously you have
formed Earth's inner and outer parts;
knitted together,
and intricately woven her,
in your womb.
She is breathtakingly,

and wonderfully made!
So awesome are your works,
that you know so intimately!

You are the Maker of the hills,
the fertile plains,
the rainforest,
the ocean and the
flowing streams.

All living things – the ants and the bumblebees,
the tuatara and the wētā,
the sea lions and the bellbirds,
the harakeke and the mighty podocarps,
the lichen and the daisies,
were each created by you,
each reflecting your creative genius.

Your infinite capacity for innovation is astounding,
Your attention to detail is extraordinary,
Your whole creation is shot through
with outrageous generosity,
everything made with the greatest love.

Each cloud, each clump of soil,
each molecule of life-giving and refreshing water
is crafted with the most delicate grace and deepest wisdom,
the whole Earth pulsates with your loving energy.
As we marvel at your handiwork –
in the beauty, goodness, and sheer diversity of life
on this exquisite planet,
this vibrant community of life that we belong to –
we feel humble and grateful to the core.

Amen

A PRAYER FOR REKINDLING THE VĀ OF PAPATŪĀNUKU

E te Atua,
your life pulses through creation
indwelling everything!
Every blossoming tree,
every flowing river,
every pollinating bee,

every nesting bird,
every migrating tuna,
every human being,
glows with your Spirit!

In the space between
all that you have made
your flame of love also burns,
**for you have woven us into a
sacred web of relationship,
of reciprocity and respect,
mutual care and balance.**

When this vā has been diminished,
rekindle the vā of Papatūānuku!

When whenua is turned into commodity
and an awa is reduced to a resource,
rekindle the vā of Papatūānuku!

When a mine comes before the existence
of a critically endangered indigenous frog,
rekindle the vā of Papatūānuku!

When an endangered sea lion is regarded as mere bycatch
that is not worthy of special protection,
rekindle the vā of Papatūānuku!

When exploitation replaces care and protection,
rekindle the vā of Papatūānuku!

O God, open our eyes again to wonder.
Quicken within us a deeper sense of your presence
in all that you have made.
May we always cherish and hallow your Earth.
Āmine

A PRAYER FOR THE ARRIVAL OF SPRING

Dear God,
With the blessed arrival of spring
we give thanks for the circle of life and
the rhythm of the seasons.

You have choreographed with perfection,
Earth's orbiting, spinning, tilting dance
through space.

As ice and snow melt in the high country,
filling our rivers and aquifers with pure flowing water;
as buds on bare branches turn to blossom
filling the air with fragrance,
we give thanks.

Through this most joyous of seasons
may we be filled with hope,
and renewed exuberance for living.
May we fall in love again with our planet Earth.

As pīwakawaka and kōtuku build their nests again,
may we build into our lives with new vigour,
your wisdom and goodness.



As kuaka make their long return flights to the motu
from the Arctic circle,
may we return to your Promised Land,
of abundant life for all.
where justice and peace embrace and kiss.

Amen

A PRAYER OF CELEBRATION

Creator God,
in this most blessed of seasons
it is a joy to gather again
to celebrate your presence in our lives.

As the trees push out new shoots,
and buds turn to blossom
we too emerge from a time of withdrawal
and turning in.

As we come to chapel again this morning
it feels like tentative new beginnings,
but may our re-emergence
bring new blossom, new growth and new life.

As we celebrate the breath-taking diversity of your creation
and the blessing that other creatures bring to our lives
deepen our sense of belonging in your great circle of blessing,
and strengthen our commitment to sharing that blessing with others.

In this sacred time together may we find fresh inspiration
from deep time like the tuatara,
and from present time like a new-born pāpango duckling.

Eternal God, ever old and ever new.
Renew us now in the beauty of your love,
now and always.

Amen

WHAKAARO NUI/WISDOM PRAYER

Holy Wisdom,
we give thanks for the relational fabric of your creation.
You have woven all of life into a breath-taking sacred web
of interconnectedness and mutual dependence.

No species is an island.
We all belong in the one community.

But the web is frayed and broken in multiple places.
Help us to understand how we have contributed to this brokenness,
and how we might become part of the Earth's healing.

Fill us with your life-giving wisdom and love.
Help us to live with humility and gratitude.
Give us the courage to live in your beloved community of justice and right
relationship.

In the name of the one who is wisdom made flesh, we pray.

Amen

Readings

Genesis 1:1-25; Psalm 33:1-9; Romans 1:18-23; John 1:1-1

Quotes

"God is in all things. See the Creator in the face of every creature."

(John Wesley)

"The pure of heart see all things full of God. They see him in the firmament of
heaven, in the moon walking in brightness, in the sun when we rejoiceth as a
giant to run his course. They see him preparing rain for the Earth and blessing
the increase of it."

(John Wesley)

Whakataukī

Ka ora te whenua, ka ora te tangata.

The whenua, Papatūānuku, is the source of all life. She is the Mother.

Tasters, threads, markers for reflection

The Earth is 4.6 billion years old and counting! It is unique in our solar system.
It is the only planet that supports life. It is the water planet – with 70% of its
surface covered by ocean. Creation is an unfolding story.

Humanity arrives very, very late in the story. We are not only created by God in
the creative processes of unfolding creation, but we are also earthlings. We are
both children of God as well as children of Papatūānuku Mother Earth.

Earth was nameless until the emergence of humanity. Every culture and tradition have their own name and meaning and creation story for our planet. Many refer to Earth as Mother. The names express reverence and gratitude. Some names are – Papatūānuku (Māori), Pachamama (Inca), Talamh (Celt), Terra Mater (Roman), Gaia (Greek), Prithvi (Hindi), Ha-aretz (Hebrew), Dì qíú (China).

So, the name of our planet is disputed. Colonisers always claim naming rights, and the name for our planet reflects the dominant culture. The Eurocentric name "Earth" derives from the 8th Century Anglo-Saxon word "erda" meaning ground or soil.

But many of the names reflect spirituality and connectedness.

The lectionary readings and Wesley quotes affirm the goodness of the Earth and God's presence within and through all of creation. If God is in creation, and creation is sacred, then ecological harm also harms God.

Words matter, and they shape our understanding and thinking. Does the Jesus community need to start calling the destruction of the Earth not environmental damage but desecration? Is this core to our task of rekindling the vā of Papatūānuku?

A Simple Communion liturgy for Planet Earth Sunday

THE GREAT THANKSGIVING

The Creator is with you and all creation.

And also with you.

Open your hearts.

We open them to our Creator.

Let us give thanks to the Maker of heaven and Earth.

It is right to join creation in thanking God.

We give thanks to you, O God,
Galaxy-Spinner,
Star-Sower,
Earth-Maker!

We give thanks,
for your love for the Earth
and the whole community of life.
You look upon all that you have made and call us good.

You indwell your whole creation and make it holy.
The whole Earth is full of your glory!

We thank you for Jesus Christ,
your embodied Wisdom in Earth,
intimately connected
with all in the community of life:
who was baptised in a river,
wandered in the wilderness,
befriended wild beasts,
foraged for wild foods,
walked along lakeshores and through wheatfields,
prayed on mountainsides and in gardens,
told heaven on Earth parables,
lifted up the oppressed,
challenged the domination system
invited all to live in the kin-dom of God.

With past generations
and future generations
with all for whom Earth has been
and will be our common home
we say with deep gratitude and joy:

**Tapu, tapu, tapu God of all life,
te whenua me te moana me te rangi
are infused with your presence
and revere your name.
Āmine.**

THE STORY OF THE LAST MEAL

We remember when Jesus, at table with his friends,
took a loaf of bread, blessed it,
and broke it.

As he then shared it with his companions, he said,
"Take this, each one of you, eat it. This is my body which is given for you."

Nearing the end of the meal,
he took a cup of wine,
and gave thanks to you,
God of all creation.

He passed it among his friends, and said:

“Take this, all of you, and drink from it.
This is the cup of the new and everlasting covenant.
Drink from it and let my life flow through you.”

THE BLESSING OF THE BREAD & WINE

God of transformation,
pour out your Spirit on us.
Pour out your Spirit on these gifts from your Earth.
May the bread and wine symbolise your body and lifeblood.
Make us through them,
Christ’s body alive in the world,
bringing healing to the Earth.

THE BREAKING AND SHARING OF THE BREAD AND WINE

The bread which we break is a sharing in the body of Christ.
(the bread is broken)

The cup which we share is a sharing in the new covenant of Christ.
(the cup is raised)

FINAL PRAYER

We arise from this table, and go from this feast,
**to embody Christ’s love in Earth community,
and to live in the community of the Spirit.**

Empowered to rekindle the vā of Papatūānuku
let us walk humbly with you, O God,

**to do justice, to seek peace,
and to heal the Earth.**

Amen

TE MANAAKITANGA/BLESSING

May the blessings of the whenua fill us with gratitude.
May the blessings of the oceans fill us with humility.
May the blessings of the sky fill us with wonder.
May we be a blessing to the Earth
this day, and every day.

Amen



Tangata
Humanity Sunday
SEPTEMBER 8

A poem: Earthling

We are all earthlings
Children of the Earth
indigenous to the Earth
but the connection
this sense of belonging
this identity
has been frayed
and even broken.

We have been alienated
become alien to Earth
through land enclosure
industrialisation
capitalism
colonisation.

This culture of death stalks
each living creature
all of us
as Earth becomes

day by day
more silent
clinging
to
survival
existence
on the margins.

What have we become
what are we becoming
the ones
formed from the ground
called to till and keep?

The sacred circle
needs mending,
healing,
will you join me
earthling friend?

Call to Worship

Haere mai, haere mai,
haere mai i ngā tangata nō ngā hau e whā.
Come people from the four winds,
from the great continents,
from the great blue continent of Oceania
come people of God,
come again into the sacred circle
of gratitude and love.

**We come to hear our calling again.
We come that we might be strengthened
for the sacred mahi of healing the Earth,
so that all your creatures may flourish
in the community of life.**

A Meditation on Human Emergence

Make yourselves comfortable.
Close your eyes.
Focus on your breathing.
In, out.
In, out.

(We breathe in the silence)

Give thanks for your breath.
Give thanks for your life.

(Continue focusing on our breathing in the silence)

In the darkness,
in the void
in God's time
life emerged.

Dust gathered in black space,
forming our planet.

Dust became rock.
Then there was water.
Then slowly, ever so slowly,
there was a quickening
that became life,

until there was a staggering,
dazzling variety of life.

In God's time,
dust and rock,
and all this life,
became us.

Humanity emerged.
In God's time
each one of us emerged
from the dark
of our mother's womb.

(silence)

Now open your eyes, as if for the first time.
Give thanks for your life.
Give thanks for the long, evolutionary journey that led to you.

(silence)

Give thanks for that whānau that gave you life and nurtured you.

(silence)

Give thanks for the whenua, and moana,
the awa and ngahere,
and all of the extraordinary life
on this blessed planet
that has nurtured and sustained us
in body, mind and spirit.

(silence)

In God's time
We grew in understanding
That we are to till and care
And to live regeneratively
Within the community of life,
Not only drawing from the gift of life
But giving back to it,
Passing the gift on.
Healing what is damaged,
Enabling all to flourish.
Give thanks for our special calling.

(silence)

With God's help
May each one of us,
and this faith community
grow more fully into this calling,
especially at this time
of climate and ecological crisis.

May we be a community
immersed in awe and wonder,
thankfulness and praise.
And a community that not only walks on the Earth,
but walks within in justice and love.

A Prayer for Deeper Connection

O God,
help me to get off my device
out of my car
and into nature.

Bring me back to my senses
so that I may see, and hear,
and taste, and smell
and feel creation again.

Fill me with the desire
to experience the real thing,
not just an image on a screen,
for I have grown spiritually poor
through my estrangement
from the community of life.

O let me feel the gentle breeze on my face,
let me hear the early morning waiata of a korimako,
let me catch the sweet scent of honeydew in a beech forest
let me glimpse the dance of moonlight on Te Moana Nui a Kiwa.

Great Weaver of the Web of Life,
bring me back into full connexion
with butterflies, earthworms, spring flowers, nesting birds...
with the budding and blooming, leafing and fruiting of trees...
with the cycles of Te Marama,

with the ebb and flow of tides.
Help me to fall in love again,
with your creation.

Amen



Image Credit: Tara Tautari

A Prayer for our Humanity

God,
open our hearts to your hurting creation,
help us to grieve the damage being done
to our living Earth.

Give us tears, give us voice to cry out
with all who suffer in your creation.

Help us to weep as Jesus wept over Jerusalem.

Save us from numbness and denial.

Liberator,
free us from the voices from without,
that have become the voices within,
that seek to distract us from reality,
and distance us from each other,
and all in the community of life;
those voices that draw us to triviality
and away from deep knowing;
voices that try to convince us
that what we feel is an overreaction.

Save us from numbness and denial.

God of our ancestors,
rekindle within us
the lamentation of Jeremiah,
the anger of Amos,
the defiance of Shiphrah and Puah,
the love of Mary Magdalene.

Save us from numbness and denial.

Healing One,
in the face of hard truths
restore in us our emotions,
the ability you have instilled in us
to feel and to empathise,
to be compassionate,
to live in community,

our sense of connection with all life,
our very humanity.

Make us whole again.

Amen

A Prayer for Human-beingness

God,
in these hypermobile times
when we skim across the surface of things
like a flat stone on a still lake;
teach us the gentle art of slowing down,
of pausing,
of reconnecting
with all the life around us,
with gratitude;
so that we might learn again,
the gift of simple presence,
the joy of human-beingness
and at-one-ment.

Amen

A Prayer for the Warming of Humanity

O Divine Fire,
where the human heart
has turned tepid,
or even polar,
warm us.

Awaken us,
to the sad irony
that as love dies within us,
for our planet,
she dangerously, warms

It is chilling
seeing Canada burning up
Canadians dying in a heatwave,
hearing that it is in the mid-thirties
in the Arctic Circle,
seeing the ocean on fire
in the Gulf of Mexico when a gas pipeline ruptured,
seeing wildfires in wet African forests,
seeing regions of our motu aflame

Help us to tenderly nurse our Mother Earth
with warmer compassion

to cool her fever
and return her to good health

In this world of a chillier human heart, O God,
where love for neighbour,
love for one another,
love for creation,
has dwindled.
Rekindle our aroha.
For your love's sake.

Amen

Readings

Genesis 1:26-28 & 2:7-15; Psalm 8; Philippians 2:1-8; Mark 10:41-45

Reflection tasters, threads and markers

There is tension between the two stories of Creation in Genesis, and their understanding of the human vocation. One story emphasises ruling over the Earth and subduing it. Its primary thrust is domination. The other story, however, offers a humbler understanding of our human calling. It speaks of tilling and keeping (or protecting) Earth. The first is a "power-over" story, the second a "power-with" one.

Could the role of "keeping/protecting" include protecting the sacred presence within the Earth? So, where Earth is being desecrated do we need to challenge what is happening and change the narrative?

In our Aotearoa New Zealand context does the first creation story reflect colonising culture, and the second story indigenous culture? If so, then, within our nationhood, we hold the tension between the two. We have a choice of narrative to live by. Which will serve us best to heal our relationship with creation?

The New Testament readings are more aligned with the "power-with" narrative than "power-over". They speak of servanthood and service. Could an ecological reading of the Philippians and Mark passages point us to a different kind of relationship with the Earth? How does this understanding sit with the Te Ao Māori understanding of kaitiakitanga?

A relationship based on humility (derived from humus, the Earth) would look to the interests of all of creation not just the human. What would it look like if our species emptied ourselves of the need to dominate nature? How could we walk more humbly with God in the Earth?

The Latin word for our species is “homo sapiens”. It literally means “wise human” or “wise ones”. Jesus as the “servant, who emptied himself” of the need to be first was often seen as God’s Wisdom in human flesh. What implications does this have for us as followers of Jesus? What would wisdom look like in our relationship with the Earth in the face of ecological and climate crisis?

Te Manaakitanga/Blessing

Like the pīpīwharau
heralding the start of te kōanga,
may we go from here announcing
the arrival of God’s new age for the Earth.

May we go boldly,
living with love,
reconnecting,
with the community of life.

May we live wisely,
reducing, reusing,
repairing, recycling and
regenerating.

May we live justly
realigning ourselves,
with all who seek justice.

Amen



Image Credit: Tony Franklin-Ross

Ranginui

Sky Sunday

SEPTEMBER 15



Words of Gathering

As the giants of our forests
– kahikatea, kauri and tōtara –
stretch to the heavens,
separating Ranginui and Papatūānuku
may our spirits be stretched
to the heavenly realm for fresh inspiration.
As the heavens declare the glory of God,
may we declare our praise
and commit ourselves anew,
to the care and protection
of our skies.

A Prayer of Gratitude for the Aotearoa Sky

For the wondrous gifts of our beautiful skies,
E te Atua, **we give our thanks!**

For the ever-changing clouds that inspired the first name given to this motu,

Aotearoa, the Land of the Long White Cloud,
E te Atua, **we give our thanks!**

For the clean, lung-filling air we breathe,
and the atmospheric shield
protecting us from ultraviolet solar radiation,
E te Atua, **we give our thanks!**

For the booming nor'wester blowing from the maunga, and gentle coastal
breezes,
E te Atua, **we give our thanks!**

For clear blue skies by day, and bejewelled skies by night,
E te Atua, **we give our thanks!**

For the sun and the moon, the stars and planets, for constellations and the
Milky Way,
E te Atua, **we give our thanks!**

For the long summer dusk of the deep south, and big skies of a high-country
station,
E te Atua, **we give our thanks!**

For thunder and lightning,
E te Atua, **we give our thanks!**

For rain, sleet, hail, rain, and snow; for frost and dew,
E te Atua, **we give our thanks!**

For aurora and rainbows; for solar and lunar eclipses,
E te Atua, **we give our thanks!**

For geese flying in formation at twilight; and murmurations of starlings,
E te Atua, **we give our thanks!**

For the ancient pouākai who once ruled these skies;
and for kāhu who circles still in search of prey,
E te Atua, **we give our thanks!**

For dark sky reserves, and the global agreement
to protect the stratospheric ozone layer,
E te Atua, **we give our thanks!**

For gorgeous sunrises and sunsets,
E te Atua, **we give our thanks!**

In the name of the one,
called Te Whetū Marama o te Ata,

the Bright Morning Star,
who heralded the dawn from on high
we pray,
Āmine

A Prayer for the Full Moon

Heavenly One,
We pray for the full moon
(due this week).

We give thanks for this luminous companion
who journeys with us through the darkness of night.

We give thanks for the beauty of her phases,
each a source of inspiration in their own way.

We give thanks for her coming and going,
her waxing and waning,
her constant influence over the ocean,
its rising and falling.

May the radiance of the full moon
gently encourage us to shine our light
even in dark places.

May her curvature remind us
that caring for your creation
is about working with your creative processes,
not against them.

In her moment of fullness
may Te Marama inspire us
to live full lives,
and to seek abundance not just for ourselves
but for the whole community of life.

Most of all,
may Te Marama,
in all her roundness,
remind us that we live within
your circle of reciprocity and blessing,
your beloved community,
your circle of aroha.

He Tangi mo te Rangi

(A Lament for the Atmosphere)

Auē! Auē! Auē!

E te Atua,

what are we doing to te rangi?

How humanity hurts him!

"The sky's the limit!" we vainly exclaim
as a way of saying there are no limits
the sky is limitless we can do what we want.

**E te Atua, forgive our arrogance,
turn us towards gratitude and respect.**

Heavenly One, we are asking too much of the sky.

We burden the atmosphere by asking him

to carry our careless waste.

We are releasing into the air what nature

had stored away underground.

We burn carbon fuels like there is no tomorrow

discharging greenhouse gasses with reckless abandon

changing the structure of the atmosphere

changing the climate for life

to a climate of death.

**E te Atua, forgive our arrogance,
help us to choose life instead of death.**

God,

we use and abuse the sky,

when we use it as a giant disposal unit

for what we don't want.

We too easily discard and forget.

We unthinkingly release industrial emissions,

vehicle emissions,

solid wastes,

that release atmosphere damaging toxins.

**E te Atua, forgive our arrogance,
may we grow in humility and wisdom.**

Creator and Creating God,

as the prophet Jeremiah had a bleak vision

of the skies growing dark

and even the birds flying away

because of human arrogance,
we too are taking this dangerous flight path.
We are reversing your creation.
On the first day you said "Kia mārama.
Let there be light."

In our disrespect for the sky
we are returning our planet
into a place of no light
our actions are the work of dis-creation.

**E te Atua, forgive our arrogance,
Turn us toward your light,
that we might be co-creators with you.**

O God,
Give us courage to reject the climate of greed
that fuels our human arrogance,
Keep us strong in our resolve to resist those who ask us
to sacrifice the health of the sky for their god of money.
Keep us resolute despite their atmosphere of disdain and ridicule
for those who love and respect te rangi.
Keep us awake to their lies and deception.
Help us to go on working for climate justice
and the decolonisation of the skies.

With the prophet Isaiah
may our prayer always be,
"Let the skies rain down righteousness."

Āmine!



Readings

Jeremiah 4:23-28; Psalm 19:1-6; Philippians 2:14-18; Mark 15:33-39

Tasters, threads, markers for reflection

The readings powerfully reflect two kinds of sky. One that reflects God's glory (Psalm) and two that reflect the dark shadow of humanity's broken relationship with the heavens. The skies are full of wonder. What do we see in our skies that reflect God's glory?

But humanity also has a damaging and desecrating impact on the sky. When Jesus is crucified, the sky turns dark in the middle of the day. In what ways are we crucifying the sky and the atmosphere that is changing the natural order of things? In what ways are we blocking out what the skies are telling us?

In the Jeremiah reading the sky also turns dark – there is no light – the birds have flown away. In what ways does this reflect a reversal of creation? In what ways is the climate crisis bringing about dis-creation?

Is the sky turning black equally for everyone? For whom is the sky darkest in these times of ecological crises?

As we ponder all of this we can go to the sky for fresh inspiration. In the Philippians reading Paul offers a challenge to the faith community "to shine amongst them (the human family) like stars lighting up the sky". Maybe we have a better understanding of what dark skies look like from our vantage point in Oceania. We come from traditions of star navigators and travellers. In what ways do we need to be visible "stars" guiding the way for others under troubled skies?

Te Manaakitanga/Blessing

Like a vivid rainbow arching across a darkening sky,
may God give us hope in the storms of life.

Like the shining moon orbiting the Earth,
may we live radiantly in the sway of the Christ.

Like an ocean breeze billowing the sails of a yacht,
may the Spirit fill us with courage in these turbulent times.



Maunga
Mountain Sunday
SEPTEMBER 22



Image Credit: George van Hout

Call to Worship

As the mist rises,
from the peaks
of Aoraki and Ruapehu,
Taranaki and Tapuae-o-Uenuku;
and the warm September sun
melts ice and snow,
enlivening nascent
mountain streams.

May the shroud
over our eyes be lifted
so that we see more clearly
the beauty and goodness of creation
that has been so divinely made.

**May we see with greater clarity
God's love for all of creation,
and may our coldness of heart
towards our Earth community
be transformed into life-giving
acts of healing and justice.**

Alpine Hut Meditation

In silence, let us imagine that we are in an alpine hut;
high on the slopes of a big mountain...

(silence)

Our hut is our chapel...

(silence)

We are surrounded by a profound stillness...

(silence)

As we look through the open door we are overwhelmed by a sense of awe,
and a powerful sense of being in a holy place...

A thin place, where heaven and Earth are closer than our very breath...

(silence)

It's as if we are seeing life for the very first time... that we are being born again...

(silence)

Slowly a new consciousness, a deeper awareness, begins to emerge...

(silence)

On a sudden gust of breeze coming from the tops above, we hear these words...

"Be not afraid. There is nothing to fear here!

I am here. I have always been here.

I always will be here.

You are not alone in this wilderness place.

You are not alone in any wilderness place.

I live in all I have made.

From the thunder above to the smallest alpine flower below.

My Spirit dances in the silence,

My energy surges through all that lives.

Whenever your fear of these wilderness places has led you to destroy them,

you have also hurt my Spirit,

you have hurt yourself.

Make peace with the wildness within you,

So that the wilderness of the world can flourish.

(silence)

Do not be afraid. My peace I give to you.

Be at peace with creation, be at peace with yourself, be at peace with me.

Let go of your need to overcome, dominate and control.

Be still. Rest. Allow the Earth to rest. Let go...

Learn to love. Learn to live in communion..."

(silence)

Holy One, in this hallowed time and place,
may this be our deepest prayer, our ongoing prayer.

May your infinite, all-encompassing love
continue to transform all our lives.

In the name, of the Christ,
transfigured on a mountain,
we pray, **Amen.**

Prayers for the Community of Life

God of mountains and high places,
we know that it is from a peak
that we gain a much wider perspective;
it is here that we are more able to see the big picture;
and, at the same time,
gain a renewed sense
of our own smallness.
It is on a mountainside
that we can learn humility.

Mountains are often places of prayer,
wonder and contemplation
that can bring us closer to you in ways
that are life-changing.

We can see our lives in a new light,
and see the world in a new light.

From this hallowed place we bring to
you our prayers for the community of life.

We pray for all flora and fauna of the mountains of our motu,
and those entrusted to protect them;
iwi leaders, kaitiaki, DOC staff, statutory bodies and NGOs.

We pray for people who live in the mountainous regions.
Too often their lives are marginal,
as they try to eke out a livelihood in harsh conditions.
With a changing climate their situation is only becoming more precarious.

We pray for mountain safety and rescue workers,
often risking their lives to save others from life and death situations;
and for mountain guides enabling people
to explore mountainous and glaciated places,
and to deepen their sense of joy and wonder in your creation.

God, we pray for scientists who conduct field research in the mountains,
may their investigations bring us greater knowledge and wisdom that deepens
our respect and care for the community of life.

Loving God, Maker and Moulder of the mountains and hills
that sustain and inspire our daily lives,
we remember also the metaphorical mountains

that many people face in their lives.

The kinds of mountain that are life-sapping rather than life-giving.

We pray for young people everywhere, terrified of the mountain of ecological debt they are inheriting, a future with an increasingly hostile climate and dwindling biodiversity;

and, leaders whose responsibilities have grown to Himalayan proportions in the face of climate and ecological justice issues.

Liberating God, help all those caught under these kinds of mountains to find their way to your new life, of freedom, justice and joy.

To choose life over death. To be your agents of liberation.

Intimate God, you are closer to each one of us than we are to ourselves, May your peace flow through us and wash away our fears and doubts.

Where we are stumbling give us the steadiness of a mountain.

In the name of the Christ, we pray.

Amen

A Prayer for our Retreating Glaciers

God,

we give thanks

for our awe-inspiring sacred glaciers,

powerful rivers of ice

snaking down our highest mountains,

making their way slowly

carving through rock

sculpting new landscapes

along their way birthing

breath-taking crevasses,

icefalls and icebergs

leaving behind vast fields

of rocky moraine.

Each with their own mauri,

speaking their own language

cracking

rumbling

fizzing

hissing

groaning

moaning

If we only have the ears to hear!

O Spirit of Life,
help us to hear what you are saying
through the life force
of these ancient enchanting wonders
gracing our maunga
each a living ecosystem
home to unique creatures
within their icy core

Help us to listen afresh for your voice
because our glaciers are retreating,
disappearing, melting,
as our planet warms

They are your sentinels telling us that all is not right,
that our relationship with creation has gone awry.

Help us to listen for what you are saying to us
in the beautiful indigenous name
of the glacier,
otherwise known
as Franz Josef.

Kā Roimata o Hine Hukatere,
bespeaks of a sad legend
that weaves together love and loss
and the birth of the glacier.

Hukatere, a mountain lover
and Wawe, a beach-lover fall in love
and she encourages him to join her in the mountains.
But they become separated
and out of his element
Wawe is tragically swept away to his death
by an avalanche.
Hukatere is overcome with grief and guilt
and her tears freeze
to form the glacier.

O God of Story and Wisdom,
speak to us again through this ancient story
speak to us in our time of climate peril.

We have become like Wawe living in a danger zone,
ignoring our natural limits, overstretching ourselves.
Keep us closer together.
May our avalanche be one that protects, rather than takes life –
an avalanche of prayer,
an avalanche of climate action.
Too often we are frozen
in the face of the unfolding ecological crisis,
thaw and enliven us
through the fire of your love.

We give thanks for our wondrous glaciers,
may they inspire us always.
May the way we live our lives
let them live.

Amen



He Karakia mō Te Reo Māori

E te Atua,
In the beginning of Aotearoa
there was the language
of Te whenua
Te hau
Te moana
Ngā manu
Ngā awa
Ngā puia
Ngā kekeno

This was your first word in creation
on these enchanted shores

Then
human language
journeyed across te moana
took root here,
and blossomed
as te Reo Māori
a way of knowing and being in this place
found voice

It listened to the first language
and gave it tongue,
every awa
every maunga,
everything in nature
and every place
was given a name,
a rich unfolding story
of sacred relationship and kinship
was woven through it all.

O God,
We give deep thanks
that like an ancient tī kōuka
ravaged by a firestorm on an exposed ridge
te Reo Māori has survived
the desolating impact of colonisation.

For mana whenua suppression of te Reo
has turned to regeneration
in the struggle for decolonisation,
but new initiatives to suppress it
have recently been launched by the government.
And this grieves us!

Kupu Ora, Living Word,
may te Reo Māori be nurtured
in the life-giving soil of Te Hāhi Weteriana,
may we honour and celebrate
the indigenous language of this motu.
May we be strong allies in the struggle
to enable its full flourishing.

May te Reo Māori
grow in us and between us
and deepen our connectedness
with this place and each other.

Āmine

Readings

Isaiah 65:17-25; Psalm 48:1-11; Romans 8:28-39; Mark 16:14-18

Whakataukī

“Whāia e koe ki te iti Kahurangi; ki te tuohu koe, me he maunga teitei. Seek that which is most precious, if you are to bow, let it be to a lofty mountain.”

Reflection tasters, threads and markers

Aotearoa New Zealand has many mountains! In the North Island the biggest mountains are nearly all volcanic. A fifth of Te Ika a Māui/the North Island is mountainous. Down south in Te Wai Pounamu this proportion rises to nearly two-thirds. It is a mountainous island!

In the north, volcanic activity in the Earth has created the maunga. On the southern island most of the maunga were born of great tectonic plates rubbing against each other. These are the scientific stories that help us understand the origin of our maunga.

But indigenous stories of origin hold rich meaning and understanding for us and alongside the scientific can deepen our sense of belonging in this whenua. Do you know the story of origin of the maunga near you? In what ways does this enrich your understanding of the place where you live and deepen your sense of connection with it?

When giving a pepeha in a Te Ao Māori context acknowledging and connecting oneself with a maunga is part of what is shared. It is a way of speaking about ancestral and spiritual relationships. A simple framing for sharing our ancestral mountain is offered in the connexional resource "Rekindle the vā of Papatūānuku". It looks like this: "Ko [Name of your ancestral mountain] tōku maunga."

So, what is your ancestral mountain? Is it near where you were born or is it where you live now? Which of your ancestors relate to this mountain? Do you go there for inspiration and strength? Can we as faith communities share our stories of our ancestral maunga? If the mountain you have named has an English name, do you in Māori Language Week know its te Reo Māori name? Do you have any sense that your ancestral mountain is also sacred?

The two Hebrew scripture readings from Psalm 48 and Isaiah 65 speak strongly of Zion. Zion is a major theme in both these biblical books. They give it greater focus than any other book. In Isaiah God says Zion is "my sacred hill". It is where Yahweh dwells. Zion is one of the two hills/maunga on which Jerusalem is built. The mountain and the city are completely intertwined and so are spoken of in many places as one. The sense of connection is so strong that "I am the mountain, the mountain is me" is not out of place in this context.

But just to identify the complexities of these relationships the name "Zion" is thought to have pre-Israelite origins. It is likely to be a Canaanite name. So has earlier indigenous origins.

In what ways do you think giving Zion in the Jewish and Christian faith traditions so much importance has been at the expense of other maunga? By elevating its importance and declaring it God's sacred mountain has this by implication suggested that other mountains are not sacred? Does God identify with just one mountain?

Or is Zion representative of all mountains?

If we consider a mountain sacred, does it change the way we relate to it?

The Gospel reading in Mark is the post-resurrection call for Jesus' disciples to "go into the world and preach the gospel to the whole creation". It is a powerful commission.

It is inclusive of all creation is not limited to the human community. This mahi might even mean “picking up snakes in their hands”. There are echoes here of Mark’s account of Jesus’ retreat in the wilderness when he tells us that he was “with the wild beasts”. There is a sense of intimacy and close relationship here.

What might the ministry and mission of Te Hāhi Weteriana o Aotearoa look like if it included preaching the gospel to the whole creation? What might we say to creation right now in a time of climate and biodiversity crisis? What actions would do our speaking? In what ways is the gospel good news to all of creation? If climate justice is part of the good news, in what ways are we living this out in our everyday lives as individuals, whānau and faith communities?

A mountain is not just a big rock. It is a whole community of life. Everything is related and interconnected. In what ways is the mission of your faith community serving the community of life on your local maunga? In what ways does Te Hāhi preach good news to kea, meltwaters, glaciers, kaitiaki, mountain flowers, mountain beech?

Zion is disputed land. Are there any maunga in your area that continue to be the focus of unresolved land grievances? How could you preach good news to these stories of colonisation?

Te Manaakitanga/Blessing

May the peace of first light
on Maunga Hikurangi,
be ours

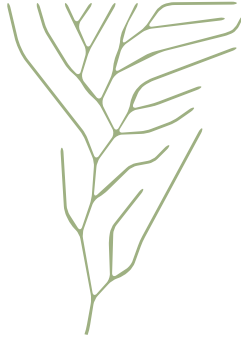
May the peace of a still alpine tarn
high above the bushline,
be ours

May the peace of a mountain daisy
pushing through snow,
be ours

May the peace of the silent mountains
where Jesus felt close to God,
be ours,
now and always

Amen

Kākāriki
Green Sunday
SEPTEMBER 29



Call to Worship

As the koru unfurls on the ponga
and green leaves return to the kōtukutuku
we celebrate the greening of the Earth,
the greening of community,
the greening of our lives.

Springtime brings a profusion of flowers,
but most of all it brings
a new greening to the Earth.

May this greening be made real now
in us and through us
in this time of celebration,
lament, and reflection.

A Prayer for Contentment

God,
I feel rich beyond measure
in a rainforest,
or wetland,
on a mountain
or wild headland.
I feel blessed,
and contented,
held in the embrace
of your love.

Yet I am surrounded by voices
seeking to sway me,
telling me that there is more to life than this.
Their good news is a lie,
designed to erode my peace within.
Their constant babble,
is sometimes gentle and seductive,
other times loud and strident:
*"Buy this,
Buy that."
"Buy now,
don't miss out."
"You need more,
what you have is not enough,"
"it's less than what you deserve,"
"it's out of date"
"you're out of date."
"Upgrade now!"
"Your life is not yet complete."*

O Gentle Guide,
give me the wisdom and strength
to resist their crusade and see it for what it is;
for they would have us mine the mountain,
mill the forest, drain the wetland,
to pursue their good life.

May I always trust in your life-giving pathway
of simplicity and sharing.

Amen

A Prayer for Daylight Saving

God,
In this time of daylight saving
help us to use this extra hour wisely.

May it be a gift that enables us to deepen
our relationship with the Earth.

As we move our clocks forward one hour,
through your guiding light
lead us on green pathways,
by waters, still or flowing.
Turn us in gratitude towards the setting sun
and the gentle folding of each day.

May this be a quiet time.
A time for renewal and healing
for ourselves and for
your beloved creation.

Amen



A Prayer for Climate Justice

Where indigenous people are driven from their land for drilling and mining,
and customary fishing grounds are threatened:

let justice roll down like a river

Where the elderly poor are exposed to heat waves without air-conditioned
shelter,
and adequate health services:

let justice roll down like a river

Where the rural poor live on marginal land increasingly challenged by drought
and fire:

let justice roll down like a river

Where low-lying island nations are caught in an existential battle with rising sea
levels and stronger and more frequent storms:

let justice roll down like a river

Where young people despair about their future:

let justice roll down like a river

Where communities in third world, and developing nations become the victims
of waste colonialism:

let justice roll down like a river

Where the climate crisis makes parts of the world unliveable and climate
refugees desperately seek a new land to live in:

let justice roll down like a river

A Prayer for Oceania

E te Atua,
We lift to you our karakia
for Oceania,
our Blue Pacific continent,
a place of great voyages and voyagers,
travellers guided by star, wind and tide.
Oceania, a place of enormous blessing.
Manaakitia the tiny island nations with a big heart
for whom Oceania is home.
Manaakitia te Moana-nui-a-Kiwa
the vast moana that nurtures and sustains us.
Manaakitia te whenua that provides food and shelter.

Manaakitia te taiao in which we dwell and have our being.
Manaakitia whales and sea turtles.
Manaakitia birds-of-paradise and iguana.
Manaakitia the beautiful flowers – tagimoucia, teuila and heilala.
Manaakitia coconut palm and taro.
Manaakitia the rich biodiversity and cultures
that are intertwined in Oceania.

Yet, O God,
Oceania
bears the unbearable weight
of climate coloniality.
Though contributing so little to the pollution
that brings the harvest of climate crisis,
she is already on the front-line
of greatest impact.
In the corridors of global political and corporate power
she is seen as of little worth and expendable,
collateral damage in the relentless drive for economic growth.

So, we pray for Oceania
as she courageously responds to the crisis.
Give her strength and wisdom
to go on claiming life in the face of death.

Where Pacific leaders call for climate justice in international forums,
may they be heard and may hearts and minds be moved into action.

Where cyclones and storms
grow more intense and come more often,
destroying housing, livelihoods, and community resources,
**may our nation be alongside those impacted
with compassion and generosity.**

Where land is being increasingly inundated by salt water
that then destroys important crops and ruins fresh-water reserves,
**may we be there in solidarity and love,
and may their voice be our voice calling for climate action.**

Where the ocean is suffering from acidification, and warming,
and coral reefs and marine life is dying,
**may we be there in solidarity and love,
and may their voice be our voice calling for climate action.**

Where health issues like Malaria are arising
because of ocean water trapped on the land,
**may we be there in solidarity and love,
and may their voice be our voice calling for climate action.**

Where the ocean waves and fish are swollen
with drift-plastic and waste from faraway shores and ships,
**may we be there in solidarity and love,
and may their voice be our voice in calling for zero waste.**

Where rising sea levels are eroding coastlines and confidence, making
communities increasingly marginal, and the future uncertain,
**may we be there in solidarity and love,
and may their voice be our voice calling for climate action.**

Where communities are needing to retreat from rising seas and relocate. Where
people have become climate migrants and refugees,
**may there be room in our nation for them to make a new start,
and may their voice be our voice calling for climate action.**

We pray in the name of the one who said
that in God's new future
the last will be put first.

Amen

A Prayer for Zero Waste

Creating God,
your workings in nature are wonderful.
An ancient rimu falls in the rainforest
and the miracle of regeneration
immediately begins.

As the giant trunk decays on the forest floor
amongst the detritus of leaves and bark,
it gives life back to the forest.
Life and death are one,
nothing is wasted,
all that dies is used again for life.

The rain and sun,
the insects and birds
all play their part
and before long new seedlings emerge

a new generation of fungi, tree and fern
are born and thrive.

God of life and death,
may we draw inspiration and wisdom from the forest.
Help us to think and act like a rainforest.
Guide us in the gentle ways of the cycle of life,
that we might be enhancers rather than disrupters of it.

Set us free from our bondage
to the exploit-consume-discard economy.
Give us courage to disentangle ourselves
from its death spiral.

Give us ears to hear
and eyes to see through
its web of deception.
Help us resist its demand for constant sacrifice
of the natural world and people.

Bring us back to the wise teaching of the forest,
that we might joyfully take our place in the circle of life,
and live in the life-giving,
circular economy of reciprocity,
of give and take
and mutual care.

Let us live simply that others may live,
share rather than hoard,
celebrate the beauty of smallness, and less,
reduce, reuse, recycle,
and live in harmony with the Earth and one another.

Amen

A Prayer for Mental Health Awareness Week

(inspired by Psalms 23 & 121)

Healing God,
as we reflect on what boosts
our mental health and well-being
we give thanks for those times you draw us again
to green places, still or flowing waters,
to the hills, to the beach,
to places of natural wildness,

that we might be restored in mind and spirit.

In these holy places, O God,
we are healed by beauty.

Close to whenua, sky and sea,
we can be made whole again.

In the silence we can hear your voice anew,
and find your inner steadying and peace.

In a forest or on a headland,
can we find a new sense of perspective and purpose.

Draw us closer to your creation,
that we may be made well again.

Amen

Readings

Genesis 9:8-17; 1 Corinth. 12:20-26 & Matthew 25:31-46
(see also Matthew 20:16; Luke 13:30 & Mark 10:31)



Whakatauki

Ehara taaku toa i te toa takitahi, engari he toa takitini.
My strength is not as an individual, but as a collective.

Kia uru kahikatea te tū!
Stand as a grove of kahikatea.

Reflection tasters, threads and markers

The Noah covenant is where God affirms commitment to all of creation. No part is to be sacrificed on the altar of economic growth. No threatened species is expendable in God's economy of grace. God's vision is that all in the community of life can flourish. This has huge implications for how we live as a human community. We need to live with a humility and simplicity that respects and protects biodiversity. All species have a God-given right to live.

The words of Mahatma Gandhi: "Live simply so that others may simply live" has implications for climate justice. It holds true also for not just human life but all of life on planet Earth. It's about humanity living in a way that allows all in the human family and in our wider kinship circle within creation to have abundant life.

An eco-reading of the parable of the sheep and the goats raises important questions in our decade for climate justice. It strengthens the first reading if we understand it in terms of the whole community of life. If we take off our human-centric way of seeing the world and see other than human life as "the least" in the context of our commodity culture it raises many questions.

Jesus' commitment to the "least" in this context must extend to those who are impacted most by the climate crisis but who contribute the least to the problem – both non-human and human.

Within humanity these are the groups within our society whose needs are overlooked in the circles of power – indigenous people on marginal land, rough sleepers, the elderly poor, the young and future generations, low-paid workers in industries vulnerable to climate change, poor communities living near landfill sites and where there is less protection from industrial pollution, and migrant workers.

The "least" could also be nations. The voices of the microstates of Oceania are often ignored by the more powerful nations. As the Jesus community we are called to be in solidarity with the least in the climate crisis. If we ignore these small nations as oceans rise and storms intensify, we are ignoring Jesus.

“I was a stranger” could be a climate refugee or migrant from a climate-impacted Pacific island. As a church we are called to advocate for their needs and a prophetic voice for a welcoming immigration policy. We are called to stand in solidarity with those who have lost their shelter and place to stand.

Climate justice means prioritising the needs of the least. To be green is to be just. As a hāhi how could we strengthen our relationships with vulnerable groups and nations? How can we make real our calling to be in solidarity with the least?

Te Manaakitanga/Blessing

May this season of Creation
that we have journeyed together
bring forth new life and hope for creation.
May it inspire deeper connections of solidarity,
and bring forth new shoots of justice,
healing and peace
in our living and our relating.
May our sorrow be turned into joy.
In the name of the one who came
to make all things new,
that all might have abundant life.

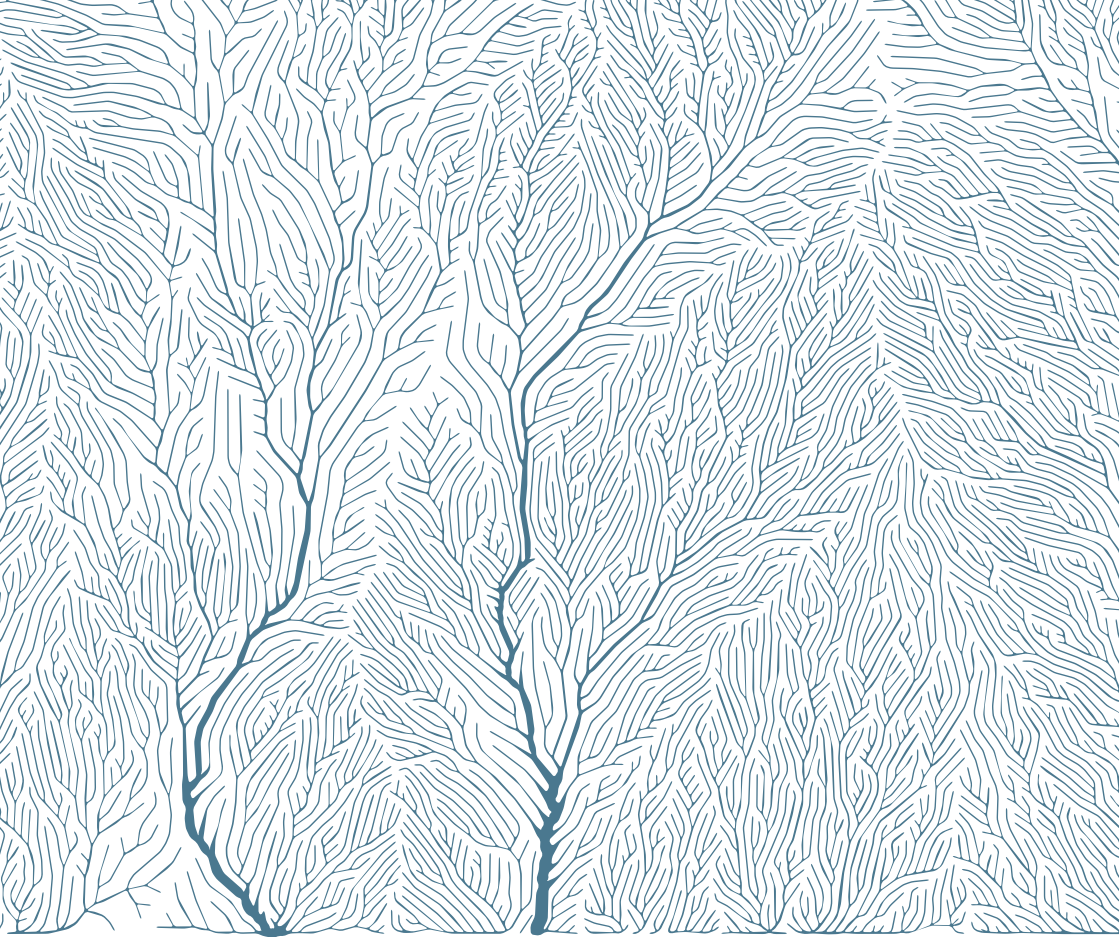
Amen

An alternative blessing

As a kōtare calls from a riverside tree
may we hear the call to action for God’s creation.

As takahē parents share time on the nest
may we hear the call to love and partnership.

As a maki mother fiercely defends her young
may we hear the call to do justice.



The Methodist Church of New Zealand
Te Hāhi Weteriana o Aotearoa
