

Together for a World Made Whole



World Environment Day 2016

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Introduction

What is World Environment Day?

World Environment Day aims to raise awareness worldwide of environmental issues and encourage political attention and action. The day was established by the United Nations Environment Program and the World Meteorological Association in 1972 and is celebrated annually on the 5 June. For more information visit: web.unep.org/wed

Together for a world made whole

The earth is our home. We are part of the web of life: nurtured, nourished, and dependent upon the earth for our survival, but also caretakers and observers of its beauty.

The web of life, whilst incredibly resilient, is being threatened by companies who continue to unsustainably mine, log and pollute our rivers, oceans and the atmosphere when there are alternatives. It is being threatened by our insatiable desire to consume more and at cheaper rates falsely believing it will make us happy. It is being threatened because we have forgotten what our purpose in life is – to love God our Creator and love our neighbour as ourselves. To love our neighbour requires a healthy environment for us all to live. To love our neighbour means we think of all God's creatures and the generations to come after us.

People at the forefront of environmental damage, Indigenous peoples and those most impacted by climate change, tell stories of forced relocation, changes to food production and water supply, acts of violence, destruction by mining companies and feelings of abandonment.

They are calling for justice; that we turn this brokenness into compassion, hope and loving action.

Now, more than ever, we need to recognise the effort of any one person or group alone is not enough and that all voices need to be heard. The contribution of every person and every community and group of people is vitally important, but we must combine and diversify our efforts.

The Uniting Church in Australia has a long history of caring for creation. There is hope in our stories, hope in the strategies we have to adapt to climate changes, and hope in the mobilisation of large groups of people for political change and the building of strong communities on foundations of collective decision-making and sustainable lifestyles.

The voices and wisdom of those who have maintained traditional knowledge and a strong connection to place and country also have something vital to teach us. This year we have gathered together reflections from Indigenous, Pacific and Asian perspectives and stories from around the Uniting Church to help us explore this year's theme and set the challenge to us all – to work together for a world made whole.

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How to use this resource

This resource has been designed for use by you, your church community, your justice group, and for those preparing worship or a devotion. This resource provides an opportunity to reflect on voices of struggle, injustice and renewal. It includes church communities' stories of inspiration and hope. The invitation is to integrate care for earth more fully into the ministry and mission of your church.

This year World Environment Day falls on a Sunday. While many congregations will use these World Environment Day resources on Sunday 5 June, they can be used at any time. 2016 is also the International Year of Pulses. Some of the prayer ideas included in the worship resource pick up on that theme.

Preparation of the Uniting Justice Australia World Environment Day resource is always a collaborative process. This year it seemed appropriate to combine an even greater diversity of perspectives and contributions. In response to the human generated ecological crisis confronting our world a combined effort is needed; one which includes all the peoples of our planet. Indeed, our efforts should extend beyond human boundaries to see us working not only in partnership with each other, but with the whole ecosystem of the planet and with God, who in Christ has acted for the reconciliation of all things on Earth and in heaven (Colossians 1:20).

The theological and biblical reflections in this resource pack are woven together so that preachers or group leaders can draw on the exegetical notes as well as the stories and reflections on the ecological crisis confronting our world. They can be used to prepare worship or in small groups.

The exegetical notes, based on the Bible readings set out in the Revised Common Lectionary for 5 June 2016, have been prepared by Rev. Dr Clive Ayre. While lectionary readings for any given Sunday do not always lend themselves to a genuine ecological interpretation,

this is not the case for 5 June this year. Any one of the lectionary readings would form a very adequate base for a sermon for World Environment Day and when they are taken together the readings complement each other and render the case even stronger.

These lectionary readings are placed alongside a number of contributed stories compiled by Rev. Dr Paul Chalson. These stories provide deep theological reflections and help bring the text to life in our current context. The gathered reflections offer a tiny but illuminating insight into the diversity of life in the planet, our identity as followers of Jesus, joined together as the Uniting Church, and the place and contribution we can make to learning how to be in a right relationship with the earth.



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Theological And Biblical Reflections

Voices of Asia and the Pacific

60-year-old Lionola in Tuvalu is packing her woven coconut basket with items she will take with her to the new place. She will have to learn to call this new place 'home'. *What will 'home' be like?*, she wonders. She has not even been to this other island, also in the South Pacific. All she knows is that it is called Koro, a place that does not have the rising seawater problems that her islands have.

She neatly folds in some clothes for church and other clothes, followed by some items she will need. So many things she can't take with her – flowers and food from her garden which are now saltwater-ridden and will not grow well anywhere, her beautiful pride of Tuvalu handcrafted mats, fans and shell necklaces that she had painstakingly learnt to weave and thread from her mother and grandmother as she was growing up. She may not be able to recreate these in her new 'home'. The pandanus leaves will be wrong, the stain, the texture. All wrong. Lionola started to cry into her handkerchief.

The plane will be here tomorrow to take her and some relatives to Koro. There is no hope. She suddenly brightened up and wiped away her tears. There is hope! She reached to the bottom of her basket and pulled out two books, a Bible and a hymn book, both written in the Tuvalu language. Her hope is in these books. It is called God.

Rev. Eseta Waqabaca-Meneilly

She reached to the bottom of her basket and pulled out two books, a Bible and a hymn book... Her hope is in these books. It is called God.



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The idea of a nurturing 'earth' (read: universe) is a very important one in almost every human culture. The earth gives life and purpose for communities; their identity is closely related to the earth.

For many Pacific communities, the earth and sea are part of their prophetic life. There is no future without the existence of the earth and sea. The very critical issue of climate change is in the heart of Pacific communities.

Across Asia, the realities of poverty make stark how the abusive use of earth's resources and scandalous pollution have hurt the earth.

For many communities in African countries living off a barren land, the idea of a single grain giving life is so important. This very unique earth with its limitations and abundance has been the source of life to many generations – and now the earth faces a critical point because of the damage that has been done by human greed and madness.

For too many people across the Middle East, the Promised Land is now a place of persecution and violence. The land is laid waste and millions are running and escaping from the violence created by human sinfulness.

Caring and nurturing the earth is a holy calling from the Creator/God to all humanity. It is the responsibility of all faith communities and cultures, and for every community, because the earth gives life and purpose for all humanity without distinction.

Rev Dr Apwee Ting
National Director, Multi/Cross-cultural Ministry, UCA Assembly

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The concept of the interconnectedness and interrelatedness of human beings and creation is not a foreign concept for Pacific Islanders. Sadly, this concept has been lost due to the legacy of Christian missions and colonisation followed by waves and influence of Western dualistic thinking and globalisation which has and continues to privilege consumerism. This separation or dualistic thinking has led to the slow erosion of creation and culture and a kind of forgetfulness regarding our responsibility to be good stewards of the earth.

The first challenge for us in re-visioning, is that we need to acknowledge and be willing to see the reality of climate change impacts in the suffering face of 'the other'. For those on the forefront of climate change it is a race against rising sea levels, erratic climatic changes, and droughts. For some countries like Tuvalu, Kiribati and the Marshall Islands, the race is already lost. Maina Talia from Tuvalu has stated, "we don't need the science to tell us that climate change is happening because we are feeling the effects of climate change now". The question we need to wrestle with is how do we work together to make the world a better place? What can we do to stand with people as they experience the anguish of impending lost homes or the belief that God has abandoned them or is punishing them for past sins? What has been our part in causing the impoverishment of others?

The second challenge for Pacific Islanders is to begin (if we haven't already) and continue (if we have already started) the cycle of reversing unhelpful dualistic theological thinking about the relationship between human beings and creation. It is to recognise and affirm that responsible care of our rich God-given resources is a critical part of our discipleship and to realise that this was a truth already embedded within our ancient cultural wisdoms. As such there is an imperative not only to revisit our dualistic received theologues, it is also to reconnect with our indigenous wisdoms that honoured and affirmed the earth and our relationship with it.

Finally, the challenge is to recognise what research has shown, which is that women are both particularly vulnerable to climate change and that they more than men bear the full brunt of the impacts of climate change. Women are the caregivers and nurturers of these communities. They are predominantly responsible for food production, household water supply and energy for heating and cooking. As climate change impact increases, these tasks become more difficult. Rev. Maleta Tenten, Secretary for Mission of the Kiribati Uniting Church attests to this fact stating, "Climate change increases the workload of women at home – care-work for children, the sick, the elderly, the disabled ... Women bear the brunt of climate change". Women also face difficulties accessing financial resources, capacity-building activities and technologies. However, as research has repeatedly shown, women's insights have been identified as key to planning future adaptation and mitigation strategies. Unfortunately, their insights still remain a largely untapped resource.

A better world for all comes from the acute recognition of the interconnectedness and interrelatedness of the intricate web of relationships between human beings and the earth. It is also the affirmation that the earth is home for all but it cannot be fully home yet if the wellbeing of any person or creature is excluded, marginalized or overlooked. But are we too late?

Rev Dr Setorosa Carroll
Manager, Church Partnerships, Pacific
UnitingWorld

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We are called to lift our sights beyond the mundane and ordinary, from the human level to the divine.

Psalm 146

The Psalmist effectively sets the scene for us as he brings together a number of essential elements. The Psalm begins on a note of praise: *Praise the Lord!... I will sing praises to my God all my life long.* Such an emphasis is timely, not least in terms of our appreciation of God's creation. We are called to lift our sights beyond the mundane and ordinary, from the human level to the divine. There are two points here. First, we are reminded that it is *God who made heaven and earth ... and all that is in them.* Such an affirmation is crucial to an ecological reading of the Scripture. If God created our planet home, then we surely have a duty of care regarding it. Second, we are reminded that this Creator God *keeps faith forever*, and is the source of our help and our hope.

But there is more still, with an emphasis on social justice and God's concern for the oppressed and "those who are bowed down". Sadly there is no shortage of issues in that regard, but today is an opportunity to remember those who are impacted by the changing environment, especially climate change. For those whose home is a low-lying island in the Pacific such as the islands of Tuvalu, the rising sea level is not a distant threat but a current reality that makes their lives very difficult.

The bookends of the Psalm are the same profound yet simple words – "Praise the Lord"! In between the bookends of praise there are the ingredients of a duty of care for Earth and all life on the planet.

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Voices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples

The creation, the land, is something we should all honour and respect because creation, which includes all the birds and the animals, embraces all our lives – physically, socially and most of all spiritually, because creation shows us the existence, not only of the raw beauty but it also shows the nurture of the divine and greater spirit, the creator, who will nurture our lives similar to how creation is nurtured. That makes for every human being not only a purpose, but teaches the reality that we belong together and need to respect each other.

Rev Sealin Garlett
Chairperson
Uniting and Aboriginal Islander Christian Congress (WA)

One of the things that is often noted about pre-colonial Tasmanian society is the apparently very small ‘tool-kit’ of the first Tasmanians. The tool-kit refers to stone and wooden implements, fire etc. that constituted the technological base which was necessary to their hunter-gatherer society. This tool-kit seems to have contained far fewer items than that of many of their mainland cousins.

Some have seen this as evidence of primitiveness, but is it?

Like other hunter-gatherer societies, the first Tasmanians had an intimate and highly detailed knowledge of their environment giving them an encyclopaedic knowledge of the where and when of all the resources they required to sustain their lifestyle. It is estimated that the business of making a living only required an average of four hours a day. Plenty of time became available for social and cultural activities. Imagine it: long leisurely meals, chit chat, story-telling, sharing knowledge, educating the children, visiting the neighbours and so on.

Eight to twelve thousand years of isolation from their mainland cousins had perhaps allowed the first Tasmanians to simplify their technology to that which was efficient, practical and sustainable but still adequate to provide a comfortable and culturally rich lifestyle.

If we want to save the planet some careful thinking about both the appropriateness of our many technologies, and our frequently inefficient use of them, and the much longer hours we have to work to sustain highly materialistic lifestyles, need to be part of the story.

Rev. Tim Matton-Johnson

Indigenous peoples have been eyewitnesses to the greatest crimes committed against all humanity. We have been living at the forefront of climate change and environmental destruction. The pace of this massive destruction of our environment is unforgivable and irreversible.

Our governments, who give permission to multinational corporations, who, in turn, destroy our ancient forests and our ancient environmental living spaces, are guilty of the most atrocious acts of violence ever committed against the future of all humanity.

The survival of our ancient cultures, wisdom and heritage, that draws its sustenance and resilience from within and among our lived environments are being destroyed at such an alarming rate.

We feel that our cry for environmental justice goes unnoticed and unheard.

We don't know how we can stop this environmental slaughter and begin the arduous task of healing our lands and restoring our traditional environments to some form of liveable and sustainable home again. We don't need science to tell us that the planet is heating up.

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We know that our children's children will inherit a planet where climate change will impact on rainfall, droughts, floods, earthquakes and other natural disasters.

These changes will affect our lifestyle, and every aspect of the choices we must make in order to adapt to these rapid changes.

In the light of these rapid changes in our lived environment, what would our Indigenous peoples like to say to the oppressors of our environment?

Firstly, we would ask politicians and multinational companies to listen to our voices.

Secondly, we would like to see an end to greed and arrogance from governments and multinationals, especially mining and forestry companies.

Thirdly, we would ask politicians and multinational company executives and boards to listen to the cry of our Mother as we hear her.

Finally, we would ask governments and multinational company executives and their boards to respond honestly and transparently to this question that Jesus posed to His people in His day, "For what will it profit them to gain the whole world and forfeit their life? Indeed, what can they give in return for their life?" (Mark 8:36-37 (NRSV)).

Pastor Ray Minniecon
Uniting and Aboriginal Islander Christian Congress (NSW)

“For what will it profit them to gain the whole world and forfeit their life? Indeed, what can they give in return for their life?”

(Mark 8:36-37 (NRSV))



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...the time is ripe for many more to switch from apathy to active concern in caring for God's wonderful creation.

Galatians 1:11-24

There are several strands in this Pauline reflection on his switch from persecutor to evangelist. One element is Paul's claim that the gospel he was proclaiming had a divine origin; he appears to downplay his contact with the apostles. But what of his dramatic change of position? From being a leading opponent of the emerging Christian movement, Paul became its foremost proponent. One could speculate on the amount of prayer that undergirded that change!

Paul dramatically changed his mind about Jesus. Might not the same thing happen in our time around the issue of climate change? In 2009, the Russian leader Dimitri Medvedev said that climate change "is some kind of tricky campaign made up by commercial structures to promote their business projects". The next year, after Russia had caught fire, devastating good agricultural land and choking Moscow, he changed his mind. He said, "Unfortunately, what is happening now in our central regions is evidence of this global climate change". A similar story can be told of Michael Shermer, publisher of *Skeptic* magazine. He had slammed "environmental extremists for their exaggerated scenarios; but he later found himself declaring that environmental scepticism was no longer tenable, and it was time "to flip from scepticism to activism".

Perhaps the bigger danger today comes from apathy; so as many people are choosing to make the switch to solar power, the time is ripe for many more to switch from apathy to active concern in caring for God's wonderful creation.

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Turning suffering into compassion

Climate Change, if we look closely and honestly, is about suffering. It is a modern doctrine of suffering written in environmental language and supported by scientific evidence. This suffering has a myriad of appearances. What the climate crisis teaches us is something about ourselves. Climate change is not just an environmental crisis, but also a crisis of humanity. Its essence is brokenness. Ancient astronomers looked into the night sky to predict changes in human history. Today atmospheric changes are projecting human crisis across the sky. It is a breaking down of relationship. Climate change is about the breaking down of relationship between God and the creation, between humanity and the world, and between human beings ourselves. While economic progress pursues the dream of value creation, climate change shows the reverse image of this teleological purpose, namely suffering.

Taking action on climate change is a way of making a public confession, but also an invocation for God's life to transform us into hope. Climate change is not just about danger, but also opportunity. It offers a new platform upon which a new way of living can be envisioned and articulated. The currency of the world is not progress, but justice. Life is not about accumulation of material wealth, but intrinsically a simple yet life-giving connection with its Maker. Life, at its elementary level, is simple and beautiful. The simplicity of human existence – free from desire-driven illusions – has its sacred and secret place in the unbound scope of God's love. Our existence, individual belief and collective action, is not defined by linear transcendence, but a circular return to the origin of the universe, God.

At this origin of all beginnings, we realise a simple truth, as in Christ's likeness. The answer to suffering is love – turning suffering into compassion, and acting accordingly.

Rev Dr Ji Zhang

Manager, Church Partnerships, Asia – UnitingWorld

Climate change is not just about danger, but also opportunity. It offers a new platform upon which a new way of living can be envisioned and articulated.



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1 Kings 17:8-24 and Luke 7:11-17

When you read these two passages you will readily see why I have linked them; the parallels are quite obvious, although there are some differences. Both accounts relate to a widow with an only son who is given back his life through the intervention of Elijah and Jesus respectively. Elijah needed to take action, while Jesus simply gave a word of command. At the outset we could juxtapose the idea of an only son with that of an only planet!

At first Elijah seems to make an unreasonable demand on a poor widow; but perhaps he knew what we may often forget, that resources can come from unexpected quarters. When resources are scarce and we limit ourselves to the human level, the task of Earthcare can simply seem too hard. We resonate with the woman's justified fear. Yet, when we include God in our thinking, the equation changes.

We should note that in Luke's account, Jesus crosses a line, so that while to some onlookers Jesus' action would have been lauded as compassionate and generous, to others it would appear as unrighteous behaviour. We ought never to forget the risks Jesus was prepared to take for the sake of the truth, and his courage in the face of potential harm. It is always hurtful when our good motives are twisted in a malicious manner, and the environment offers plenty of scope for that, but our Lord has set the example. As Horatius Bonar wrote, "It is the way the Master went; should not the servant tread it still"?

The compassion of both Elijah and Jesus is also very clear. In ancient times widows were in an extremely tenuous position, but these days there are many others who are at the margins. So Jesus was willing to risk rebuke for exercising God's special mercy for the least in society. That links with the social justice aspect of the Psalm for today. There is an element of intercession here that should

not be overlooked in any environmental endeavours; and if our theology is practical, so will our prayer be.

In 2013 the World Council of Churches published a thoughtful little book by Joosep Keum called *Together Towards Life: Mission and Evangelism in Changing Landscapes* which raises a critical question about the orientation of our life and mission as Christians; consider the following:

Mission has been understood as a movement taking place from the centre to the periphery, and from the privileged to the marginalised of society. Now people at the margins are claiming their key role as agents of mission and affirming mission as transformation. (p. 5)

For many today, the Earth itself is marginalised, and cries out together with marginalised people, for a say in the way Christian mission is exercised.

Alan Culpepper wrote:

Had Jesus passed by that funeral procession on the other side when he had the power to stop it, none of his other works would have made much difference. If religion has nothing to say to a grieving widow, it has nothing to say. (New Interpreters Bible, Vol. 9, p. 159)

It is surely legitimate to extend that statement to suggest that if religion has nothing to say about the environmental and ecological degradation of our Earth home, and has nothing to say to those who are suffering or at serious risk because of it, then it has nothing to say.

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Worship Resources

Ideas for all age worship, devotions, small groups

This resource has been designed for all age worship. This means having a time to focus on using all the senses, being authentic, sharing stories of hope and participating. You are invited to use it as a whole or take ideas out and weave it into your own worship format or setting. Many of the following ideas could also be used or adapted as a small group idea or devotion.

Preparation and Setting

You will need:

- A table or if appropriate you can use the communion table or altar
- A large piece of black fabric (approx. 3m long or enough to cover the table)
- A white candle and matches
- A collection of rocks
- Chalk and a bowl of water (optional)

Cover the table with the black cloth. Place a white candle at the back in the middle. In front place the bowl of water. The idea is to symbolise light emerging from the darkness.

Call to Worship

You are invited to respond with actions

Creator God,
out of the darkness,
life emerged
A candle is lit

In light and breath
you gave birth to the world
Take a deep breath in and out

Jesus is the light of the world.
In him all things are made whole
Cup your hands together and then make them into a ball. Hold them together for a few moments.

Hymn / Song

(see the suggestions on p. 21)

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Act of Confession

Leader: Creator God, we come now to our time of confession for those things we have done and those things we have not done.

Idea 1 With the stones you have gathered, before the service, write one of the following confessions on each of them in white chalk: ‘unkind words’, ‘hurtful anger’, ‘greed’, ‘disrespect’, ‘being ungrateful’, ‘not standing up for what’s right’, ‘pollution’, ‘wasting energy’, ‘not seeing beauty’ (or feel free to use others you think of). After the leader speaks, invite people to come up and choose one, read it out loud and place it in the water to cleanse the rock. Alternatively, the leader can do this.

Idea 2 Leave some or all of the stones blank and ask people to come and write their own in white chalk and then place them in the water to see it washed away.

Leader: We are not alone. We live in God’s world.

Our God hears and sees all things, and through the Spirit reconciles and makes all things new.

All: Amen

We are not alone.
 We live in God’s world.
 Our God hears and sees
 all things, and through
 the Spirit reconciles and
 makes all things new.



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In Our Garden

Ask four people in the congregation to finish these sentences from their experience. Involve a range of ages and perspectives.

Leader: Let us hear now, how we connect to our common home, this earth we share. Let us hear how we till and keep it.

Voice 1: In our garden we have ...

Voice 2: I remember a garden that ...

Voice 3: My ideal garden would have ... in it

Voice 4: My favourite thing in our garden is ...

Voice 1: I wish our garden had ...

Voice 2: I would like to grow ...

Voice 3: I don't like it in our garden when ...

Voice 4: I feel excited in our garden when ...

Leader: We give thanks for gardens and gardeners.

All: We give thanks for the earth that nurtures us, and our Creator God, giver of life. Amen.

Hymn / Song

Bible Readings

The following are the lectionary readings for 5 June. Click on the reading to go to the reflection.

[Psalm 146](#)

[Galatians 1:11-24](#)

[1 Kings 17:8-24](#)

[Luke 7:11-17](#)



We give thanks for
the earth that nurtures
us, and our Creator
God, giver of life.
Amen.

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Prayers – prayer station ideas

These interactive prayer activities are designed to allow people to reflect in a physical, emotional, intellectual and spiritual way. You can set up three or four tables and offer a range of ideas. Or you could just use one communal idea or just set up one prayer station.

Set up each station on a separate table with a piece of cloth. The aim is to allow people to reflect at their own pace, and interact with as many of the stations as they wish. It is helpful to play some appropriate music to create the mood for people to reflect and also signify when it's time to start and stop.

Garden poem

Cut out the words from a gardening magazine or make up your own and place them in a bowl. Invite people to create a poem or prayer using the words.

Seed or bean mandala

The word 'mandala' loosely means 'circle'. It represents wholeness. A mandala is an integrated structure organised around a unifying centre. Ideas for mandala patterns can be found by searching for 'mandala images' online.

You will need:

- a packet of red kidney beans
- a packet of yellow chickpeas or split peas
- a packet of green mung beans
- a packet of white beans (or any other combination of coloured pulses)

Place each bean in a separate bowl and invite people to place beans to fill out the mandala. It will work better if you can begin the central circle pattern as then people will take this cue to continue to fill it in.

This mandala is from Queenscliff Uniting Church created over a weekend during their Sacred Edge Festival. However,

for a church service you might like to keep it smaller and just use a square or round platter or piece of A4 paper.

Prayer tree

Draw and cut out leaf shapes from coloured pieces of paper or collect real leaves of different colours.

Invite people to write a prayer of new life on the leaf and hang it on a branch set in sand.

Alternatively you can use sticky notes and invite people to write their prayers and attach them to a bean climbing frame. Place flowers or leaves inside.



Mandala created at the Sacred Edge Festival
Photo © Queenscliff Uniting Church

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Prayer soup!

You will need a selection of chopped vegetables and cooked pulses (canned chickpeas, beans etc.), a 2L jug of water, salt. Place these in bowls on the table around the candle.

Leader: We come now to a time of prayers for others.

As you think of others, I invite you to come and place a spoon of lentils, chick peas or a vegetable into the pot. You may say the prayer out loud or in silence.

time of offering prayers

Leader: To all that has already been offered in our prayers today, we now add grains of salt. Salt that represents our tears, the salt of the earth, Jesus' reminder to us of the kingdom of heaven. *(Add a spoon of salt.)*

Leader: We now add the water of life. Water that has been cycling in our ecosystem since the beginning, with Moses in the parting of the sea, with John the Baptist and Jesus in their baptisms, with us as we have travelled through life. *(Pour in water.)*

All: We give thanks for the soup of life!

At the end of the service, cook up the soup and share it together.

Water that has been cycling
in our ecosystem since the
beginning, with Moses in
the parting of the sea, with
John the Baptist and Jesus in
their baptisms, with us as we
have travelled through life.

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We are called to be the Church: to celebrate God's presence, to live with respect in Creation.

Passing the Peace

A New Creed

(from the United Church of Canada)

We are not alone,
we live in God's world.

We believe in God:
who has created and is creating,
who has come in Jesus,
the Word made flesh,
to reconcile and make new,
who works in us and others
by the Spirit.

We trust in God.

We are called to be the Church:
to celebrate God's presence,
to live with respect in Creation,
to love and serve others,
to seek justice and resist evil,
to proclaim Jesus, crucified and risen,
our judge and our hope.

In life, in death, in life beyond death,
God is with us.
We are not alone.

Thanks be to God.

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Hymn / Song

Offering

Idea 1: An offering of our lives

There are many ways to care for the earth in our everyday life. Composting, gardening, taking more active and sustainable transport options (walking, cycling, public transport), holidaying domestically rather than internationally, switching to renewable energy, and reducing meat consumption are just a few examples. Invite the individuals in your congregation to write down on pieces of paper a step that they have already taken in their daily life to care for the earth, and a further step that they would like to commit to. Collect these up as an offering to God, the earth and each other, and as an affirmation of what the congregation is already doing and an encouragement to take further steps in the race. Stick the offerings up on a display board for people to return to in the weeks that follow to be inspired.

Idea 2: Stories of Hope

Print or project the pictures and read out the stories of hope at the end of this resource. Give thanks for what Australian churches are doing for the environment.

Invite people to reflect and write down ideas for what they could do in their church and place these in the offering bowl.

Idea 3: Take up a financial collection in support of climate justice

Think about donating to:

- UnitingWorld's Pacific climate change response program, helping churches who are on the frontlines of climate change in the Pacific to wrestle with climate change: www.unitingworld.org.au/pacificchange
- The first Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander climate justice network www.seedmob.org.au



Invite the individuals in your congregation to write down on pieces of paper a step that they have already taken in their daily life to care for the earth.

Photo © Elenie Poulos

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A Uniting Church in Australia Prayer 'For The Sake Of The Planet'

Creator God,
breath and source of life,
in love you called the world into being
and in grace you made us and call us your children.
We stand in awe of the wonder of your creation:
its beauty and wildness;
complexity and power;
resilience and fragility.

God of life,
you call us to be participants in the web and
wellspring of life:
to be nurtured by the planet;
to be nurturing of the planet;
to cherish the world and all that lives.
But we have failed and creation groans under our weight.

God of grace,
forgive us in our brokenness:
when we have taken too much from the earth;
when we have not spoken out
against greed and destruction;
when we have allowed our most vulnerable neighbours
to be harmed.
We seek courage and forgiveness to be made whole.

God of love,
we pray for those people, communities and nations
already suffering the devastating effects of climate change;
and we pray for the diversity of life on earth,
so much of it already threatened by our actions.

God of hope,
we pray for the world's leaders
Bless them with wisdom and creativity,
and a shared vision of hope for all creation.
May they find the determination
to take strong action against climate change,
and the political will to act together for the common good.

Creator God,
we pray for us all,
that we might restore our relationships with each other
and work together to heal the earth.
Renew us in your grace
for the sake of your creation. Amen.

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Notices

Blessing / Sending out

We are blessed with the diversity and uniqueness of creation, the beauty and mystery of life
As you leave now and go out into this new day
May you know God's love and healing energy
to enable you to work and live in newness of life
For the glory of God's creation
Amen.

Hymns and Songs

There are a range of new songs with an ecological theme at: letalcreationpraise.org/liturgy/hymns

Norman Habel has written lyrics to well known hymn tunes which can be found at: seasonofcreation.com/creation-songs

From *Together in Song*

Community of Christ (TIS 473)

Touch the Earth lightly (TIS 668)

Inspired by love and anger (TIS 674)

For the beauty of the Earth (TIS 137)

Where wide skies roll down (TIS 188)

From *Alive and Singing* – songbook and CD available from faywhitemusic.com/songbook---alive-and-singing.html

Wind Harps – Fay White

The Tide has Turned – Digby Hannah

Miracle – Michael Kennedy

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Ideas For Action

These actions can be taken up by a group at any time or even used during morning tea after worship. Maybe your congregation already has a justice or environment group but if not, consider setting up an ‘eco-team’ or justice group at church. A designated group of people who can provide leadership to the congregation and inspire others to get involved, can also help your church to take the next steps on integrating care for the earth more fully into its ministry and mission. It is not always easy for one person to drive change, but it’s amazing what a small group of inspired people can achieve – even just two or three motivated people can make a difference!

Places to help you set up an eco-team and take further action

- Church Greening program: Five Leaf Eco Awards fiveleafecoawards.org
- Australian Religious Response to Climate Change’s Steps to Sustainability arcc.org.au/steps2sustainability and Action Kits arcc.org.au/climate-action-kits
- National Energy Efficiency Network: resources to help churches reduce their energy use neen.org.au
- Contact your Synod’s eco ministry/environment program: see p. 30 of this resource for contact details

Join with others in your local community

Invite a representative of a local sustainability group to come and speak with the congregation about the action the group is taking. There may be ways your church can join with them.

Advocate for change

Taking action in our everyday lives and in our local communities is key to building a better world. At the same time, the actions that we can take are supported and facilitated by political, economic and social structures that protect the Earth, or they are impeded by structures that damage the Earth. Advocacy toward decision-makers who have a key role in shaping and changing these broader structures is important in enabling us all to head in the right direction.

Promote

Add your church’s name to a petition such as any of the following:

- **Getup Climate Action Petition:** calling on the Federal Government to take strong action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions: getup.org.au/campaigns/climate-action-now/climate-petition/climate-action-petition

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- Ask the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition to support 100% renewables by 2050 change.org/p/malcolm-turnbull-ban-ki-moon-respond-urgently-to-climate-change-by-setting-a-renewable-energy-target-of-100-by-2050
- Solar Citizens has a series of campaigns, state and nationally focused, to protect and grow solar power across Australia. See current petitions at solarcitizens.org.au/campaigns



Pilgrimage through the Flinders Ranges South Australia
 Photo © Uniting Church in Australia Assembly

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Hold a letter-writing event

Hold a letter-writing event after the service. Write to the Minister for the Environment asking that the Government follow through on the commitment we made at the Paris climate change negotiations to help limit global warming to a maximum of two degrees. Climate change policy in Australia is currently a very long way from what is needed to achieve this goal. Here are a few points you can make in your letter.

Write a letter to:

The Hon. Greg Hunt MP
Minister for the Environment
Parliament House
Canberra, ACT, 2600

Points to consider making

Thank the Australian Government for its involvement in the Paris Agreement on climate change which committed to hold the increase in global temperature to well below two degrees above pre-industrial levels, and to pursue efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5 °C above pre-industrial levels.

- Australia's current emission reduction target of up to 28% of 2005 levels by 2030 falls far short of what is needed.
- Australia's current renewable energy target of 20% of all energy production by 2020 is too low.
- Australia is among those countries most responsible for the historical causes of climate change.

Suggested asks of our Government:

- Take the necessary action to follow through on the Paris agreement.
- Urgently reduce greenhouse pollution.
- Set a target of 40% below 2000 levels by 2025, and net zero emissions by the middle of the century.
- Strengthen the renewable energy target to 100% renewable by 2050.
- Commit to providing climate finance to the most vulnerable countries in our region. This funding should be new and additional to our current aid program and commitments.

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Church Voices of Inspiration and Hope

Stories continue to emerge from all around the world about the wonderful things people of faith are doing with their communities to care for creation. Australia is no exception. The following are just some of the stories from churches who have been taking action. Some have just begun their projects, while others have been practising creation care for several years. They are churches of different sizes, from different parts of the country and from different kinds of communities. These four voices illustrate the range of ways we can respond including with solar power, community gardens, energy efficiency, caring for animals and more.

Many churches and individuals feel alone in their action for the environment, but there is actually a large and growing community, working passionately at the grassroots level to create a better future for ourselves and the planet. Be encouraged that you CAN make change, and that no church community is too small or too powerless to make an important difference.

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Palmwoods Community Garden, Queensland

Soil and Soul

The Community Pastor of Palmwoods Uniting Church, Kay Nixon, has lived in Palmwoods for over 20 years and has seen an increasing need for deepening community relationships and creating a more sustainable lifestyle.

Through conversations with the Palmwoods Community & Business Association (PCBA), the local school chaplain, managers of local businesses, Sunshine Coast Regional Council delegates, community groups and individuals she has discovered a strong desire to improve the environment of Palmwoods to be inclusive and vibrant. There was a great deal of support for developing a Community Garden and the proposal to locate it at Palmwoods Uniting Church.

The church had vacant land available and was growing in its vision of mission, so it seemed appropriate after prayerful consideration to arrange to offer the land given to the church for 'the community's benefit' in this way. The Tongan members of this faith community have also been keen to be involved in this project so this was also seen as an opportunity to build relationships and learn with the local community especially across generations and cultures. The church had also been discussing ways of being more responsible towards the environment as an expression of care for God's creation and responsible stewardship, while providing a place of spiritual contemplation and help. It could also be a place of healing, educating and for events.

Plans for the development of the garden are taking place. They will include strategic planning for layout design, finances and stages of progress. The subcommittee of the PCBA will put in place a Code of Ethics to cover safety concerns, membership requirements and ways of ensuring that there is no conflict with existing businesses. They have already acquired the correct insurance to cover the project.



Palmwoods Community Garden – planning gathering
Photo © Kari Ross

The first public meeting about the garden was held on 20 February 2016 attended by about 50 people. This took place at 'The Lane', a meeting place behind a café which has supported the project and has a pantry where local produce is collected and sold. The community was able to share dreams, concerns and resources with regards to the garden. It is to be called 'Soil and Soul' which very much reflects the hope for the church and the community.

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Tecoma Uniting Church, Victoria

Powered by the Sun/Son
Story by Brian Broughton

Early in 2008 Tecoma Uniting Church members reflected on important projects the church could undertake. Several people shared their ‘heart burst’ for different projects. The members then voted on the proposals and decided to invest in a solar panel array on the north facing roof of the church complex. After research it was decided to install a 5kwh system as this was the maximum allowable under the Government guidelines and with rebates it made this system affordable.

The desire to be self-sustainable and to reduce our carbon footprint was the major reason for this project. We wanted to undertake a practical project that would show the community that we were serious about caring for the earth and this community. There was also the added benefit of the promise of repayment of our outlay within 10 years.

Seven years on, the system has produced 43,000 kilowatt hours of electricity saving 57,000 tonnes of CO2 from going into the atmosphere and saved the church approximately \$25,000 in electricity bills.

At present we have an electricity account showing a credit of \$1,700. The cross shape of the panel layout has also added to our witness to the local community.



Tecoma Uniting Church's cross-shaped solar panels
Photo © Brian Broughton

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Together We Marched for Climate Justice

By Miriam Pepper

There have been many climate change marches in Sydney in recent years, but the People's Climate March in Sydney on 29 November 2015 was different. Its size, diversity and colour were unparalleled. This march privileged the voices of those who are at the front lines of climate change – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and Pacific Island peoples and farmers. Rather than simply being an event, the march was part of a broader movement that is mobilising around climate change and is calling on Australia's political leaders to do likewise.

Whereas in previous marches the visible presence of the Uniting Church has been small, with a few banners here and there, this time there was a sea of us, with our Pacific Islands congregations especially prominent. People from the Pacific churches – Tongan, Fijian, Niuean, Samoan and others – were key to the organising for the march, both within the Uniting Church and across the breadth of the movement.

The state and national councils of the Uniting Church officially supported the marches that took place across the country in the lead up to the United Nations climate summit in Paris. For more than a decade, the Uniting Church has stood in solidarity with churches in the Pacific and other international partner churches, who have asked us to support their call for a stronger global response to climate change. At this march, members of the Pacific diaspora communities raised their voices in a crescendo of support.

Tau'alofo Anga'aelangi, a young Tongan woman who is a candidate for Deacon in the Uniting Church, laid symbols at a prayer service ahead of the march at the Pitt St Uniting Church. "As an inhabitant of diaspora there's always a longing for my place of birth," she said. "My connectedness to the land and all that God created has called me to be a voice speaking out to take action and to stand in solidarity with the people of Oceania."

Reflecting after the march, Rev. Alimoni Taumoepeau of Strathfield Homebush Uniting Church said, "The People's Climate March was a first for most Pacific Islanders to get involved in such an event. I believe we have made an inroad for future involvement. It is just wonderful seeing Pacific Islanders coming together and collaborating in such a manner."

Rev. Waisea Kania of Fiji Parish said, "For me, the Sunday march may be seen as a form of worshipping God and is the beginning of a journey to continue to fight for justice wherever and whenever it may be needed."

At the prayer service, the gathering offered prayers for human and ecological communities at the frontlines of climate change, for our political decision makers, for fossil fuel industries, and for ourselves and all who are taking action in our continued commitment to climate justice. In a sea of red (signifying frontline communities) and purple (signifying faith groups), we made our way from Pitt Street Uniting Church to the Domain with ecumenical friends and friends from other faiths, singing the "Pasifika" hymn, led by the Fiji Parish choir, along the way.

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People of faith gathered on the steps of St Mary's Cathedral, Sydney, for the Peoples Climate March.
 Photo © Common Grace

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