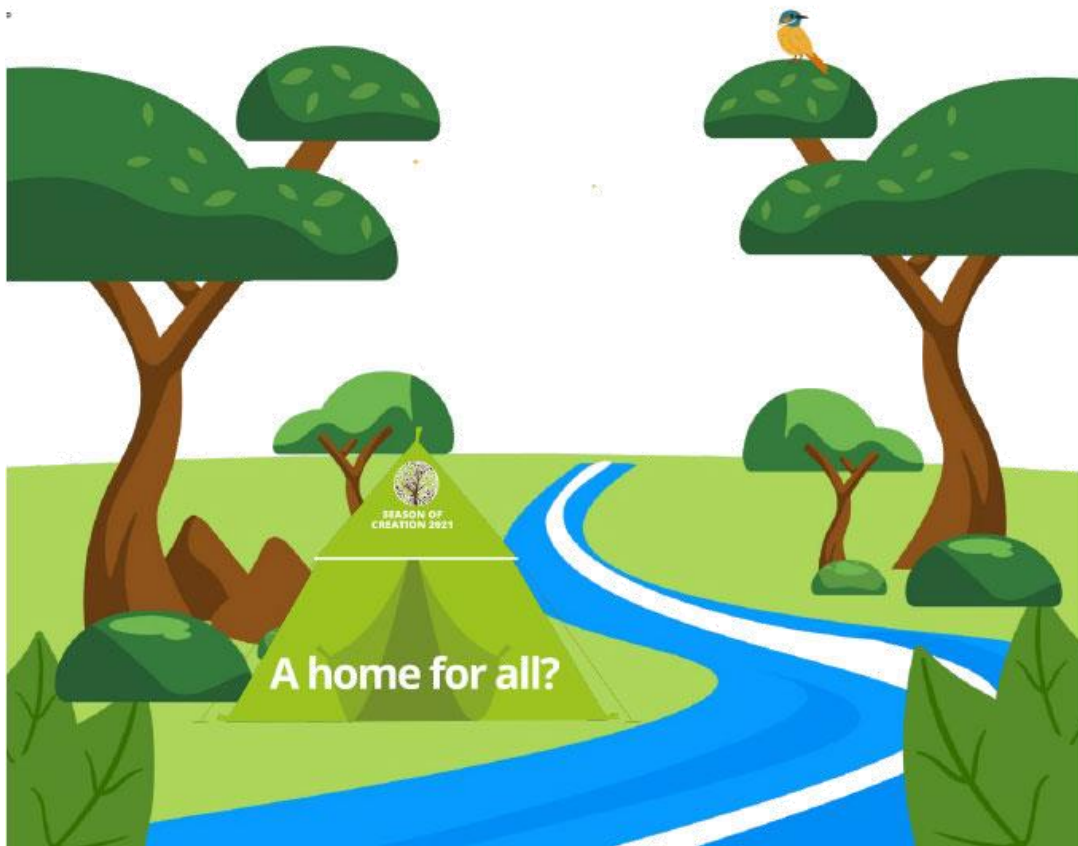




SEASON OF
CREATION

2021 Season of Creation Celebration Guide **A Home for All?**

Renewing the *Oikos* of God



Season of Creation 2021

Theme: A Home for All - Renewing the 'Oikos' of God

The 2021 Season of Creation theme is A Home for All - Renewing the *Oikos* of God. This theme is in alignment with a global call to recognise that “the Earth is the Lord’s and all that is in it.” *Oikos* is the Greek word for home/household and by rooting our theme in the concept of *oikos*, we celebrate the interconnectedness of life and the integral web of relationships that sustain the holistic wellbeing of our Mother Earth. An opportunity for our ecumenical Pasifika community to stand united in solidarity to amplify our voices and take action as warriors custodians of the *vanua* (land) to care for our common home in an integral ecological sustainable manner. This means every creature belongs to the Earth community and the entire community belongs to the Creator and we are called custodians to care for our common home in an integral ecological sustainable manner.

In Genesis God set a dome over the Earth. The word “dome” is where we get words such as ‘domicile’ and ‘domestic’ — in other words, God puts us all is — all people, all life — under the same domed roof — we are all in the house, the *oikos* of God. God gave humans the ministry to take care and cultivate this *oikos* of God. The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and others have called the *oikos* of God “the Beloved Community,” a community in which all of life are equally members, though each has a different role.

The *oikos* is a home for all but it is now in danger because of greed, exploitation, disrespect, disconnection and systematic degradation. The whole creation is still crying out. Since the dawn of the Industrial Revolution the geography where we recognize God’s creative power has continued to shrink. Today only scraps of the human consciousness recognize God acting to restore and heal the Earth. We have forgotten that we live in the household of God, the *oikos*, the Beloved Community. Our fundamental interconnectedness has been at best forgotten, at worst deliberately denied.

It is our hope and prayer that we can become again this beloved community of intentional discipleship. We hope to move beyond the programmatic and didactic aspects of life to the prophetic and spiritual life to the action and way of life, which is shaped by Jesus.

May we be the champions to renew life, the servant leaders of all life in the Beloved Community, the *oikos* of God.

In God’s Grace,

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Week 1: 1st - 7th September

Theme: Goodness of Creation and Human Responsibility

1. Welcoming Remarks

2. Call to Worship

Written by Daphne Kiki - Papua New Guinea

Tok Pisin

Yumi singim song bilong kriesen!
Graun holim ol tumbuna, kamapim niupla life
Yumi offerim prayer bilong kriesen!
Blupela sky givim yumi hope na bright stars promis bilong niupla day.
Yumi givim praise osem kriesen
Solwara pulap long blessing, na nambis danis wantaim kokonas diwai.
Yumi lotu wantaim kriesen!
Olgeta manmeri stap long graun na heven
Yumi kam bung wantaim osem wan family long graun na liftimapim nem bilong kriator bilong yumi, husait i givim lifelong yumi, na em i papa bilong heaven na graun.
I True

English

We sing the song of Creation!
Earth cradles our ancestors, birthing new life
We offer a prayer of Creation!
Blue Sky brings us hope and bright stars at night, a promise of a beautiful day.
We give praise as Creation!
Oceans are full of blessings, beaches swaying with coconut trees.
We worship with Creation!
Humanity exists between the Earth and Heaven.
We gather here as one earthly family, respectfully, to worship our Creator: the giver of life, the father of all creation.

Amen

3. Hymn of Praise

4. Prayer for the Day

God, our Creator,
As we reflect on the mystery of our fragile planet, we celebrate the wonders of Earth as our home. Help us to discern how we have polluted our planet and to empathize with the groaning of creation beneath us. Teach us to sense the presence of God pulsing through Earth as a living green blue sanctuary. Teach us to love Earth as our home. In the name of Christ, the Word of God, who is the creative impulse in all creation.
Amen.

5. Scripture Readings

1. **Old Testament:** 1 Genesis 1.1-25 'The birth of Earth' God creates the physical universe. The central character in the Genesis One story is Earth. Earth waits beneath the waters below and at God's summons, emerges from the waters like a child at birth and then, at God's command, brings forth all the fauna and flora on our planet.
2. **Psalm:** Ps. 33.1-9 'The Word of the Lord in creation' The Psalmist summons us all, Earth and her inhabitants, to praise God with song and musical instruments because of what God's word has done. The Word is the means by which God created the skies, Earth and all the seas.
3. **Epistle:** Romans 1.18-23 'Creation proclaims God's presence' St Paul declares that people have no real excuse for thinking God is not real or really present. Take a look at creation! It reveals God's eternal power and divine nature.
4. **Gospel:** John 1.1-14 'The Word becomes part of Earth' The Word that is before all things and is God, is the source of all creation. And that Word becomes flesh and blood, the very stuff of creation. The Word of life becomes part of the living planet called Earth.

6. Affirmation of Faith

Service Leader: Let us affirm our faith together.

Women:

We believe that God creates all things, renews all things and celebrates all things.

Men:

We believe Earth is a sanctuary, a sacred planet filled with God's presence, a home for us to share with our kin.

Children:

We believe that God became flesh and blood, became a piece of Earth, a human being called Jesus Christ, who lived and breathed and spoke among us, suffered and died on a cross, for all human beings and for all creation.

Women:

We believe that the risen Jesus is the Christ at the core of creation reconciling all things to God, renewing all creation and filling the cosmos.

Men:

We believe the Spirit renews life in creation, groans in empathy with a suffering creation, and waits with us for the rebirth of creation.

Together:

We believe that with Christ we will rise and with Christ we will celebrate a new creation.

7. Reflection/Bible Study

Written by Rev. Dr Cliff Bird - United Church of Solomon Islands, Munda

TOPIC: Stewardship - What and Who? A broad view.

Introduction

In this first study we want to do the following:

- 1) Introduce the Greek word from which the English words “steward” and “stewardship” come;
- 2) Explain that the words “steward” and “stewardship” are used in the New Testament; and
- 3) Outline how Economics, Ecology and Ecumenical (Ecumenism) are interconnected.

Greek “*Oikos*” for Home

“*Oikos*” is a Greek word or concept. Depending on how it is used, the word can mean the following: ¹

1. A house
 - a. an inhabited house, home
 - b. any building whatever
 - i. of a palace
 - ii. the house of God, the tabernacle
 - c. any dwelling place
 - i. of tents, and huts, and later, of the nests, stalls, lairs, of animals
 - ii. the place where one has fixed his residence, one's settled abode, domicile
2. The inmates of a house, all the persons forming one family, a household
 - a. the family of God, of the Christian Church, of the church of the Old and New Testaments

Common to all the above definitions is the idea of *home* or *household*, and this broad or wide idea of *home* or *household* is the one taken in this study as the way to do the stewardship studies this month.

Greek “*Oikonomos*” for Steward

From the word “*Oikos*” comes the word “*Oikonomos*”. This is the word that is translated into the English word “Steward” and sometimes “Manager”. *Oikonomos* is a combination of two Greek words, which are *Oikos* and *Nomos*. (*Oikos* is already explained above.) *Nomos* can be variously defined as: allot (allocate, apportion, appropriate, distribute), organize or manage. Putting *Oikos* and *Nomos* together, *Oikonomos* means “the manager of household affairs ... who has responsibility for planning and administering the affairs of a household.”²

¹ Definition is taken from the NAS New Testament Greek Lexicon:

<https://www.biblestudytools.com/lexicons/greek/nas/oikos.html>, cited 26/12/20.

² J. Douglas Hall. *The Steward: A Biblical Symbol Come of Age*. Michigan: Eerdmans, 1991, 141.

Greek Oikonomia for Stewardship (or Management)

•Oikos → Oikonomos → Oikonomia

•Home → Steward → Stewardship (Management, Administration)

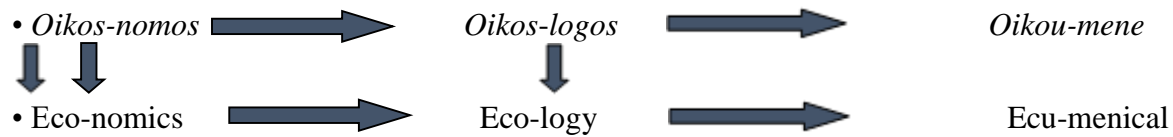
Green arrows point down from Oikos to Home, Oikonomos to Steward, and Oikonomia to Stewardship.

Examples of Uses of Steward (Oikonomos) & Stewardship (Oikonomia) in the New Testament

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***Oikos* – the Root Word for Economics, Ecology and Ecumenical (Ecumenism)**

In this first study, it is important to start with the connectedness of Economics, Ecology and Ecumenical (Ecumenism) – which all three words come from the same root word, *Oikos*:



Thus *economics* is the proper management of a household. Each one has a role in every home. For Solomon Islands, economics is about the proper management of our nation. *Ecology* is about the way things (beings) (everything in and around us, including us human beings) relate and are integrated to make the home work. Each home does not exist in isolation – it is interconnected with everything in and around it. *Oikoumene* or Ecumene is the whole inhabited Earth, including humanity and its interrelationships. It is about the interrelationships between all of humanity (Ecumenism) and God's Earth.

Summary

So, when we talk about stewardship (*Oikonomia*), we are talking about managing and caring for the interconnectedness of life. All of life is interconnected! This is why I stress that fullness of life is not just about prayer, bible reading, going to church, meditating, preaching and so on. Stewardship is connected with economics, ecology, and ecumene. In other words, stewardship is about making sure that God's offer of life in all its fullness is made available to all God's people, and to all of God's Creation.

8. Questions:

(Sit in family groups for this activity. Reporting or feedback is NOT necessary).

1. Do a brief reflection on the situation of your own home.
2. What could each member do to better family relationships in 2021?
3. Pray together as a family, committing yourself to try to do and be better in 2021.

9. Closing Hymn

10. Blessing

Service Leader: May the Spirit of God, who is above all and in all and through all, fill you with the knowledge of God's presence on Earth and the pulsing of Christ within you. Go in peace! Serving Christ and loving Earth!

Together: We go in peace, serving Christ and loving Earth.

ACTIVITIES FOR SUNDAY SCHOOL, WOMEN, YOUTH AND MEN'S GROUPS

Host an Ecumenical Prayer Service

September 1st - World Day of Prayer for Creation

Hosting a prayer service is a simple and beautiful way to celebrate the Season. While a prayer service that stays within your church community is welcomed, this Season offers a wonderful opportunity to connect with Christians outside of your denomination or network.

Host your ecumenical prayer service outside (COVID-19 Free Activity)

To celebrate God's creation fully, it is good, where practical, to take our worship outside a building and to worship in the context of God's creation—which is already worshipping God eloquently as every creature, and even mountains, rivers and trees worship the Lord simply by doing what God created them to do. You might like to consider a site of environmental significance. If it is a place of great natural beauty, the focus would be on giving thanks to God and committing ourselves to protecting the site and others. If it is a place of environmental degradation, the focus is on confessing our environmental sins and committing to actions of healing and restoration.

Host your ecumenical prayer service virtually/online (COVID-19 Free Activity)

Connect virtually and find a space outside in your own yard where you can tune in from. If this is not possible then you can look at alternatives of having within your ecumenical prayer service an opportunity for your participants to bring with them a piece

of art/poem/plant that symbolizes the goodness of creation.



“Speak up for the poor and see that they get justice” (Proverbs 31:9)

How can we as faith communities speak up for environmental issues of justice? Here are some of the calls:

1. All nations must adopt more ambitious national targets to reduce emissions by the end of 2020, to hold temperature rise to no more than 1.5°C.
2. We commit to a rapid reduction in single use plastics, and push for national bans, promoting a circular economy.
3. End fossil fuel subsidies and all investments in fossil fuel expansion. Divestment from fossil fuel companies and investing in just climate solutions is a powerful action that all actors can take, including faith-based institutions, to send a powerful signal that the fossil fuel era must end urgently.

By exercising our prophetic call to speak truth to power, we grow in love and strength.

Week 2: 8 - 14th September

Theme: Climate and Ecological Emergency - The Desolation of Creation

1. Call to Worship

Service Leader

O God, make speed to save us.

Together: O Lord, make haste to help us.

Service Leader

Send forth your Spirit, O Lord

Together: And renew the face of the earth

2. Prayer of Penitence

Creator God,

Maker of heaven and earth, we acknowledge our failure to live responsibly as part of your creation. We have taken what we want, without considering the consequences; we have wasted and discarded, without thought for the future. Open our hearts and minds to the signs of our times, to the groaning of creation, so that we may turn from our greed and lack of vision and see a world being made anew in Jesus Christ our Lord
Amen

3. Hymn of Worship

4. Prayer for the Day

We praise you God, for the Earth that sustains life. Through the planetary cycles of days and seasons, renewal and growth, you open your hand to give all creatures our food in the proper time. In your Wisdom you gave a Sabbath for the land to rest. But these days our living pushes the planet beyond its limits. Our demand for growth, and an endless cycle of production and consumption are exhausting our world. The forests are leached, the topsoil erodes, the fields fail, the deserts advance, the seas acidify, and the storms intensify. Humans and animals are forced to flee in search of security. We have not allowed the land to observe a Sabbath, and the Earth is struggling to renew. And so we confess. God of mercy and justice,

One: You tell us the land must rest, free from the burden of production.

Many: We confess our demand that the Earth produce beyond its limits, and our bondage to desire more.

One: You call us to pause from sowing, pruning, and reaping in ways that destroy the soil.

Many: We confess our vicious consumption of food and energy.

One: You assure us that we can be filled from the yield of the land.

Many: We confess our lack of trust that we can thrive within the Earth's limits.

One: You affirm that our security is found in enough.

Many: We confess our lack of courage to resist the myth of endless growth.

One: You tell us that the land must not be sold permanently, because the land is yours, and everything in it.

Many: We confess to thinking of creation as given, instead of a gift.

One: You call us to leave enough fruit on the vine and in the fields to feed our neighbors, animals, and replenish the Earth.

Many: We confess our failure to share what we receive from the Earth.

One: You call us to fairness and justice.

Many: We confess our lack of faith, not loving you with our whole heart and strength and mind, or our human and non-human neighbors as ourselves.

One: Turn us from fear and mistrust,

Many: And free us to imagine a life reconciled to the Earth and all creatures, through the Good News of Jesus Christ, in whose name we pray.

One: The Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words. And God, who searches the heart, knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God (Romans 8:26–27).

Many: Amen.

5. Scripture Readings

i. **Old Testament: Exodus 17: 1 – 7**

This story is one of a series which can be seen as rebellions or tests of the Hebrew people, which get increasingly exhausted responses from Moses and gracious provision by God. These relate to many of the most basic needs of human beings: clean safe water (15:22-27 and here), food (16), and security (17:8-16)

There is an increasing threat to those basic needs because of the climate emergency – access to safe water is reduced by shrinking glaciers, disrupted rainfall patterns, drought and floods. Those threats clearly affect access to food, and conflict over water brings security risks. God's desire to see those needs met should influence our lifestyle & policy choices.

ii. **Psalm: Psalm 78.1-4, 12-16**

iii. **Ezekiel 18:1-4,25-32**

This chapter identifies *collective sins* as the problem. This is pertinent for an assessment of our global emergencies. A fixation on small individual misdemeanors can mean we miss the point. Repentance is not a matter of bearing guilt as a burden, neither is it the cultivation of remorse or regret. Instead, it is the first step toward transformation -- what Ezekiel calls getting a new heart and a new spirit. Repentance is an active, deliberate step in a new direction. It is a step into the future, into life itself.

Ezekiel nonetheless gives value to the individual as a moral agent and the present moment as the moment of moral significance. Like our small-scale environmental initiatives, righteous action is not pointless as some of the exiles claim (33.10). Ezekiel articulates a responsibility and opportunity for each individual to “turn and live” on the basis of new choices and righteous acts.

iv. **New Testament: Matthew 21.23–32**

6. Call for Reconciliation

Despite our greed and arrogance;

Despite our apathy and despair

Despite chosen bitterness and hatred of the Body

God still commends compassion, Offers healing, peace, new life

God forgives, in Christ, incarnate in the Earth, we re-connect, in joy.

Let us confess our sins to God: and put behind us, what we need carry no longer, that God's hope and grace might heal what has broken in God's world.

7. Reflection/Bible Study

The bible describes the beauty and abundance of creation. It also talks of human injustice and oppression, distorting relationships amongst people and with the land. The Book of Isaiah offers inspiring images of these relationships being restored, so that all life is in harmony and justice with each other and creation. As Isaiah 58:6 says, this will require a kind of ‘fasting’ or self-denial, to reject greed and embrace justice. These words speak to us today, where greed and overconsumption by some is having a dire impact on the earth's climate and leading to desperate suffering in many parts of the world. We have little time to act - but must speak and act now.

This bible study is for use by small groups or individuals, to be adapted to your own context.

Isaiah 32: 15 - 18 The Peace Of God’s Reign	Isaiah 58: 6 God’s Justice
15 till the Spirit is poured on us from on high, and the desert becomes a fertile field, and the fertile field seems like a forest. 16 The Lord’s justice will dwell in the desert, His righteousness lives in the fertile field. 17 The fruit of that righteousness will be peace; Its effect will be quietness and confidence forever. 18 My people will live in peaceful dwelling places, in secure homes, in undisturbed places of rest	6 “Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke?”

8. Discussion

You may open in prayer. Read the bible passage twice and then discuss these questions

In biblical times:

- What do you think these two passages are about? Discuss each and retell in your own words.
- In Isaiah 32: 15 - 18, what happens when people live with the Spirit in harmony with the land?
- What happens when justice and righteousness prevail? To what kind of justice do you think this refers?

- Isaiah 58: 6 talks of a different kind of fasting or self-denial. What kind of human greed would lead to injustice and oppression of others?
- What do these passages say about God's vision for humanity and his creation?

In our own times

- What do we recognize from this psalm in our world today?
- In what ways has humanity been unjust and damaged the environment?
- What is the impact of this damage on others, including the poorest communities?
- Isaiah 58: 6 talks of fasting and ending greed that overcomes justice and oppression.
- What should people deny themselves to help bring justice for others and care for creation?
- What is our prayer?
- What practical actions can we commit to take at individual and community level?

9. **Benediction**

May God who established the dance of creation,
 Who marveled at the lilies of the field,
 Who transforms chaos to order,
 Lead us to transform our lives and the Church
 To reflect God's glory in creation.

Week 3: 15 - 21st September

Theme: Ecological Conversion - Reweaving Our Relationship with Creation in the 'Oikos' of God

1. Welcome

Leader: In the name of God, who creates planets, the name of Jesus Christ, born on planet Earth, and the name of the Spirit who envelops our planet. Amen.

People: Holy! Holy! Holy! Earth is filled with God's presence.

Leader: Christ, we come to into your presence, today, to worship in this sanctuary called Earth,

People: Holy! Holy! Holy! Earth is filled with your presence.

2. Call to Worship

Praise for the *aelōñ* (land), and *lōmeto* (oceans).

God's creation.

Praise for our indigenous communities and their relationship they share with our *Jinen*, our Mother Earth.

God's creation.

Praise for the *wjki* (trees) and *wut* (rain).

God's creation.

Praise for God's *menninmour* (creatures) finned, winged, and hoofed.

Let us praise God for all of creation.

3. Hymn of Praise

4. Prayer for the Day

Written by Susana Lefaoeu - Methodist Church of Samoa

English

We believe Father God that you are the creator of the heavens and the earth. You have created human beings in your image to look after and be stewards of that very creation, the acts of thy mighty hands. All of creation obeys your loving voice and worship thy heavenly throne in their action and purpose. From the rising of the sun to its setting, the rising of the tides to its going back, even the singing of the birds is to worship your holy name.

We are thankful therefore for all the things that you have made. In one way or another, we are connected to non-humans and vice versa, in a way that we are connected to you Lord. We are thankful for your creation, for it supports our every needs and may your name be praised now and forever.

We do confess that we are sinners. We have abused your creation and we have used it to support our lust and our desires. We used your creation for profits without having returned the favor to sustain your creation so that it can continue to support us. Species of many kinds have been extinct due to our evil doings. We therefore ask for your forgiveness. May the gracious blood of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ cleanse our evil hearts and create new life in us so that we can give life to your creation rather than destroying it.

We pray O Lord to continue to support your creation, continue to make it alive for our lives depend on it. We pray so you can open the eyes of the ignorant to help them realize that we are a part of the environment and not apart from it. Keep our connection with our environment. Although our planet may be diverse in the sense that we have our own identities and culture, deep down we are all in relation.

So help us sustain this relationship and help us do our part. We are aware of the contributions of the plants and animals to our lives and there is nothing we can do without the importance of every life in your creation.

Help us see your creation as your foot-stool and a sanctuary in which you dwell. These are our prayers Lord with the many silent prayers in our hearts we offer them to you in the name of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, Amen.

Samoan Translation

Matou te talitonu le Alii e, o lau Afioga na faia le lagi ma le lalolagi. Na e faia le tagata i lou lava faatusa e fai ma tausi mea o lau foafoaga, galuega mamana ia o ou aao. E usitai le foafoaga i au malelega ma tapuai i lou nofoalii mamalu e ala ia latou galuega ma faamoemoega. Mai le oso ae o le la i lona goto ifo, le sua mai o le tai i lona pea atu, e oo lava i le pepese o manu felelei, o le faamoemoe, e tapuai i lou lava suafa paia.

O lea matou te faafetai atu ai le Alii e, I mea uma na e faia. E i ai le matou sootaga ma lau foafoaga, e faapena ona felata'i lo tatou va feagai ai ma lau afioga. Matou te faafetaia lau Afioga ona o le lagolagosua o lau foafoaga i lo matou ola. O lea ia tuuina atu pea le viiga I lau Afioga e faavavau.

Ae matou te tautino atu, o i matou o se fanau agasala. Ua matou soona faaaogaina lau foafoaga ina ia tali ai o matou tu'nanauga ma le manao lasi o o matou loto. Ua matou saili i mea faasili i lau foafoaga ua matou le fesoasoani i lau foafoaga paia ina ia ola ma faaauau lana matafaioi o le tausia lea o le soifua ma lo matou ola. O le tele o ola o lau foafoaga ua faaumatia ona o a matou amio leaga. O lea matou te tatalo ai ia e faamagalalo mai ia i matou. Ia aoga le toto taua o lo matou Alii

ma lo matou Faaola o Iesu e fufulu ai o matou loto eleelea ma faafouina o matou ola ina ia mafai ona matou faaolaina nisi ola.

Matou te tatalo ia e fesoasoani i lau foafoaga ma ia e faaolaina ona e tua i ai lo matou ola. Matou te tatalo ia e faapupulaina mata oe sau i lau foafoaga ma ia mautinoa o i matou o le isi vaega taua o lau foafoaga. Ia e faatumauina pe lo matou sootaga ma le matou siosiomaga. E ui lava ina eseese o matou manatu ma o matou lagona, tu ma aga, ae e i ai lo matou sootaga taua. Ia e fesoasoani mai le Alii e ina ia mausali lenei sootaga ma ia mafai ona matou faatinoina o matou sao taua. Ua mautinoa i o matou loto le sao taua o laau, o manu, ma mea uma na e faia, ae leai se mea matou te mafai e aunoa ma le taua o ola o lau foafoaga. Ia e fesoasoani i ai matou ia matou mautinoa o lau foafoaga e tu ai ou aao ma le malumalu o lou afioaga paia.

O o matou tatalo na le Alii e, faatasi ai ma le tele o o matou manao lilo tuuina atu ia te oe i le suafa o Iesu lo matou Alii ma lo matou Faaola,

Amene.

5. Scripture Readings/Reflections

i. Scripture: Isaiah 24:4-6

“The earth dries up and withers, the world languishes and withers; the heavens languish together with the earth. The earth lies polluted under its inhabitants; for they have transgressed laws, violated the statutes, broken the everlasting covenant. Therefore a curse devours the earth, and its inhabitants suffer for their guilt.”

❖ Reflection:

“Man, especially in our time, has without hesitation devastated wooded plains and valleys, polluted waters, disfigured the earth’s habitat, made the air unbreathable, disturbed the hydro-geological and atmospheric systems, turned luxuriant areas into deserts and undertaken forms of unrestrained industrialization, degrading that ‘flower bed’—which is the earth, our dwelling place.”

ii. Scripture: Luke 4:17-21

“He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written: ‘The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.’ And he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. Then he began to say to them, ‘Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.’”

❖ Reflection:

“Every individual is called upon to play his or her part ... to safeguard nature itself and the world about us.... I wish to appeal with simplicity and humility to everyone, to all men and women without exception... to ask them to be convinced of the seriousness of the present moment.”

iii. **Scripture: Deuteronomy 30:19**

“I call heaven and earth to witness against you today that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Choose life so that you and your descendants may live.”

❖ **Reflection:**

“The world faces a time of trial today. Today, the conflict is between a culture that affirms, cherishes, and celebrates the gift of life, and a culture that seeks to declare entire groups of human beings—the unborn, the terminally ill, the handicapped, and others considered ‘unuseful’—to be outside the boundaries of legal protection. My fervent prayer is that ... every person will resist the culture of death and choose to stand steadfastly on the side of life. To choose life involves rejecting every form of violence: the violence of poverty and hunger ... the violence of armed conflicts...and the violence of mindless damage to the natural environment.”

iv. **Scripture: Romans 8:19-21**

“For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God; for the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God.”

❖ **Reflection:**

“A radical challenge facing the human family is to use the earth’s resources wisely and responsibly which means with respect to the limits to which these resources are necessarily subject. To do this is to respect the will of the Creator.”

6. **Benediction**

Leader: May the Spirit of God, who is above all and in all and through all, fill you with the knowledge of God’s presence on Earth and the pulsing of Christ within you. Go in peace, serving Christ and loving Earth!

People: We go in peace, serving Christ and tending Earth.

Youth & Sunday School Activities

Make a Green Colour Strip (Sunday School)

Take the children out to collect as many different green leaves as possible or provide these for them. Put a strip of double sided sticky tape on a piece of white card and arrange the leaves (or parts of the leaves if too big) in colour order from lightest green through to darkest green onto the tape. This gives a colour strip showing something of the diversity of plants in the local environment.



Church/Backyard Garden

Use a corner of the church garden, a window box or large plant pot to sow some seeds for the children and youth groups to create and care for their own garden. Have talanoa discussions with the youth and Sunday school groups on the importance of creating your own vegetable gardens or planting trees and the role trees play in the 'oikos' of God. End the activity by blessing the new garden or seedlings with a prayer.



Creation Musical

Listen to the story of creation. Create a musical play or drama skit that focuses on the theme for the week or the story of creation itself and have your Sunday school and youth groups collaborate in this skit to be showcased at your Sunday church services.

Trivia Night

To create more dialogue and awareness amongst your youth and Sunday school groups, hosting a trivia night is a fun and effective way for kids to learn on a certain topic. Have your trivia night focus around climate change and how this affects us as humans.



Week 4: 22nd - 28th September

Theme: Indigenous Wisdom - Reframing the Christian Vision

1. Welcome

Of all the creatures of the earth we human beings consciously ponder our own existence. We marvel at the diversity of human cultures, languages and peoples. And we look for how we may live in harmony – with each other and with the earth.

Acknowledgements of First People

We gather in acknowledgement of the (name of local People), the first inhabitants (or traditional owners/custodians) of this place who dwelt here and cared for it of old.

We gather attentive to their wisdom of living in harmony with the land and in commitment to the ongoing journey of reconciliation between indigenous and non-indigenous communities.

2. Call to Worship

We give thanks for the *vanua* which sustains and nurtures us.

We acknowledge we are intimately connected with *vanua* and have a responsibility to care for our land just as how our land cares for us.

With the soil and with all creation we give praise to God in whom the universe was born and who is present in and through all creation.

Amen

3. Hymn of Praise

4. Prayer for the Day

Written by Alisi Waqainabete - Methodist Church of Fiji

Fijian Translation	English Translation
Na Masu ni Veivakararamataki. Kemuni na tamai keimami mai lomalagi, Kalou ni vei ka kecega, kemuni na liga talei ni dauveibuli. Keimami vakacerecerea na yacamuni Jiova ni sa sega ni dua na ka o ni bulia e sega na kenai naki. Oni va gauna taka na cadra ni matanisiga kei na kena karobo, oni vagauna taka na veiveisau ni uwa kei na veidraki me rauti keimami. Keimami qoroya na mawe ni ligamuni ena i	A Prayer for Enlightenment. Our father who art in heaven, God of everything and Great God of Creation. We praise and glorify your name Jehovah for there is nothing you create that exists without purpose or meaning. You schedule the rising of the sun to its setting as perfectly as you call the tides back in after you send it and like a fine puzzle, you change the seasons beautifully suiting

boi kei nai rairai ni veisenikau, me vaka kina na maqosa ni ligamuni ena nomuni buli keimami mai na kuvu ni soso. Sa ka talei na nomuni loloma, ni o ni yadrava tu na neimami bula yadudua ka vakarautaka tu na veika me keimami bula kina mai na qeteqete ni ligamuni. Oni veivakarautaki ena wai ni bula, oni vabula na vei kau kei na manumanu me keimami kana ka mamau kina, o ni loloma taka vei keimami na vakasama me keimami rawa ni veivukei kina vei ira na nomuni tamata, ka sega ni o ni oca se vuturi ena veivakarautaki tu ena vuku ni nomuni bulibuli ena dela ni vuravura. Ia, e sa lailai na neimami vakacaucau kei na vakavinavinaka, ka sa levu sara mai na neimami vakasausataka na nomuni cakacaka Jiova. Keimami sa vakayagataka na nomuni loloma vakavakasama, me keimami bulia kina na veika me vakatotolo ka vakarawarawa taki kina na neimami bula, ka sa yavu dei tu ni leqa ena nomuni vuravura. A sa qaciqacia na kawa tamata ka keimami sa sega ni masuta na veiliutaki mai vei kemuni ka keimami sa benuca kina na vuravura ena sivi na bilioni na tani na benu ena vuku ni veivatorocaketaki va tamata. Sa ra mate mai na veika bula, sa katakata na dela ni vuravura, sa dredre me bula tale mai na kau, sa tubu na waitui ka sa kania yani na nodra lomanivale na wekaikemami. Keimami sa vuki tara vale ena vakacaca ni cagilaba tubu koso. Era sa tagi na manumanu vuka, era tagi na manumanu yavai va, era tagi na manumanu ni waitui ka keimami tagici kemuni Jiova moni nanumi keimami mai. Nanumi keimami mai turaga, nanumi ira na neimami kawa, nanumi ira na sega tu ni rogoci na nodra tagi, nanumi ira na kawa tamata era vosota tu na batabata ni waitui ni sa curuma na loma ni nodra dui vei vale. Ni solia vei keimami na yalomatua va Kalou, me keimami maroroya ka taqomaka na veika bula, me keimami kakua ni benuca na vuravura o ni lolomataka vei keimami. Ni kauta laivi na yalo ni veiqati kei na yalo ni veicudruvi ka me vakararamataki na neimami vakasama me keimami veitauriligataka na cakacaka ni kena maroroi na vuravura mai na leqa oqo na "Global Warming". Ni vakararamataka na veikawa tamata e rogoca na qaqa ni masu oqo me na raica nai valavalaca levu ni kena vakcaci na vuravura ka me na vosa ena yacai Jiova me tarova.

Ni liutaki keimami Turaga, ena veisiga kece ni neimami bula.
Emeni.

your people. We are in awe of your artistry, your presence portrayed boldly in the scent and beauty of the ecosystem and of course the creation you called to life from dust. So great is your love that you watch over us and provide for our lives from the palm of your hands. You prepare fresh water to quench our thirst, you allow plants and animals life so we have to feed and be filled, you give us knowledge to help your people, yet not one single time have you complained or withheld your goodness from us. But now we barely say our thanksgiving and our praises and we've dedicated our time to moving away from You and in the process, we've ruined and corrupted your wondrous work. We have used the knowledge you so lovingly gave us to create a fast paced world for our ease that is now the root of our decapitating world. We have become arrogant and prideful and no longer seek your guidance; therefore we have created billions of tons of waste in the name of development. Plants and animals have suffered to death, the earth on which we walk is overheated, the lush forests are now deserts, the risen sea levels have risen enough to take and ruin lives. Our families are constantly rebuilding after re-occurring cyclones, relocating due to rising sea levels and fighting to keep oil miners, bauxite miners, nuclear testers, plastic creators and those who choose to be blind to all of it, Lord. The birds weep for you, the animals of the land weep for you, all creatures of the sea weep for you and my blood line weep for you to remember us. Remember us our God, remember our descendants, remember those without a voice, remember your people who hold their families tight in a dry corner of their homes as the cold tides enter. Grant us Godly wisdom, that we may well keep and protect all of your creation and that we do no longer ruin it. Take away the spirit of hatred and jealousy and enlighten our minds to help one another in eradicating this Global Warming. Enlighten all those that hear this prayer to recognize that polluting earth is a sin and to speak against it in the name of Jesus.

Be our guidance, Lord God in all the days of our lives.

Amen.

5. Scripture Readings

1. **Old Testament: Job 28.22-33**

In this remarkable wisdom poem, the sage asks where wisdom can be found. No human can find it. But God finds wisdom. Where? In creation! In the ways and laws of nature! And in this poem, God finds wisdom specifically in the climate or the weather, in the forces of the wind, the volume of the waters, the law of the rain and the way of the thunderstorm. Do we see God's wisdom at work in these domains of nature?

2. **Epistle: James 3.13-18**

If the wisdom of God is present in nature, as the OT lesson indicates, then the advice of James is appropriate. We are called to live by the wisdom of God from above rather than by selfish ambition. Then we may harvest peace rather than harvest what comes from upsetting the balance of our climate.

3. **Gospel: Matthew 16.1-4**

Jesus reminds the leaders of his community that they have long observed patterns in the weather to discern what is happening in nature. These are the natural signs humans should be watching to understand what is patterns and changes, not supernatural interventions. To keep his audience wondering, Jesus suggests they watch for the cryptic sign of Jonah. What might that sign be for us today?

6. Affirmation of Faith

Leader: Let us affirm our faith together.

Women: We believe that God creates all things, renews all things and celebrates all things.

Men: We believe Earth is a sanctuary, a sacred planet filled with God's presence, a home for us to share with our kin.

Children: We believe that God became flesh and blood, became a piece of Earth, an Earth being called Jesus Christ, who lived and breathed and spoke among us, suffered and died on a cross, for all human beings and for all creation.

Men: We believe that the risen Jesus is the Christ at the core of creation reconciling all things to God, renewing all creation and filling the cosmos.

Women: We believe the Spirit renews life in creation, groans in empathy with a suffering creation, and waits with us for the rebirth of creation.

Together: We believe that with Christ we will rise and with Christ we will celebrate a new creation.

7. Passing of the Peace

Leader: Let us share the peace of the Lord with one another.

People: The peace of the Lord be with you

8. Reflection/Bible Study

Written by Rev. Dr Cliff Bird - United Church of Solomon Islands, Munda

TOPIC: Stewardship of Creation: “take care of” and “look after”

Reading: Genesis 2: 4b – 25

Introduction

In this second study we want to do the following:

- 1) Stress that human beings are only one component of all of Creation
- 2) Highlight one primary aspect of stewardship, namely to take care, even serve, creation; and,
- 3) Attempt to seek ways for congregation members to take care of and serve Creation.

Text Verses – Genesis 2: 7-8, 15 (Contemporary English Version)

⁷ The LORD God took a handful of soil and made a man. God breathed life into the man, and the man started breathing. ⁸ The LORD made a garden in a place called Eden, which was in the east, and he put the man there ... ¹⁵ The LORD God put the man in the Garden of Eden to take care of it and to look after it.

Two Creation Stories

Genesis chapters 1 and 2 present two creation stories. Following are some important points to raise regarding these two stories.

1. The two stories arose from different periods and contexts of Israelite history from different authors addressing different situations in the lives of their people.³ Although the story in Genesis 1:1 – 2:3 comes first, it is actually from a later tradition and is, therefore, the newer one of the two. This story emerged during the Babylonian Exile, which began in 597 BC and ended in 538 BC.⁴ For the Israelites the story functioned as a theological reflection and grounding – of God bringing order out of the watery chaos and disordered life of exile and captivity in Babylon. The creation story in Genesis 2:4b – 25 comes from an earlier time period, during the time and reign of King David, which was around 10th Century BC or 1000 BC. In this story, creation is presented as the result of the Lord God bringing together four rivers to form a kind of an oasis where there had only been dry ground before.

2. In the creation story of Genesis 1, creation of the man and woman occurred at the end of the story, on the sixth day. They are commanded to have dominion over and subdue that which

³ According to popular tradition, it is said that Moses is the author of the first five books (called the Pentateuch). However, scholarly studies by Old Testament experts have shown that the books were written by different authors/writers over time and put together by an editor or editors (or also known as redactors)

⁴ Traditionally the Babylonian Exile is recorded as from 587 – 538 BC.

God created. Strong words indeed! In the Genesis 2 story, creation of the man occurred at the beginning of the story, and he is given the task to take care of and look after the garden. Softer words! Making of the woman occurred at the end of the story, most likely to stress that man and woman complement each other.

Responsibility Given to the Man According to Genesis 2: 7-8, 15

As noted above, the words used to state the responsibility given to the man in the Genesis 2 story are softer compared to those used in the Genesis 1 story. It is to this responsibility we now turn. Those who know and are familiar with the Hebrew language will tell us of the two words used in Genesis 2:15, which are `abad and shâmar. Various English words have been used to translate these two Hebrew words:

Hebrew Word	English Word in 5 Different Bible Versions – Genesis 2:15				
	King James Version (KJV)	New American Standard (NAS)	New International Version (NIV)	Contemporary English Version (CEV)	New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)
<i>`abad</i>	to dress	to cultivate	to work	to take care	to till
<i>shâmar</i>	to keep	to tend	to take care	to look after	to keep

Most commonly these English words are the ones used to talk about stewardship from an Old Testament perspective. Almost all of these words have equivalents, or similar words, in our own native languages. This means that the idea of stewardship, at least from an Old Testament perspective, is not completely new. There are two important aspects of stewardship based on this Genesis 2 text. These are as follows:

1) Human beings are made of the same earthly substance as all creatures – from *ādāmāh* (dust of the ground, ground, and earth)

According to verse 7 God formed man (Hebrew *ādām*) from the dust of the ground (Hebrew *ādāmāh*). The same Hebrew word *ādāmāh* is also used in verse 9 as God made all kinds of trees to grow in the garden. Moreover, according to verse 19, God also formed every kind of animal and bird out of the ground (Hebrew *ādāmāh*). In verses 21-22, God made, fashioned the woman (Hebrew *iSHāh*) from a rib that God took from the man (Hebrew *'ish*). In this way, both the man (Hebrew *'ish*) and the woman (Hebrew *iSHāh*) come from the same earthly stuff or dust. All of this analysis informs us that human beings and all creatures come from the same earthly stuff or from dust. (And in the end, ALL also return to dust!)

Some people make the argument that human beings are different from all other creatures because God breathed the breath of life or spirit into *ādām* and not into other creatures. However, according to Psalm 104:28-30, life of every creatures is given by the same spirit (Hebrew *rû'ach* or *ruach*) of God: “²⁹Thou hidest Thy face, they are troubled; Thou takest away their *ruach* [breath, spirit] they expire, and return to their *aphar* [dust]. ³⁰Thou sendest forth Thy *Ruach* [breath, spirit], they are created; and Thou renewest the face of *adamah* (earth),” (Orthodox Jewish Bible).

2) Human beings are tasked with a twofold responsibility: cultivate or till, and keep or take care or look after.

Firstly, to cultivate and till in order to generate food to support life and livelihood in the present time. Secondly, to keep, take care and look after in order to ensure that the garden is not damaged or destroyed in order to support life and livelihood into the future. This twofold responsibility is integral or central to our Christian understanding of stewardship of creation. Moreover, both of these responsibilities have familiarity with our own cultural and/or traditional understandings and relationships with our surroundings or environments. The twofold responsibility highlights the use value or utility value of our immediate environments. Use value or utility value refers to the value that human beings attach to our terrestrial and marine environments based on how useful or beneficial these environments are to human beings.

However, stewardship of creation is not only based on use value or utility value. There are things, indeed creatures that may not be useful for or to human beings directly. Nevertheless, these are still useful for the whole and purposes of creation itself. Humanity is to make sure that these creatures are kept and not destroyed. They are part and parcel of God's Creation.

9. Summary

So, stewardship of creation, in light of the Genesis 2 creation story, is based on three theological/biblical pillars. Firstly, human beings and all other beings (creatures) are all from the dust or from earth (Hebrew *ādāmāh*). In fact, scientific research shows that human beings share genes with all living organisms. Thus, we exercise stewardship because our lives are connected with all other lives. What we do to other living organisms, we do to ourselves ultimately. Secondly, human beings have a responsibility of care toward creation. We exercise stewardship because human life is closely dependent on many other lives – in the sea, in rivers & estuaries, on the land, in the land and so on. When damage is done to our environments, human life is affected in negative ways. Thirdly, creation exists in a balance and so whatever is not considered valuable for/to human beings still has value in and of itself, and for the overall purpose of God's creation. We have a huge responsibility for care!

10. Questions:

(Sit in small groups of men, women, girls, boys, S/School. Groups may report back in plenary)

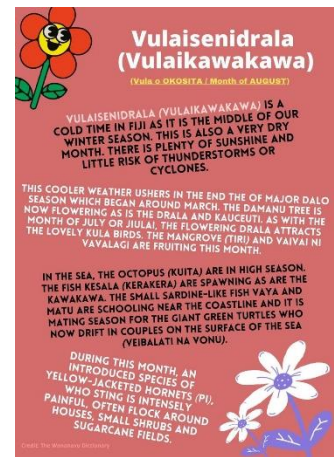
1. God's Spirit is the source of all life – human and non-human life. How should this realization shape how we live and relate in our surroundings (environments)?
2. What are words in your native language that speak about stewardship? Explain/clarify these.
3. What kinds of work are good for our surroundings? What kind is not good?
4. List some practical ways on how your community can live as a better caregiver to your surroundings.

ACTIVITIES FOR SUNDAY SCHOOL, WOMEN, YOUTH AND MEN'S GROUPS

Engage your Local Ecology through this Earth Examen

An examen is a way of beholding an object or being in prayerful wonder. Through questions, you are invited to reflect on God's presence and the goodness of that which you behold. During this Season of Creation, consider contemplating a part of your local ecology. This is an exercise that you can choose to do alone, or with a group. Pick a natural or agricultural place to contemplate. A forest. The ocean. Your backyard garden. Your traditional fishing ground. Your traditional agricultural site/farm area. A hilltop. Find a comfortable place to rest in or near this place. Enter into prayer in whatever way is natural to you. Invite Holy Wisdom to open the eyes of your heart. When you are ready, reflect on the following questions:

- Become aware of God's presence in a natural/traditional or agricultural place that you are contemplating.
 - How is God present in this place? How does all the life you see exist in God's spirit? How your ancestors were able to care for creation, was it through their relationship with the land? How are you able to continue the beliefs your ancestors had paved?
- Pay attention to what you feel as you contemplate the fragility, health of this site.
 - Is this ecosystem healthy? How is this ecosystem at risk of illness? What are the keys to sustaining the harmonious balance of this place? What are the sources of stress that threaten the balance of this particular ecosystem? How do you feel when you consider the fragility of life that depends on the health of this place? What is your effect on this balance?
- Choose one feature of the site and pray for it, its rest and its renewal.
 - When you consider the ways that this place is under stress, what does it need for rest, restoration and renewal? What needs to be conserved for this site to heal itself? What features need to be reclaimed? Pray for this site, and the wisdom to care for it.
- Look toward your response. What can you do to ease demands or promote the rest of this ecological site?
 - Based on your examination, how do you identify with this place? What have you discerned is required to care for this place? What will be your act of compassion to promote rest for this place?



Week 5: 29th September - 4th October

Theme: Oceans Justice

Introduction

Ocean refers to the masses of waters that cover two thirds of Earth's surface, along with the seven seas and the watery deeps where a myriad of species live, many of which are still undiscovered. The ocean is a world of mystery and beauty, of fascinating depths and spectacular life forms. The ocean is that vast domain many of our ancestors crossed to reach all parts of planet Earth. The waters of the oceans are the waters of life for all the planet.

Preparation

To capture the world of the ocean in worship, it is helpful to create a sense of life in the deep with images of sea creatures on the walls, scenes of rich color and mystery, whales, dolphins, sea lions, angel fish, albatross and so on. Another option is for the children to process into worship as if they were boat people, sailing on a series of sailboats, holding images of life at sea. The church floor then becomes the surface of the ocean. The community worships at sea! Some of the children could be whales, penguins or dolphins swimming alongside the boats. Scientists and artists in the community may help with conceptualizing the ocean as a living part of our planet. Another option is play recordings that fill the sanctuary with sounds of the ocean and of ocean creatures. These sounds might be augmented with appropriate images of ocean life projected on a wall or a screen.

1. Welcome

Leader: In the name of the Spirit of God who hovered over the primal waters. In the name of the Word of God who parted the waters for Earth to appear. In the name of the Wisdom of God, who filled the deep with amazing designs? Amen

People: Holy! Holy! Holy! The oceans are filled with God's presence.

Leader: Christ, we come into your presence, today, to worship in this sanctuary called Earth,

People: Holy! Holy! Holy! Earth is filled with your presence.

2. Call to Worship

Leader: As we celebrate our seas.

People: Christ, have mercy.

Leader: As we connect with our oceans.

People: Christ, have mercy.

Leader: As we care for the water of life.

People: Christ, have mercy.

Leader: Glory to God in the highest!

People: And peace on the high seas!

3. Hymn of Praise

4. Prayer for the Day

Written by Frances Namoumou - Suva, Fiji

Noqu Kalou (*my Lord*)

We thank you for the gift of life, *na neimami bula kei na veika bula*.

We thank and praise you for the mystery of creation.

We know that you are in us, and we in you.

You have blessed our sisters and brothers in the Pacific

With the *vanua, fenua* and the *wasawasa, watitui, moana*

Which are bountiful and marked by great beauty.

Remind us to live in peace, (*duavata*)

And harmony with all creation.

Bring healing to our lives, that we may protect (*taqomaka*) the world and not prey on it,

That we may sow (*tea*) beauty, not pollution and destruction.

Call us to renewal (*veivakavoui*), to stewardship;

Call us to solidarity with the earth and all its creatures.

Give us new vision (*nuinui vou*) to see the fragile beauty that remains to us;

Give us new spiritual energy to become active in loving the world through our daily lives;

Give us new voices to speak out for environmental solidarity.

Bless us again with the gift of being a joyful community;

Bless us with a love of your Creation

Help us to listen to your voice, your word and your creation

EMENI

5. Scripture Readings

1. **Old Testament:** Job 38.1-18 ‘The Mysteries of Creation’ In this portrait of God creating the universe, Earth is constructed like a grand edifice, the ocean is born like a baby and restrained with boundaries, while 8 down below lie domains called the deep and the realm of the dead. Earth with its oceans is a complex of profound mysteries designed by the Creator.

2. **Psalms:** Ps. 104.24-26 ‘A World Created by Wisdom’ The whole world is formed by the Wisdom of God, thereby giving it all its integral parts, laws, design, and purpose. That world even includes domains where God ‘plays’ with wild creatures in the ocean.

3. **Epistle:** Ephesians 1.3-10 ‘The Cosmic Christ’ In Jesus the Christ, we not only face the eternal mystery of forgiveness and salvation, but also the truth that, as the cosmic one, Christ gathers all things together and unites the cosmos. The cosmic Christ fills the universe!

4. **Gospel:** Luke 5.1-11 ‘Facing the Deep’ When Peter and his friends catch no fish, Jesus asks them to take a risk and cast into ‘the deep’, the realm of the unknown. An even greater risk faces the disciples when they one day catch humans with a new message.

6. Affirmation of Faith

Leader: Let us affirm our faith together.

Women: We believe that God creates all things, renews all things and celebrates all things.

Men: We believe Earth is a sanctuary, a sacred planet filled with God’s presence, a home for us to share with our kin.

Children: We believe that God became flesh and blood, became a part of Earth, a human being called Jesus Christ, who lived and breathed and spoke among us, suffered and died on a cross, for all human beings and for all creation.

Men: We believe that the risen Jesus is the Christ at the core of creation reconciling all things to God, renewing all creation and filling the universe.

Women: We believe the Spirit renews life in creation, groans in empathy with a suffering creation, and waits with us for the rebirth of creation.

Together: We believe that with Christ we will rise and with Christ we will celebrate a new creation.

7. Bible Study/Reflection

Read Job 38.1-2 After Job’s seemingly endless cries to God about the injustice done to him, God answers by taking Job on a tour of the cosmos. He opens by challenging Job not to obscure the ‘design’ of the universe. Throughout the chapter, God explores with Job the design of numerous domains of the cosmos. Each domain has evidence of the laws or wisdom that God has implanted in that domain so that it functions as intended. The technical word for this inner character of a domain is its ‘way’. Each domain or part of creation has its ‘way’ or ‘law’, that inner code which governs how it functions.	
Read Job 38.4-7 We noted that in Genesis One the beginning of Earth is portrayed in terms of the birth of Earth from the primal waters. In Psalm 104, Earth is covered with waters before they are assigned to their place.	Discuss: What insights about the nature of Earth do you discern in this image of the

<p>In Job 38 the images are quite different. The origins of Earth are portrayed as the meticulous construction of an edifice. The first stage is the fixing of the foundations. Then follows a detailed measurement of the various components of the building. Finally the cornerstone is fixed in place and there is a celestial celebration. The heavenly beings sing for joy. The design of Earth corresponds to the construction of a major building, an artifice of the master builder, celebrated by the heavens.</p>	<p>origin of Earth? What is the significance of the celestial beings celebrating the erection of Earth? What is God's relationship to Earth in this imagery?</p>
<p>Read Job 38.8-11</p> <p>The image of the ocean in this passage is in stark contrast to what we might have expected from other parts of the Scriptures. The Hebrew word for sea is Yam, a name that referred to the god of chaos in ancient Canaan. In this passage, however, sea a baby that bursts from the womb, just as Earth emerges from water in the birth story of Genesis 1 (Gen. 1.9-10). The image of the sea as a newborn infant continues as God wraps the sea in cloths of cloud and darkness. Sea is first of all enveloped with 'clothing'. Then God places a structure around the sea—much like a playpen—to contain the child. Finally the infant sea is given a word of warning from its divine parent: You can go so far and no further! The ocean may be feared as a raging deity with 'proud waves,' but in the hands of God it is like a child. As part of God's design, the sea too has laws and limits which govern its behavior. Some passages suggest even more delightful ways in which God is linked with the sea. Psalm 104.26 speaks of the ocean as the playground where God 'plays' games with Leviathan, the great sea monster. In the sea, Leviathan is like God's beach-ball!</p>	<p>Discuss:</p> <p>How do you think the sea might respond when viewed by God as an infant or a playground? What kind of special relationship seems to exist here between God and sea?</p>
<p>Read Job 38.12-18</p> <p>God continues to take Job on a tour of the cosmos in the verses that follow. First God asks Job whether he implanted innate wisdom in the down, its knowledge of how to rise each morning and expose the wicked in their hiding places. Then God takes Job back to explore the design of the sea. Perhaps Job has a limited understanding after the earlier image of sea as a baby in its pen. For there is a dimension to sea that is enveloped in mystery, a mystery reflected in the word 'deep'. The deep of the sea is a realm Job has not plumbed, a world of amazing springs and torrents hidden below. That deep is a mystery comparable to the deep of death, another world deep below closed in by gates and dominated by darkness. A similar mystery is the vastness of Earth rising from the ocean waters. In short, this chapter of Job is about all the distinct yet mysterious 'ways' that govern each domain in the</p>	<p>Discuss:</p> <p>We have all, at some point, viewed the clouds and the images they seem to form in passing. Do we realize that those clouds are an extension of the sea? Or as Job puts it, the garment for sea? How should we relate to the ocean? Does this text suggest that the sea is more than a source of fish or a passage for navigation? What is the voice of the sea</p>

design of God’s universe. In that design, the oceans, the springs below and the torrents of rain above form a mysterious complex of interdependent forces, each with its role to play, each with its distinctive ‘way’ in the design of the cosmos.	you hear from these passages?
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8. Sending Out

Leader: Christ calls you to be his disciples, to serve him with love and compassion, to serve Earth by caring for creation to serve by caring for all creatures. Hold again the symbol in your hands and go forth to serve. Will you care for creation?

People: We will care for the ocean! We will nurture our planet! We will care for one another! We will celebrate life! Blessing

Leader: May the Spirit of God, who is above all and in all and through all, fill you with the knowledge of God’s presence on Earth and the pulsing of Christ within you. Go in peace! Serving Christ and loving Earth!

People: We go in peace, serving Christ and loving Earth.

9. Benediction

Leader: May the Spirit of God, who is above all and in all and through all, fill you with the knowledge of God’s presence on Earth and the pulsing of Christ within you. Go in peace! Serving Christ and loving Earth!

People: We go in peace, serving Christ and loving Earth.

ACTIVITIES FOR SUNDAY SCHOOL, WOMEN, YOUTH AND MEN'S GROUPS

Implement Conservation Strategies

Take the initiative as a parish/church to introduce or implement water conservation strategies either in your places of worship or within your community itself. This can either be:

1. Reviving traditional conservation methods such as having a traditional fishing ground where you place a tabu on an area in the ocean for a certain period of time.
2. Invest in water tanks to store rainwater for late use.
3. Preventing wastage of water by closing taps when not in use, repairing any pipe leakages or using small capacity flush in toilets.



Waterways Cleanup

Have your church host a coastal cleanup where you invite the whole community to

visit a river/stream or the ocean and do a massive cleanup. Collecting trash washed into those waterways and then disposing of them properly later. A good initiative to educate your children/youths on why we as custodians should always care for our environment/waterways and keep it clean.



Talanoa Discussion/Workshops

Have your parish host workshops or set up informal/formal talanoa where you invite each gender group from the community to share their experiences on the significance of water, its uses and the issues around it. Each group has their own way of conserving water through their roles and responsibilities, this is a good opportunity to share and reflect on our individual roles and collective roles as stewards of this Earth.

October 4th - St. Francis of Assisi Feast Day

Saint Francis of Assisi's (1182 - 1226) radiant spirit is a beacon for those seeking a life of meaning and service. It does no good to put him on a pedestal; rather we should walk with St. Francis on the path of peace, openness, mysticism, poverty, reverence for nature, and love of animals. The 4th of October allows us to commemorate the life of St. Francis and find ways where we too can live a life of service as stewards.

1. INTRODUCTION

The originally harmonious relationship between human beings and nature has become conflictual (Gen 3:17-19). Through universal reconciliation with every creature, Saint Francis in some way returned to the state of original innocence. In calling to mind the figure of Saint Francis of Assisi, we come to realize that a healthy relationship with creation is one of a personal conversion, recognizing our failures and leading to a heartfelt desire to change.

May the power and the light of the grace we have received also be evident in our relationship to other creatures and to the world around us. Let us help nurture that relationship with all creation which Saint Francis of Assisi so radiantly embodied. Brothers and Sisters in Francis, let us begin our Evening Prayer/Animal Blessing by uniting our hearts and voices with songs to the Lord.

2. HYMN

3. READING: GENESIS 1:20-25

And God said, "Let the waters bring forth swarms of living creatures, and let Birds fly above the earth across the dome of the sky." So God created the great sea monsters and every living creature that moves, of every kind, with which the waters swarm, and every winged Bird of every kind. And God saw that it was good. God blessed them, saying, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters in the seas, and let Birds multiply on the earth." And there was evening and there was morning, the fifth day. And God said, "Let the earth bring forth living creatures of every kind: Cattle and creeping things and wild animals of the earth of every kind." And it was so. God made the wild animals of the earth of every kind, and the cattle of every kind, and everything that creeps upon the ground of every kind. And God saw that it was good.

This is the Word of the Lord!

4. Prayer of the Day

Let us pray with Christ:

God, who makes us with the earth,

God, who gives us to the world, God;

God-with-us in our struggles:

Hear us, stand with us as we bring our fears and needs

And walk, hold hands, advise, encourage.

For the world:

What have we heard in the news this week?
Who is in need and who should give thanks?
How far have we got, and where have we stumbled?
And what seems completely beyond us?
Listen for Earth's voice: what is it saying?
We remember our neighbours, of whatever species.
We pray for our enemies, and those we fear.
And pray for peace throughout creation.
Hear us, stand with us as we bring our fears and needs
And walk, hold hands, advise, encourage.

For the church

Give thanks for the faithfulness, undergirding prayer.
Be open about continuing divisions, including local ones.
Look to a greater integration of environmental concern in our life and work.
And seek openness to the joy of deeper fellowship with all creation.
Hear us, stand with us as we bring our fears and needs
And walk, hold hands, advise, encourage.

For ourselves

In silence: bring to God what no-one else needs to hear, not for God to 'hear' but to remind ourselves that God knows and understands.
Pray for those we pray with, acknowledging and respecting what they cannot share with us.
Look for support and perseverance, and some sustaining signs when we get things right.
Pray for 'impatience' – not to simply accept 'the way things are'
And pray for peace in our heart, and the fuller joys of Christ.
Hear us, stand with us as we bring our fears and needs
And walk, hold hands, advise, encourage.
Amen.

5. PSALM READING Psalm 104

(Response: Living things both great and small)

Leader: O Lord, how many are your works! In wisdom you have made them all;

All: Living things both small and great

Leader: Yonder is the sea, great and wide, creeping things innumerable are there,

All: Living things both small and great.

Leader: These all look to you to give them their food in due season;

All: Living things both small and great.

Leader: When you send forth your spirit, they are created;

All: Living things both small and great.

6. GOSPEL READING: Matthew 6:25-34 or Luke 12:22-32

(Pause for reflection/silence)

7. BLESSING FOR ANIMALS:

(RITE FOR THE BLESSING OF WATER may be inserted here, when employed.)

Blessed are you, Lord God, maker of all living creatures. You called forth fish in the sea, birds in the air and animals on the land. You inspired St. Francis to call all of them his brothers and sisters. We ask you to bless our pets. By the power of your love, enable them to live according to your plan. May we always praise you for all your beauty in creation. Blessed are you, Lord our God, in all your creatures! Amen.”

8. HYMN: (While blessing is going on)

9. AFFIRMATION OF FAITH

We believe that God creates all things, renews all things, and celebrates all things.

We believe that Earth is a sanctuary, a sacred planet filled with God’s presence,
a home for us to share with our kin.

We believe that God became flesh and blood, became a part of Earth, a human being called Jesus,
who lived and breathed and spoke among us, suffered and died on a cross,
for all human beings and for all creation.

We believe that the risen Jesus is the Christ at the core of creation reconciling all things to God,
renewing all creation, and filling the cosmos.

We believe that the Spirit renews life in creation, groans in empathy with a suffering creation,
and waits with us for the rebirth of creation.

We believe that with Christ we will rise and with Christ we will celebrate a new creation. Amen

10. OFFERING

Prayer if signing or presenting commitments

Bless to us the sky that you placed above us
the breath that the trees have given us
the water of all life on the Earth
The minerals of which we are composed

Bless to us this commitment [mention what is being offered]

our successes and failures

Our setbacks and encouragements

For though we will not ourselves fix or save the world

With delight, we accept our place and purpose in God's/your own collaborative care,

That all that's offered indistinguishable from prayer may be seeds planted to bear much fruit.

Amen

11. SENDING:

Go as instruments of God's peace.

Where there is hatred, sow love;

Where there is injury, pardon;

Where there is discord, peace;

Where there is doubt, faith;

Where there is despair, hope;

Where there is darkness, light;

Where there is sadness, joy.

Let us go forth into the world, rejoicing in the power of the eternal Spirit of God.

Go in peace. Serve the Lord.

May we continue to walk, hold hands, advice and encourage one another.

God bless us all.