



E tū te mana o te ao: Building a Climate of Hope Faith Guide



*Religious Diversity Centre
Aotearoa New Zealand*

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ISBN Online: 978-0-473-75802-8

Mō tātou, ā, mō kā uri, ā muri ake nei
For us and for our children after us

Ko au ko te taiao, ko te taiao ko au
I am the environment and the
environment is me

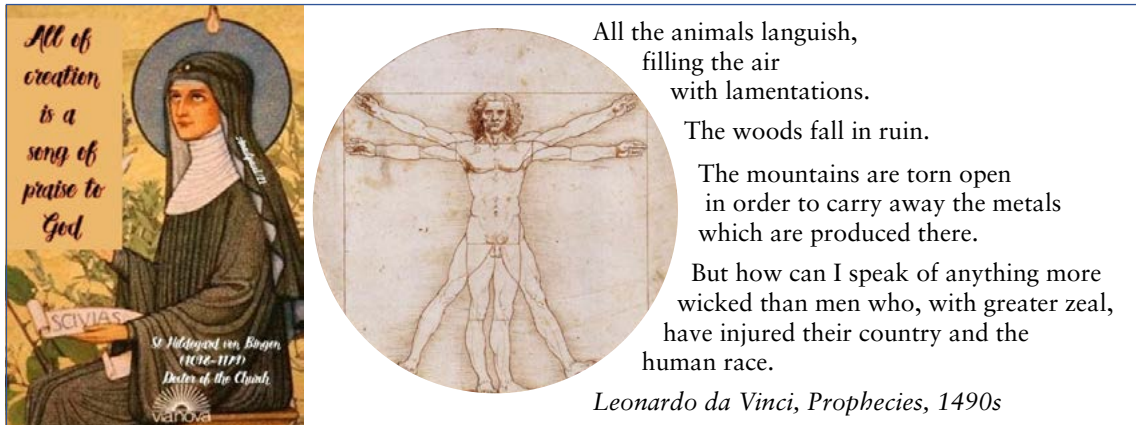
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Beliefs of Major Faiths about our relationship with Planet Earth

Introduction



In this guide, we outline some of the shared beliefs of a selection of the major religious faiths in Aotearoa New Zealand on their relationship with Planet Earth. We recognise that religious traditions are diverse, with different histories and contemporary roles in society, and these faiths have deeply engaged with their dynamic positioning on the environment. These responses to climate change are contemporary attempts to apply this religious wisdom to a rapidly changing world.

This guide acknowledges and honours *Te Tiriti o Waitangi* in the context of Aotearoa New Zealand, and includes a section on the spiritual relationship between *tangata* (people) and *whenua* (land). Indigenous communities around the world have a vast array of beliefs and practices about the interconnections between land, life, and people. Within this diversity, we have drawn on the strong thread of stewardship and care.

The purpose of this guide is to raise awareness of the beliefs of different faiths, including their declarations on existential challenges facing all humanity: these include climate change, loss of biodiversity, and sustainable development. It is not intended to be a comprehensive analysis, but rather an easily accessible resource to complement the Action Guide. We hope that knowledge of the views of each faith, and interfaith efforts globally, will inspire Faith Communities in Aotearoa New Zealand to both strengthen their own efforts on climate change and to work together on climate change action.

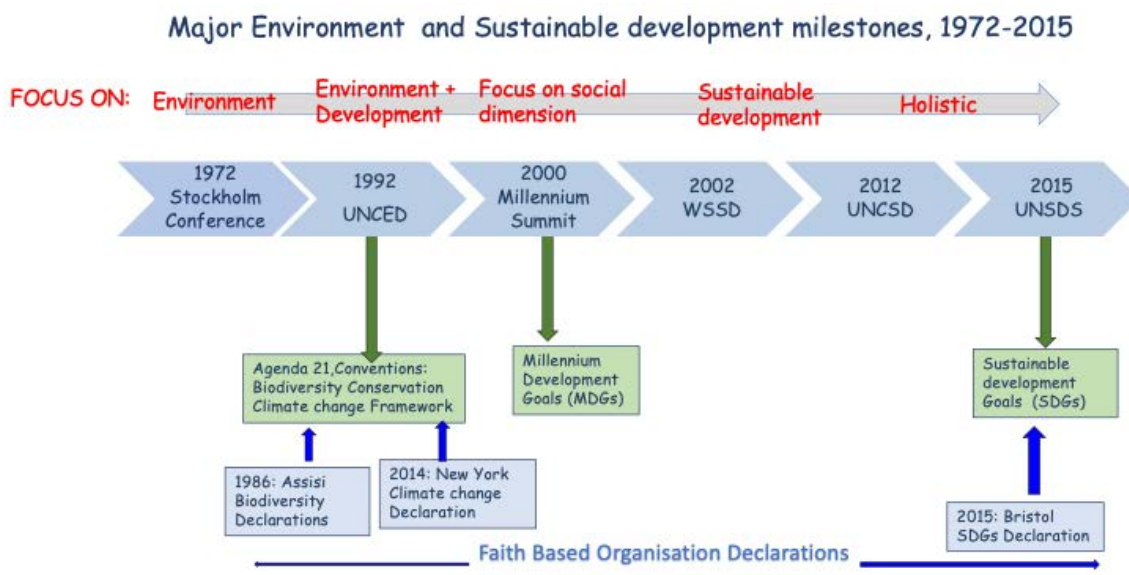
This guide is largely based on summaries from various publications from the United Nations (UN), the World Parliament of Religions, and various global interfaith meetings on biodiversity, climate change, and sustainable development.

Conceptual Framework

There is a diversity of major faiths in New Zealand,¹ with more than 150 different religious affiliations recorded in the 2023 census. Christianity (the largest groups being Roman Catholic, Anglican and Presbyterian) is the largest overall religious grouping, followed by Hinduism, Islam, Buddhism and Sikhism.² These major faiths are listed according to when they were established, to help us understand their views about our relationship with Planet Earth.

Beginning with the Stockholm Conference on the Human Environment, which led to the Rio Earth Summit in 1992, a series of global summits focused the world’s attention on the negative impacts of economic development on the Earth’s resources. The outcomes of Rio 1992: Agenda 21, the Biodiversity Conservation Convention and the Framework Convention on Climate Change, have been associated with interfaith gatherings and declarations on: biodiversity, (Assisi, 1986), climate change (New York, 2014); and UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), (Bristol, 2015). These show how concepts such as ‘oneness with nature’ and ‘stewardship of the Earth’s resources’ are expressed in the teachings of all faiths.³

These have come to the fore, enabling faith-based organisations to contribute to conversations and actions at global⁴ and local levels on our relationship with planet Earth.



Source: Nizar Mohamed (2025).

1 <https://rdc.org.nz/the-national-statement-on-religious-diversity/>
 2 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religion_in_New_Zealand
 3 See Recommended Further Reading below
 4 e.g. *Laudato Si*, 2015. See Section on “What is meant by Dominion”, p8.

Beliefs of indigenous peoples about Mother Earth

We, Guardians and Children of Mother Earth, Indigenous Peoples and allied partners, held our Second Assembly, and our prophecies, our wisdom, our insights have allowed us to see that life on Mother Earth is in danger and is coming to a time of great transformation.

Indigenous Peoples have continually taken care of Mother Earth and humanity. We wish that this can continue with the support of the people of the world.

The Indigenous prophecies place in us the responsibility to tell the world that we must live in peace with each other and Mother Earth to ensure harmony with her natural laws and with the Creation.⁵

Indigenous communities around the world have distinct views about the relationship between humans and the natural environment. In Aotearoa New Zealand, these views are best reflected by the Māori relationship with Nature:

Māori traditional beliefs — worldview⁶

*Through the union of Earth Mother and Sky Father
Who gave birth to our resources
And entrusted their care into our hands
The land and the sea
The weather and the conflicts between the elements
The forests and the birds
The animals and plants
All these treasures, given to us from the past
Are for us to manage for generations to come.*



⁵ "Faith for Earth", UNEP, 2020

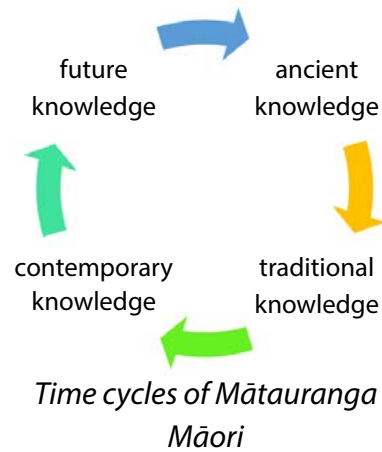
⁶ <https://onehealth.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/Harmsworth-OHA-2018.pdf>

Māori knowledge systems — Mātauranga⁷

Mātauranga is the pursuit of knowledge and comprehension of Te Taiao (the natural Environment) – it is a systematic methodology based on evidence that incorporates culture, values, and world view.

Mātauranga refers to the universal phenomena of life experienced by all living beings, not just to knowledge specific to humans. It makes no distinction between the spiritual and material worlds, which are conceived of as constantly interacting with one another.

Mātauranga embraces intergenerational continuity, drawing on the knowledge of ancestors – it allows contributions to knowledge in the present to be passed on to descendants in the future, i.e. it is dynamic, regenerative, and can evolve to respond to modern day situations.



Hinduism⁸

In some Hindu texts, the Earth is seen as a manifestation of the Divine and must be treated with respect:

Oh Earth, the giver of all that is good for us, I bow before thee.

The five elements – space, air, fire, water and earth – are the foundation of an interconnected web of life.



Dharma or duty – our responsibility to care for the earth:

The Earth, our Mother, feeds, shelters and clothes us. Without her we cannot survive. If, as children, do not care for her, we diminish her ability to care for us.

Hindu declaration on climate change⁹

We must base our response to climate change on a number of central principles...the Divine is all and all life is to be treated with reverence and respect.

7 Hikuroa, D. (2016). Mātauranga Māori—the ūkaipō of knowledge in New Zealand. *Journal of the Royal Society of New Zealand*, 47(1), 5–10. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03036758.2016.1252407>

8 "Faith for Earth," UNEP (2020)

9 <https://www.hinduamerican.org/hindu-declaration-climate-change-2015>

Climate change creates pain, suffering, and violence. Unless we change how we use energy, how we use the land, how we grow our crops, how we treat other animals, and how we use natural resources, we will only further this pain, suffering, and violence.

On a personal basis, we can reduce this suffering by beginning to transform our habits, simplifying our lives and material desires, and not taking more than our reasonable share of resources.



Hindu declaration on biodiversity¹⁰

This earth, so touchingly looked upon in the Hindu view as the Universal Mother, has nurtured mankind up from the slime of the primeval ocean for billions of years.

Let us declare our determination to halt the present slide towards destruction, to rediscover the ancient tradition of reverence for all life and, even at this late hour, to reverse the suicidal course upon which we have embarked.

Let us recall the ancient Hindu dictum: "The Earth is our mother and we are all her children."



Buddhism

The Buddha's five ethical precepts for life (*Pancha Sila*) can be interpreted as a strong framework for caring for the Earth by promoting mindfulness, respect for life, and responsible consumption, essentially advocating for a harmonious relationship with the environment and all living beings within it.

The overarching principle is non-harm or ahimsa toward all sentient beings, not just humans. The concept of *Paticca Samuppada*, or Dependent Origination, provides a framework for understanding the interconnectedness



¹⁰ "Earth and Faith", (2000); UNEP and Interfaith partnership for the Environment

of all things, including the environment. This principle highlights that nothing exists independently but rather arises in dependence on various causes and conditions, including the natural world. By recognising this interdependence, Buddhism offers a unique perspective on environmental ethics and sustainability, emphasizing responsibility and mindful interaction with nature.

The Teachings of the Buddha make it clear that the moral community includes all forms of life, and that all living things are essentially one. Therefore, the damage we are doing to the Earth is suicidal, a form of self-harm, but equally the efforts we make to protect and restore the Earth uplift all of us. Our actions matter.

The clothes we wear, the food we eat, even the air we breathe, all come from the environment. None of us are truly independent. Our responsibility is to take what scientists teach us to heart, so we actually transform our way of life. Live simply. Act with compassion. Protect the Earth. Our future depends on it.
Ogyen Trinley Dorje, Gyalwang Karmapa, Buddhist leader, 2009¹¹

*We regard our survival as an undeniable right. As co-inhabitants of this planet, other species, too, have the right of survival...let us share the conviction that conservation of the environment, the restoration of the imbalance caused by our negligence in the past, be implemented with courage and determination.*¹²

Buddhist declaration on climate change¹³

We are united by our concern to phase out fossil fuels, to reduce our consumption patterns, and the ethical imperative to act against both the causes and the impacts of climate change, especially on the world's poorest.



Buddhist declaration on biodiversity¹⁴

Our ancestors have left us a world rich in its natural resources and capable of fulfilling our needs...

There is a great danger that future generations will not know the natural habitat of animals; they may not know the



11 "Faith for Earth", (2020); See References

12 The Buddhist Declaration on Nature: Assisi 1986 (<http://www.arcworld.org/faiths1916.html?pageID=180>)

13 <https://plumvillage.org/articles/buddhist-climate-change-statement-to-world-leaders-2015>

14 Assisi Declarations in "Earth and Faith", (2000); See Recommended Further Reading below

forests and the animals which we of this generation know to be in danger of extinction.

We are the generation with the awareness of a great danger.

We are the ones with the responsibility and the ability to take steps of concrete action, before it is too late.

Judaism

Let the sea and all within it thunder, the world and its inhabitants;

Let the rivers clap their hands,

The mountains sing joyously together at the presence of the Lord

For God is coming to rule the earth;

God will rule by world justly, and its people with equity.

Psalm 98:7-9

In the teachings of Judaism, the universe is the work of the Creator: love of God means love of all his creations - plants, animals, humans, and the physical world.

God's Covenant is with humanity and with every living creature on Earth:

The Earth is the LORD'S and all that it holds, the world and its inhabitants.

Psalm 24:1

Judaism has a strong tradition of environmental responsibility, emphasising stewardship and repairing the world (Tikkun Olam). Jewish tradition also teaches Bal Tashchit — do not destroy or waste. This commandment has become central to Jewish environmental ethics.

Judaism perspectives on climate change

Many Jewish organisations and leaders have issued statements and declarations calling for action on climate change, aligning with core Jewish values and teachings. These declarations often highlight the obligation to care for the planet as a divine creation, and a responsibility to future generations through *Tikkun Olam*.

"Elijah's Covenant Between the Generations to Heal Our Endangered Earth," a letter calling for action on climate change¹⁵ says:

For the first time in the history of Humanity, we are actually moving toward the burning and devastation of the web of life on Earth by human action — the unremitting use of fossil fuels. Our children and grandchildren face deep misery and death unless we act. They have turned their hearts toward us...



15 <https://legacy4now.theshalomcenter.org/content/elijahs-covenant-new-rabbinic-statement-climate-crisis>

Judaism declaration on biodiversity¹⁶

We have a responsibility to life, to defend it everywhere, not only against our own sins but also against those of others. We are all passengers together in the same fragile and glorious world. Let us safeguard our rowboat – and let us row together.

The ignorant have compared humankind's ruling over the earth with God's rule over the heavens. This is not correct, for God rules over everything. The meaning of "but the earth He gave over to humankind" (Psalm 115:16) is that humankind is God's steward over the earth and must act according to God's word.

Rabbi Abraham ibn Ezra (c.1093–c.1167) commenting on Psalm 115.

Christianity

Diverse Christian traditions share the belief that the universe was made by the creative word of God and His redeeming love for all creation is a constant reminder that humans have a duty and responsibility to care for the well-being of His creation.



We human beings are part of the environment. We live in communion with it, since the environment itself entails ethical limits which human activity must acknowledge and respect.

Pope Francis, Address to United Nations General Assembly, 2015

Christian tradition is testimony to divinity and love flowing through the natural world:

*The soul is a breath of living spirit,
that with excellent sensitivity,
permeates the entire body to give it life.*

Just so, the breath of the air / makes the earth fruitful.

Thus the air is the soul of the earth, moistening it, greening it.

Hildegard of Bingen, 12th Century.



I welcome all creatures of the world with grace.

~ Hildegard of Bingen

Christian declaration on climate change

In "Laudato si'" and the subsequent "Laudate Deum", Pope Francis declared that:

climate change is a global problem with grave implications: environmental, social, economic, and political.... and it represents one of the principal challenges facing humanity in our day.

16 "Earth and Faith", (2000); Assisi Declarations on biodiversity UNEP and Interfaith partnership for the Environment

Christian declaration on biodiversity

In his encyclical “Laudato si”, Pope Francis addressed “every person living on this planet” and declared that:

The Earth’s resources are also being plundered because of short-sighted approaches to the economy, commerce and production. The loss of forests and woodlands entails the loss of species which may constitute extremely important resources in the future, not only for food but also for curing disease and other uses. Different species contain genes which could be key resources in years ahead for meeting human needs and regulating environmental problems.

Other significant Christian denominations have developed similar statements.

What is meant by “Dominion?”

The meaning of the word “dominion,” used in the first chapter of the Hebrew (Jewish) and Christian bibles, has long been significant for its theological and ethical implications, especially today in a time of climate crisis. Historical and contemporary understandings of the word ‘dominion’ by some Jewish and Christian sources is exemplified by the following quotes:

God said: ‘Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that creepeth upon the earth.’
(Genesis 1:28, 1917 translation.)

In the past, much of the exploitation of the Earth’s resources has been justified by this mandate in the Bible giving Man ‘dominion’ or ‘mastery’ over the Earth. However:

The word translated as “dominion” has come to mean having responsibility for the well-being of the creation, not the right to destroy it. Man’s dominion cannot be understood as license to abuse, spoil, squander or destroy what God has made to manifest His glory.¹⁷

“Laudato si” also sets out this later interpretation of “dominion”; what it has meant in the past and what it now means. Pope Francis’ view was that rather than exploit natural resources without limit, humanity has an obligation to restore “harmony between the Creator, humanity and creation as a whole.” This interpretation is about unity with nature, holistic approaches, and guardianship of the Earth and its resources.

¹⁷ Klaus Töpfer, Executive Director, UNEP, in a speech to the World Council of Churches, 31 October 1999, quoted in “Earth and Faith”.

Aspects of Laudato si' and Laudate Deum

WHAT IS HAPPENING TO OUR COMMON HOME

summarises the scope of current problems related to the environment. Issues discussed include pollution, climate change, water scarcity, loss of biodiversity and global equality.

THE GOSPEL OF CREATION

The Genesis creation stories in the Bible are interpreted as enjoining responsible cultivation and protection of nature. The natural world is portrayed as a gift, a message, and a common inheritance of all people.

THE HUMAN ROOTS OF THE ECOLOGICAL CRISIS

Explores social trends and ideologies that have caused environmental problems, including the unreflective use of technology, an impulse to manipulate and control nature, a view of humans as separate from their environment, narrowly-focused economic theories, and moral relativism.

INTEGRAL ECOLOGY

Integral ecology is presented as the main solution to the climate crisis. It affirms that humans are part of a broader world and urges us to consider the ethical and spiritual dimensions of how humans are meant to relate to each other and the natural world - drawing on culture, family, community, virtue, religion, and respect for the common good.

LINES OF APPROACH

This applies the concept of integral ecology to political life. It calls for international agreements to protect the environment and assist low-income countries, new national and local policies, inclusive and transparent decision-making, and an economy ordered to the good of all.

ECOLOGICAL EDUCATION AND SPIRITUALITY

Recommends a personal lifestyle focused less on consumerism and more on timeless, enduring values. It calls for environmental education, joy in one's surroundings, civic love, reception of the sacraments, and an "ecological conversion" in which an encounter with Jesus leads to deeper communion with God, other people, and the world of nature.

THE GLOBAL CLIMATE CRISIS

Pope Francis is critical of climate denialism and insistent on the urgency of taking action for the worsening crisis, saying what is required of us is "a certain responsibility for the legacy we will leave behind, once we pass from this world."

A GROWING TECHNOCRATIC PARADIGM

Our obsession with growth and progress is working against us. "The mentality of maximum gain at minimal cost, disguised in terms of reasonableness, progress and illusory promises, makes impossible any sincere concern for our common home and any real preoccupation about assisting the poor and the needy discarded by our society.

THE WEAKNESS OF INTERNATIONAL POLITICS

Francis exposes the self-interest and lack of care that is inherent in current multilateral power structures. Instead, we need power to come from the ground up. "It is no longer helpful for us to support institutions in order to preserve the rights of the more powerful without caring for those of all."

CLIMATE CONFERENCES: PROGRESS & FAILURES

Francis notes the agreements made at previous COP climate and biodiversity conferences, to loss and damage adaptation support to a commitment to transition to renewable energy. None have been implemented, despite much discussion at the time about them.

WHAT TO EXPECT FROM COP28 IN DUBAI?

The timing of Laudate Deum suggests it is directly aimed at the delegates at the COP28 climate conference in Dubai. We will only know COP28 has been a success if there is a binding agreement to a just transition that is drastic, intense, and demands the commitment of all nations.

SPIRITUAL MOTIVATIONS

A reminder that God "has united us to all his creatures" and to the world in which we live, therefore we must care for it. Francis urges individual action to cut down our carbon footprint as a way to transform society but recognises that the big change must come from political decisions. He ends: "Praise God" which is the title of this letter. For when human beings claim to take God's place, they become their own worst enemies."

Islam

The Qur'an affirms that God:

- is the one Creator and Sovereign of the universe,
- has willed its right order and balance,
- and that all beings (not only humans) praise and glorify God.

God has also entrusted the care and guardianship of Earth, Khalifa, to human beings to be good stewards caring for God's creation, which we must not damage or waste.



Corruption has spread on land and sea as a result of what people's hands have done, so that Allah may cause them to taste "the consequences of" some of their deeds and perhaps they might return "to the Right Path".

Qur'an, Surah Ar-Rum 30: 41

- **Khalifa or stewardship** – Islam teaches that God created humans to be guardians of His creation, i.e., nature does not belong to us to do with as we wish but is entrusted by God to us for safe-keeping.
- **Tawheed or unity** – the central tenet of Islam is that God's unity is reflected in the unity of humanity and nature. We are obliged to maintain the integrity of the Earth, its flora and fauna, its wildlife and environment. We have a responsibility to keep balance and harmony in His creation.
- **Akhirah or eternal life** – Islam teaches that there is accountability, so we will one day be judged by God on how we have discharged our responsibilities following the guidance of Islam.

*Islamic declaration on climate change*¹⁸

We face the distinct possibility that our species, chosen to be God's caretaker (Khalifa) of the Earth, could be responsible for ending life as we know it on our planet. This current rate of climate change cannot be sustained, and the earth's fine balance (mizān) may soon be lost. We call on other faith groups to join us in collaboration, co-operation and friendly competition in this endeavor, as we can all be winners in this race.



18 The Islamic Leaders Climate Change Declaration (2015)

Islamic declaration on biodiversity¹⁹

- Unity, trusteeship and accountability, that is *tawheed*, *khalifa* and *Akhirah*, three central concepts of Islam, are also the pillars of the environmental ethics of Islam. They constitute the basic values taught by the Qur'an.
- It is these values which led Muhammad, the Prophet of Islam, to say: "Whoever plants a tree and diligently looks after it until it matures and bears fruit is rewarded", and:
- "If a Muslim plants a tree or sows a field and men and beasts and birds eat from it, all of it is charity on his part", and again, "The world is green and beautiful and God has appointed you his stewards over it."



Sikhism

The Lord infused His Light into the dust, and created the world, the universe. The sky, the earth, the trees, and the water – all are the Creation of the Lord.²⁰

The Sikh scripture declares that the purpose of human beings is to achieve a blissful state and be in harmony with the earth and all creation.

We are called to the vision of Guru Nanak which is a world society comprising God-conscious human beings who have realised God. To these spiritual beings, the earth and the universe are sacred; all life is unity, and their mission is the spiritualisation of all. Guru Nanak laid the foundation of Sikhism in the late fifteenth century. His writings, those of other human Gurus who succeeded him, and other spiritual leaders, are included in the scripture.

Guru Granth Sahib (SGGS), primary scripture of Sikhism, 1604.²¹



Sikh statement on climate change²²

Our Mother Earth, Mata Dharat, has gone through undeniable changes at the hands of humans. It is abundantly clear that our action has caused

19 "Earth and Faith", (2000); UNEP and Interfaith partnership for the Environment

20 Guru Granth Sahib, Ang 723.

21 <https://ecosikh.org/environmental-theology-in-sikhism/>

22 <https://ecosikh.org/sikh-statement-on-climate-change/>

great damage to the atmosphere and is projected to cause even more damage if left unhandled. Since 1980, the average temperature of the earth's surface has increased drastically. Glaciers and Arctic ice are melting, and sea levels are rising – threatening plant and animal species and hurting the poor people of the world first. As Sikhs, we appeal to lawmakers, faith leaders, and citizens of the world to take concrete action toward reducing carbon emissions and protecting the environment. And as Sikhs we pledge to take concrete actions ourselves. We have a responsibility to follow our Gurus' teachings and protect the vulnerable.



Sikh statement on biodiversity

In the Sikh faith, all of the earth's biodiversity, including wild animals, birds, and plants are considered to be a creative play of the Divine. The unseen cosmic force both creates all life, all species, all beings, all forms, both on land and on water and sustains and nurtures them:

There are beings and creatures in the water and on the land, in the worlds and universes, form upon form Whatever they say, You know; You care for them all.
(SGGS 466)



In Sikhism, among all creatures, humans are endowed with the unique capacity to merge their consciousness with the Creator's. Still, the Gurus also recognise all species are in constant remembrance of the Divine which allows them to act in accordance with their inner nature:

Mortals, forests, blades of grass, animals and birds all meditate on the Divine.
(SGGS 455).

Bahá'í

*The earth is but one country and mankind its citizens.
Be anxiously concerned with the needs of the age ye live in...
Nature is God's Will and is its expression in and through the contingent world.
When... thou dost contemplate the innermost essence of all things, and the individuality of each, thou wilt behold the signs of thy Lord's mercy in every created thing, and see the spreading rays of His Names and Attributes throughout all the realm of being...*

Bahá'u'lláh (1817-1892), Founder of Bahá'í

We cannot segregate the human heart from the environment outside us and say that once one of these is reformed everything will be improved. Man is organic with the world. His inner life moulds the environment and is itself also deeply affected by it. The one acts upon the other and every abiding change in the life of man is the result of these mutual reactions.”

Shoghi Effendi, 1933²³



*Bahá'í declaration on climate change*²⁴

A more balanced attitude toward the environment must therefore address human conditions as consciously as it does natural ones. It must be embodied in social norms and patterns of action characterised by justice and equity. On this foundation can be built an evolving vision of our common future together.

COP 21, for example, can be understood as an opportunity to embrace more deeply the practical implications of the oneness of humanity, including the obligation to translate our moral responsibility toward one another and the natural world into tangible agreements, approaches, and plans of action.

*Bahá'í declaration on biodiversity*²⁵

Nature in its essence is the embodiment of My Name, the Maker, the Creator. Its manifestations are diversified by varying causes, and in this diversity there are signs for men of discernment. Nature is God's Will and is its expression in and through the contingent world. It is a dispensation of Providence ordained by the Ordainer, the All-Wise.

Bahá' u'lláh

Look not upon the creatures of God except with the eye of kindness and of mercy, for Our loving providence hath pervaded all created things, and Our grace encompassed the earth and the heavens.

Bahá' u'lláh

23 The Guardian of the Bahá'í Faith (from 1922 to 1957) and great grandson of Bahá' u'lláh.

24 Excerpts from Baha'i statement on climate change at COP21, Paris 2015

25 Baha'i statement on Nature, Bahá'í International Community 1987

Conclusion

As shown in this guide, there is a diversity of religious traditions in Aotearoa New Zealand, with a common thread of concern around care for our natural environment.

Caring for the Earth

The excerpts highlighted in this brief guide indicate that among the common threads linking all faiths and indigenous cultures are some of the spiritual principles that can guide peoples' interactions with the natural world.

These spiritual principles also reflect the three-way relationship for Māori between *Atua* (God/Spirit), *Tangata* (People), and *Whenua* (Earth).

Unity

The idea of unity between humans and the natural world is expressed by indigenous cultures around the world, and by Mātauranga Māori here in Aotearoa.

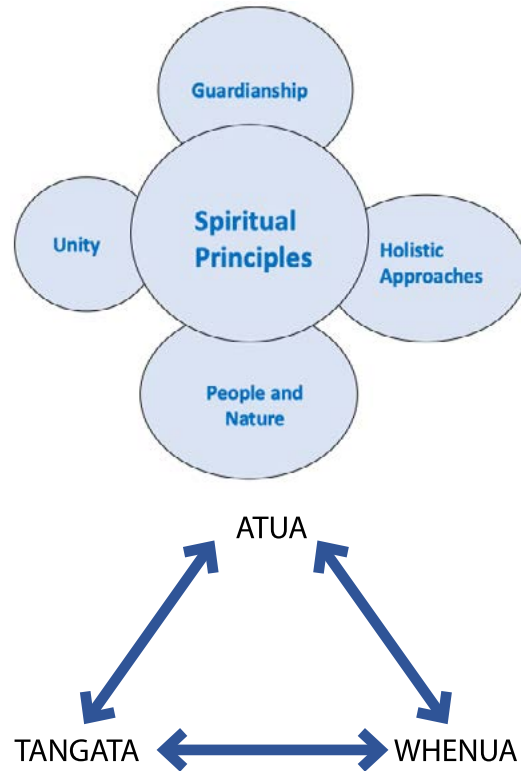
The concept of unity is also expressed by the common elements about humanity's interdependent relationship with the Earth, found across Faiths.

Holistic or systems approaches

A holistic view of humanity's relationship with Nature is common to indigenous cultures and beliefs, and all the faiths outlined here see humanity's connection with Nature as sacred.

The importance of holistic approaches to humanity's relationship with Nature is becoming increasingly recognised in the scientific community. For example, see recent publications by the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES), an international organisation for science and policy for people and nature, which advocates for the application of systems methodologies to analyse interlinkages between Nature and Human society in a holistic manner.²⁶

26 A recent publication illustrates modern scientific perspectives on holistic or systems approaches: *Summary for Policymakers of the Thematic Assessment Report on the Underlying Causes of Biodiversity Loss and the Determinants of Transformative Change*. IPBES (2024) <https://www.ipbes.net/transformative-change-assessment>



Source: Nizar Mohamed (2025)

Guardianship

The concept of guardianship or stewardship is intrinsic to indigenous cultures from around the world.

It is also found in religious texts across different faiths, and has come to the fore since the Brundtland Report in 1987²⁷ and the Rio Earth Summit in 1992, which emphasise the greater need for climate change action, biodiversity conservation and sustainable development.



Guardianship is demonstrated in the Māori concept of kaitiakitanga, the idea that the current generation has an obligation to guard and protect the environment in order to respect our ancestors, and to ensure its protection for the benefit of future generations.

Recommended Further Reading

Apostolic exhortation *laudate deum* of the Holy Father Francis to all people of good will on the climate crisis (2023). https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/20231004-laudate-deum.html

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