

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



Religious Diversity Centre
Aotearoa New Zealand

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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

FOREWORD: Rt. Hon. Helen Clark	4
PREFACE: Dr. Paul Blaschke	5
About the authors.....	6
PART ONE:	
BELIEFS OF MAJOR FAITHS ABOUT OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH PLANET EARTH	
Introduction	9
Conceptual Framework.....	10
Beliefs of indigenous peoples about Mother Earth	11
Māori knowledge systems — Mātauranga	12
Hinduism	12
Hindu declaration on climate change	13
Hindu declaration on biodiversity	13
Buddhism	13
Buddhist declaration on climate change.....	14
Buddhist declaration on biodiversity.....	14
Judaism	15
Judaism perspectives on climate change	15
Judaism declaration on biodiversity	16
Christianity.....	16
Christian declaration on climate change.....	16
Christian declaration on biodiversity	17
What is meant by “Dominion?”	17
Aspects of Laudato si’ and Laudate Deum	18
Islam	19
Islamic declaration on climate change.....	19
Islamic declaration on biodiversity	19
Sikhism	20
Sikh statement on climate change	20
Sikh statement on biodiversity	21
Bahá’í.....	22
Bahá’í declaration on climate change.....	22
Bahá’í declaration on biodiversity	22
Conclusion	23
Caring for the Earth	23
Unity.....	23
Holistic or systems approaches.....	23
Guardianship.....	24
Recommended Further Reading	24

PART TWO: ACTION GUIDE

Introduction	26
What is the climate crisis?	26
Why the climate crisis matters.....	29
Current efforts to respond to the rapidly changing climate.....	30
Why does climate change matter to faith communities?.....	32
What can individuals and faith communities do?	34
Finding hope.....	35
Awareness	37
Learning opportunities	37
Climate denial and greenwashing	40
Advocacy	41
Why advocate?	41
Submissions	42
Petitions and visits	42
Actions and activism	42
Act collectively	43
Hold the public and private sectors accountable	46
Conservation projects	46
Community gardens	47
Actions for individuals and households.....	47
Further resources.....	52
Free newsletters and websites	52
Helpful books and published articles	53
Some technical terms	54

Foreword

Rt. Honourable Helen Clark

This Climate Action Teaching Guide has come at just the right time. For some time now, many New Zealanders have been aware that climate change will affect every dimension of our lives. The collective will to respond to climate change as an existential crisis, however, has not kept pace with this awareness. Even our experiences of devastating extreme weather events like Cyclone Gabrielle have not ensured that the climate crisis is front and centre of policy discussion and decision-making. A major shift in the minds of policy makers will not occur until committed citizens at all levels of civil society make it clear that this must happen.

The Religious Diversity Centre Aotearoa sees taking action for climate justice as a moral imperative of our times. In taking action, New Zealanders can draw on the wisdom of nearly every major faith tradition in the world, since New Zealand is one of the most religiously diverse nations in the world today. Indeed, part one of this Teaching Guide illustrates how humanity conceives its relationship with the Earth in each major faith tradition, and how people of faith are able to live in harmony with the earth and one another.

The second part of the Teaching Guide – the climate action guide – illustrates how many faith communities are already beacons of hope, and how important it is at this juncture in human history for all faith communities to provide leadership in the “triple As” of climate crisis engagement: awareness, advocacy, and action. We can look to many faith communities already engaged in significant projects of climate action, like habitat projects to restore native biodiversity, guides for families and faith institutions to reduce their individual emissions, and community gardens to assist with food security. Communities of faith are also passionate advocates for justice for vulnerable people in our society and our broader Pacific neighbourhood.

This Teaching Guide draws on the wisdom of Mātauranga Māori which provides an important framework for climate action in Aotearoa. Principles of interdependence and balance between nature and humanity must be the basis for what we do. This climate action Teaching Guide points out the compatibility between indigenous worldviews and our faith traditions.

From successful social movements like the nuclear-free movement, we know that impetus for social change arises from local communities. There, the energies of people are harnessed to make transformative changes in attitudes and behaviour. Collaboration between like-minded organisations must occur now if New Zealanders are to see the climate crisis as a national emergency. This Teaching Guide illustrates all the practical ways that faith communities are engaged in the triple As of awareness, advocacy and action to make this happen, and to give us hope for the future.

Preface

Dr. Paul Blaschke

Human-induced climate change is an existential challenge for our times. We need “realistic hope” to face this challenge successfully: that is why we refer to “a climate of hope” in our title. But how do we do this? And what resources do people of faith need to support and guide our thinking and acting in pursuit of this sacred task?

This guide to climate awareness and action was developed to assist leaders and members of faith communities, both individually and collectively. It was written by members of the Climate Action Group of the Religious Diversity Centre Aotearoa (RDC), which is a national centre of educational research excellence dedicated to fostering appreciation and understanding of religious diversity among all New Zealanders.

By way of background, the Climate Action Group made a presentation to the RDC Religious Leaders’ Forum in late 2024. The religious leaders present gave their mandate for the group to continue this work and expressed the need for more resources to support climate action.

These two complementary guides are the outcome of their request. They provide introductions to these broad issues and include references and links to further information. The two guides can be read independently or together.

The *faith guide* provides a summary of the spiritual foundations of the major faiths relevant to climate action and sustainable development. The action guide provides an introduction to the issues of climate change and the things that people can do about climate change. The guides are intended primarily for people of diverse faiths in Aotearoa New Zealand, and people interested in religious and faith traditions in Aotearoa New Zealand. We base our work first on the indigenous knowledge of Māori as tangata whenua of our country, on the interconnectedness of people and nature, as well as scientific knowledge and of course the wisdom of both ancient and more modern faith traditions. We also recognise the close faith links between Aotearoa New Zealand and the many small Pacific Island countries who are so threatened by climate change, and hope that the guides will be relevant to people of faith in those countries.

The Climate Action Group acknowledges with thanks:

- Our esteemed peer reviewers Ms. Catherine Gibbs, Prof. James Renwick, Ven Amala Wrightson, Dr. Jenny Te Paa Daniel and all the RDC Trustees for valuable advice and comments on the draft guides
- The Rt Hon Helen Clark, patron of the Religious Diversity Centre Aotearoa, for writing the Foreword
- Robert Gibb for copy editing and Liz MacNeill of TypeMatters (Palmerston North) for formatting and layout
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About the authors

Dr. Nizar Mohamed (lead author of the Faith Guide) lives in *Tāmaki Makaurau* Auckland. He is from Kenya and a member of the Bahá'í Faith. Nizar has worked for over 50 years on sustainable development issues in 59 countries, with six UN agencies, the New Zealand Aid Programme, and Non Governmental Organisations (NGOs). As someone who grew up in a multi-faith environment and worked and lived in countries of all the major faiths, he has personal experience and understanding of many diverse faiths. Nizar has a particular interest in the relationship of different faiths with the Earth, from teaching courses on the spiritual dimensions of sustainable development at the Bahá'í Institute of Higher Education since 2019. He was a member of the New Zealand delegation to the Rio Earth Summit in 1992 and helped to negotiate Agenda 21, one of the main outcomes of this Conference.

Dr. Richard Milne (lead author of the Action Guide) lives in *Ōtautahi* Christchurch. Richard is an active member of a progressive Christian church and Ōtautahi Quakers. His diverse professional and academic life in Aotearoa NZ, the US and the UK has included applied physics, neuroscience research, and economic modelling. Richard was co-creator of a workshop on climate change in Holy Trinity Cathedral Auckland in 2006 and subsequently co-convenor of the Auckland Anglican Climate Action Network where he engaged in climate education, advocacy and activism for over 15 years. He loves science, the Southern Alps and other people's cats and dogs.

Dr. Paul Blaschke (Convenor of the RDC Climate Action Group) lives in *Te Whanganui-a-Tara* Wellington. He is an active member and past Board Chair of Temple Sinai Progressive Jewish Congregation, Wellington. Now retired from professional work, Paul was most recently a researcher on nature-based climate change adaptation, and formerly a wide-ranging independent environmental consultant, researcher, policy analyst and environmental studies teacher. He is still active in numerous environmental groups in Wellington. Paul is active in Jewish and interfaith environmental advocacy and action as a response to the huge social and environmental issues of our current world.

Dr. Mary Eastham QSM (Secretary of the RDC Climate Action Group) lives in *Te Papa-i-Oea* Palmerston North. She is Catholic. Mary was born in the United States and educated at the Catholic University of America in Washington DC. She has lived in New Zealand since 1993. Mary is a Trustee of the Religious Diversity Centre Aotearoa. She is currently on the steering committee of the Diocesan Commission for Justice, Peace, Ecology and Development. From 2011 until 2022, Mary was a member of the New Zealand Catholic Bishops' Committee for Interfaith Relations and chaired the Palmerston North Interfaith Group. This Interfaith Group distinguished itself for its many programmes

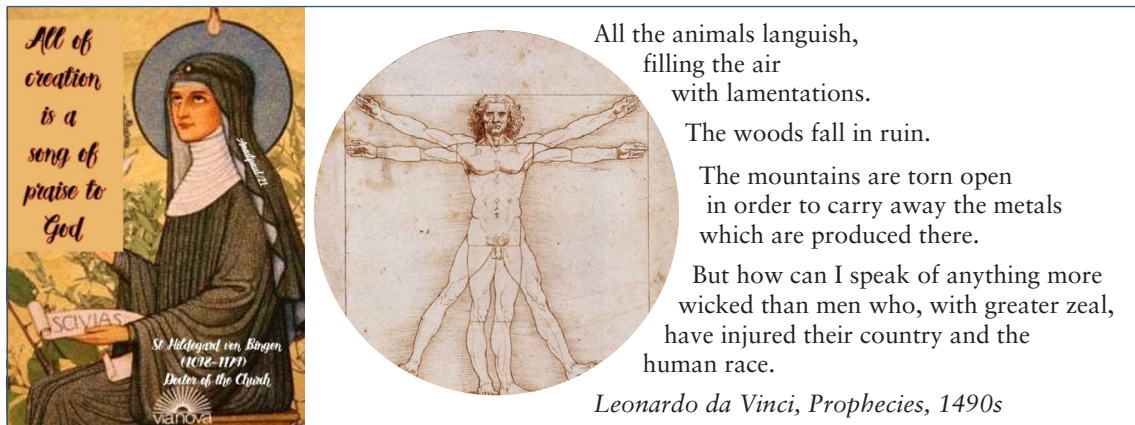
on education about the climate crisis and community events in climate action and climate justice. Mary was awarded QSM in the King's Birthday Honours' List in 2023 for her interfaith work.

Philippa Fletcher (Revell) lives in *Te Whanganui-a-Tara* Wellington. She is 'Climate Emergency Correspondent' for Te Hāhi Tūhauwiri Religious Society of Friends Aotearoa New Zealand (Quakers). Philippa's antecedents all arrived in Aotearoa NZ prior to 1890, seeking a better life for themselves, others, and their descendants. Philippa is seeking the same thing, and is using qualifications and experience in economics, international development, dispute resolution, mental health and public policy to try to be faithful to this calling.

PART ONE

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.

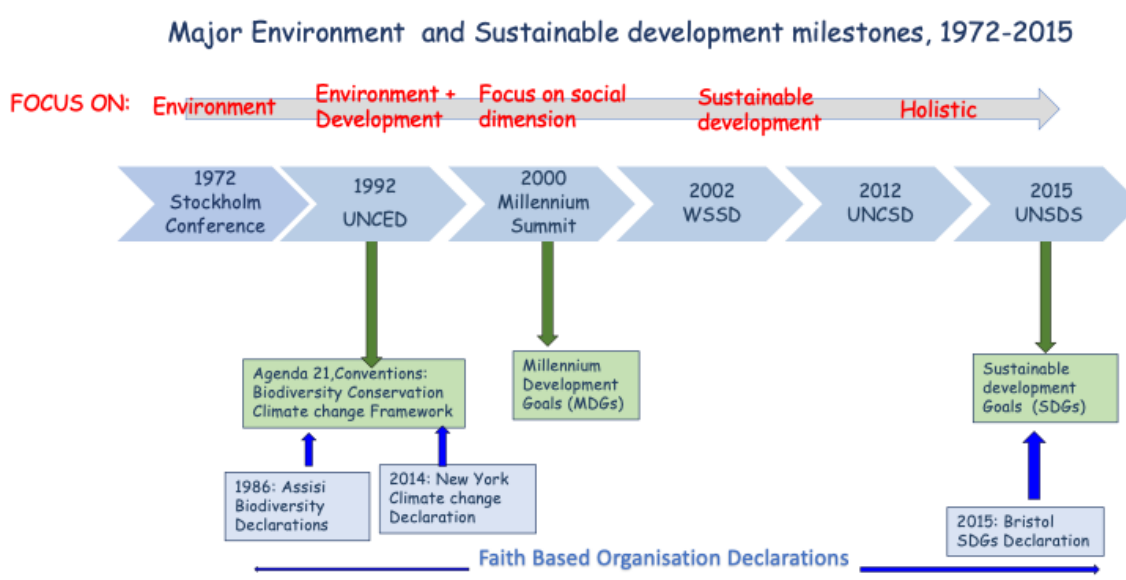
This guide is largely based on summaries from various publications from the United Nations (UN), the World Parliament of Religions, and various global interfaith meetings on biodiversity, climate change, and sustainable development.

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

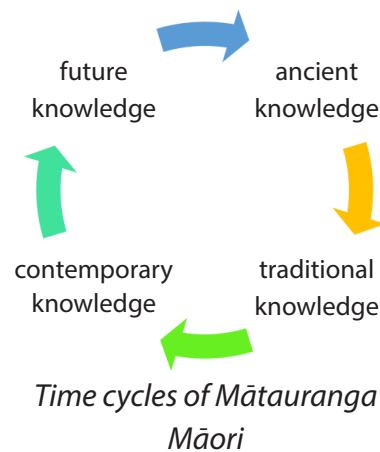
6 <https://onehealth.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/Harmsworth-OHA-2018.pdf>

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 the 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 unrelenting 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

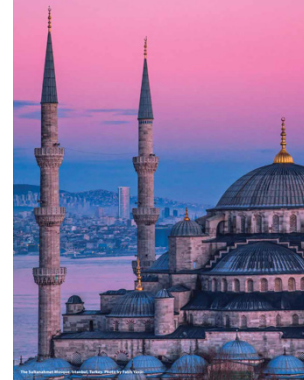
A reminder that God "has united us to all his creatures" and to the world in which we live, therefore we must care for it. Francis urges individual action to cut down our carbon footprint as a way to transform society but recognises that the big change must come from political decisions. He ends: "Praise 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 change¹⁸

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 change²⁴

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 biodiversity²⁵

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 kindliness 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.

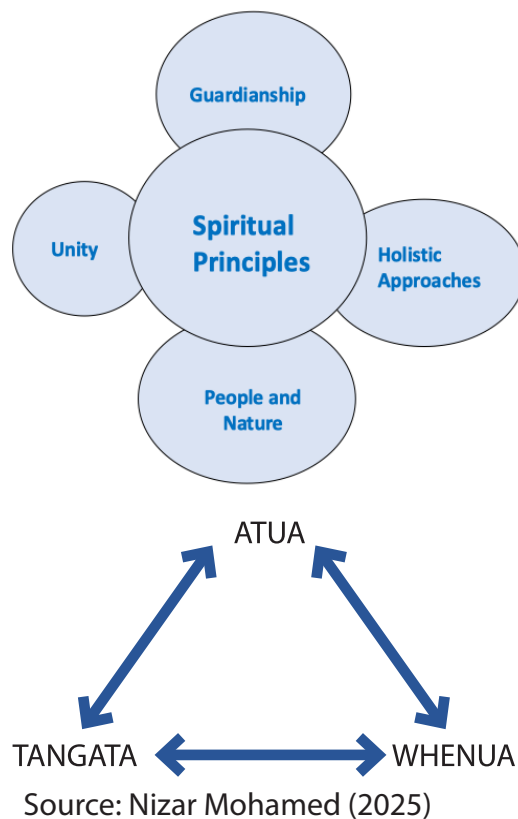
The concept of unity is also expressed by the common elements about humanity's interdependent relationship with the Earth, found across Faiths.

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>



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

Earth and Faith (2000): UNEP and Interfaith Partnership for the Environment. <https://www.unep.org/resources/report/earth-and-faith-book-reflection-action>

Encyclical letter *laudato si'* of the Holy Father Francis on care for our common home (2015). https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html

Environment, Religion and Culture in the Context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, (2016) United Nations Environment Program (UNEP). <https://www.unep.org/resources/report/environment-religion-and-culture-context-2030-agenda-sustainable-development>

Faith Action on UN Sustainable Development Goals, Progress and outlook (2020). UNEP. <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/3895334?v=pdf>

Faith for Earth – A call for Action (2020), UNEP and Parliament of the World's Religions. <https://parliamentofreligions.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/Faith-for-Earth-A-Call-for-Action.pdf>

Faith for Earth – Brief (2018): UNEP Foresight Brief. https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/25452/Foresight_008_201805.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y

Faith in the Future: The Bristol Commitments (2015). Alliance of Religions and Conservation (ARC) and UNDP. <http://www.arcworld.org/projects/b140.html?projectID=661>

27 “Our Common Future”, Report of the Brundtland Commission, 1987.

PART TWO

Action Guide

Introduction

What is the climate crisis?

The climate has always been changing, but the changes we are seeing now are different and human activity is the main cause. Global average surface temperatures of the atmosphere and oceans are rising, with a rate of change that is unprecedented over the last 800,000 years.

The authoritative Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), representing 195 nations, tells us:

Human activities, principally through emissions (discharges into air) of greenhouse gases, have unequivocally caused global warming, with global surface temperature reaching 1.1°C above 1850-1900 temperatures in 2011-2020. Global greenhouse gas emissions have continued to increase, with unequal historical and ongoing contributions arising from unsustainable energy use, land use and land-use change, lifestyles and patterns of consumption and production across regions, between and within countries, and among individuals. https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/syr/downloads/report/IPCC_AR6_SYR_SPM.pdf

Figure 1 shows how average global surface temperatures have increased in step with rising carbon dioxide levels since the early 20th century.

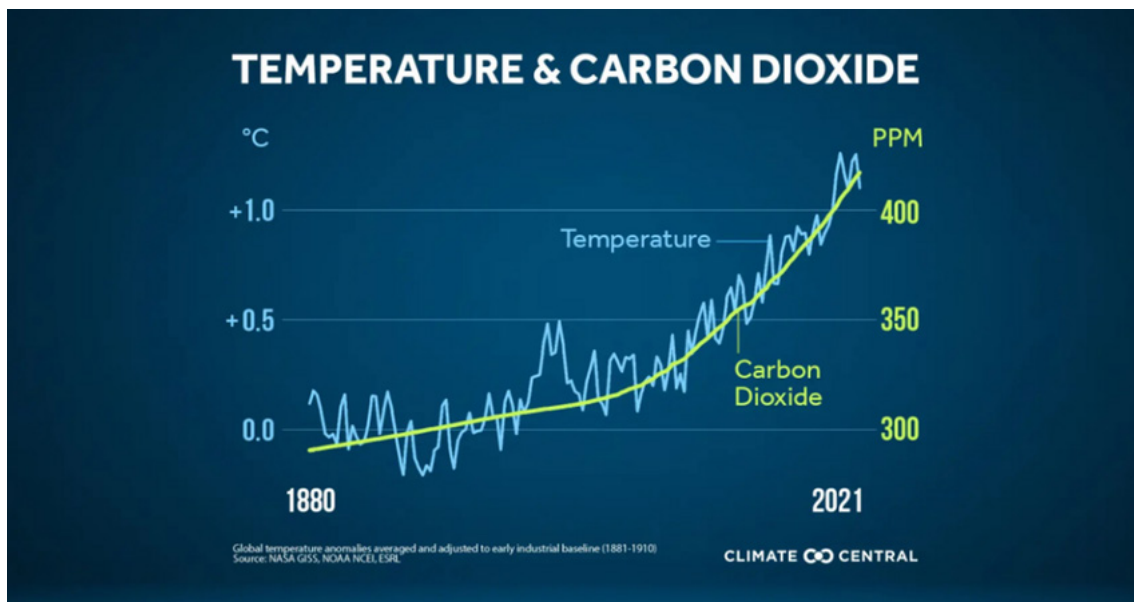


Figure 1. The mean surface temperature of the Earth since the 1880s, showing changes ('temperature anomalies') compared to the 1881 to 1910 average. Atmospheric carbon dioxide levels are also shown. Özbay, Nimet & Toker, Selma. (2024). *Stochastic Environmental Research and Risk Assessment*. 38. 1-18. 10.1007/s00477-023-02583-1.

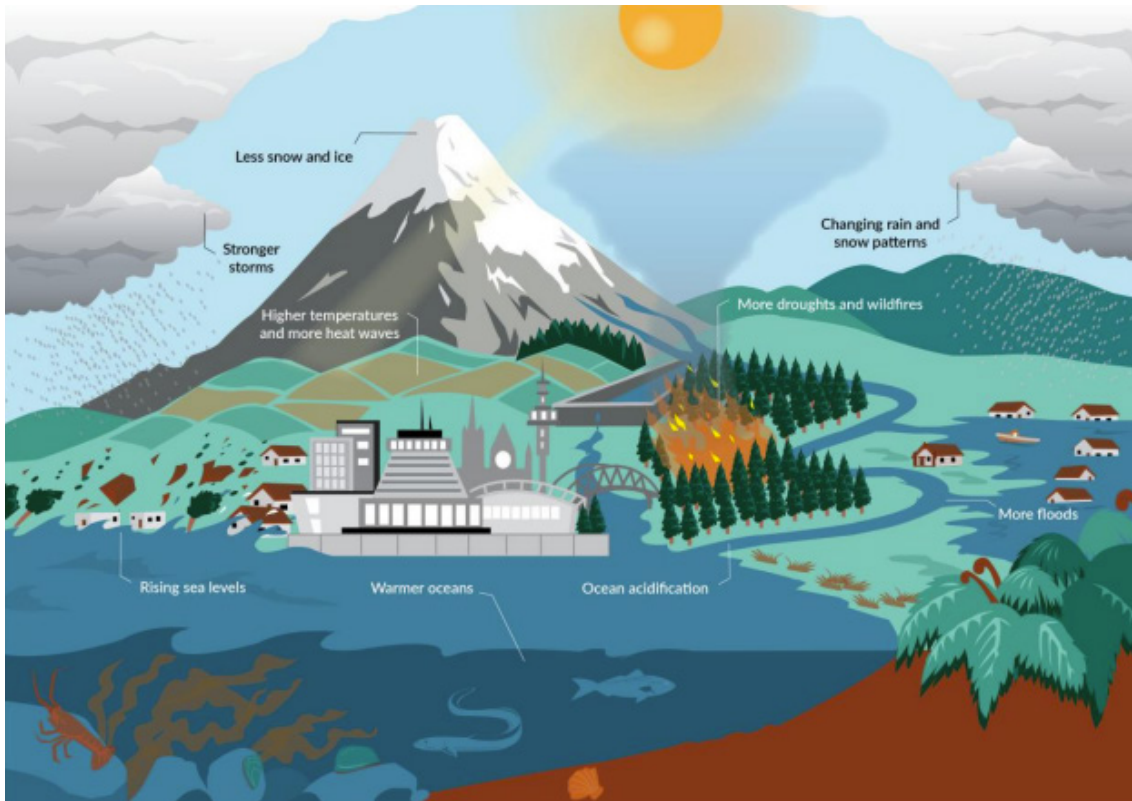


Figure 2. Summary of the physical impacts of climate change on Aotearoa New Zealand.

The year 2024 was the hottest year on record and the first year in which Earth's surface was more than 1.5 degrees Celsius (1.5°C) above its average during the preindustrial era (<https://wmo.int/publication-series/state-of-global-climate-2024>). Hotter air contributes to more frequent and longer lasting heat waves, bringing heat stress, wildfires and droughts. Because warmer air holds more moisture than colder air and releases it unevenly, rainfall is becoming more extreme and localised flash flooding is becoming more common. Warming of oceans and melting of glaciers and polar ice causes sea levels to rise, which is making some coastal land uninhabitable, especially in Pacific Islands (Figure 2). All of these phenomena threaten human and animal health and food supplies as well as biodiversity (the variety of all living things and their interactions).

According to the IPCC, even warming of 1.5°C would expose nearly 1 billion people to water stress and desertification, cost an estimated \$US63 billion in adaptation and residual damages to major crops, and put 14% of the world's species at risk of extinction. About 24% more people would face flooding compared to historical levels, coral reefs would decline by 70-90%, and, the distribution of malaria would expand. Extreme heat waves are already causing thousands of deaths (<https://www.wri.org/insights/1-5-degrees-c-target-explained>).

These effects surely constitute a crisis. With every additional fraction of a degree of warming, the impacts become harder or even impossible to adapt to. The climate crisis

is a dominant aspect of serious breakdown of Earth systems, and we are all part of this system.

Climate scientists tell us that global heating of the atmosphere and oceans is caused mostly by burning fossil fuels (coal, oil and natural gas) which release carbon dioxide, methane and other “greenhouse gases” (GHGs) into the atmosphere, which trap heat. In addition, changes in land use such as forest removal (deforestation), and methane emissions caused by cattle, sheep, deer and other grazing animals warm the Earth.

The richest 10% in the world are responsible for about half of all carbon emissions, as shown in Figure 3. That 10% includes most people in Aotearoa New Zealand.

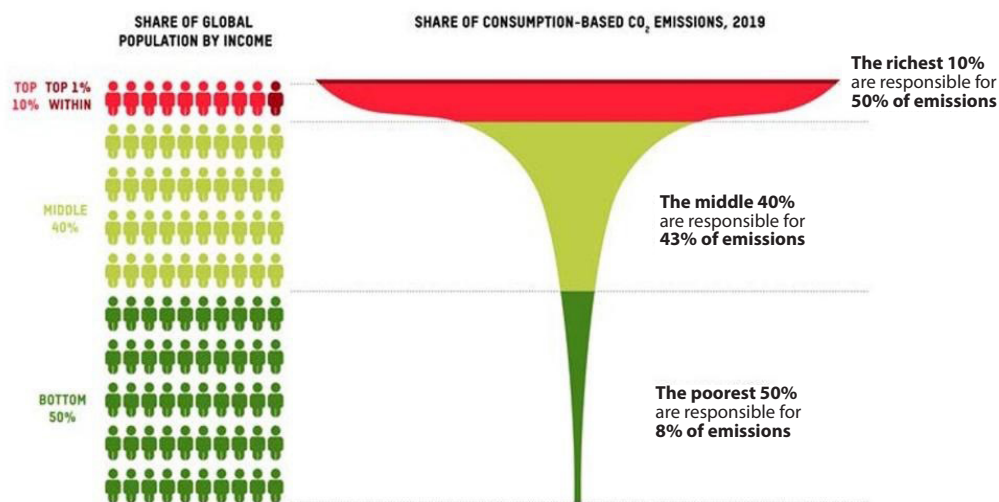


Figure 3. Who emits the most carbon?

<https://earth.org/global-carbon-emissions-richest-1-match-emissions-of-5-billion-people/>

The climate crisis is accompanied by environmental degradation and loss of the biodiversity which is the basis of our food chain. These phenomena are caused by the following:

- over-consumption by developed countries of energy, oil/plastics, food, fibre/fashion
- over-use of fossil fuels (coal, oil and gas) which produce greenhouse gases (GHGs) when they are burned or when gas leaks from pipes, or methane flares from oil and gas facilities
- extraction of minerals and fossil fuels
- transport, industry and industrial agriculture
- lack of care for the land, water, atmosphere and oceans
- land use changes such as deforestation
- over-use of fertilisers (nitrogen and phosphorus), herbicides, fungicides, etc.
- industrial monocrops like palm kernel and maize

- marketing, which encourages consumption of goods and services that we might not need
- pollution and waste
- political and social upheaval (wars, migration)
- population growth; noting however that growth is slower in wealthy countries but that people in poorer countries use fewer resources

The climate crisis is closely linked to where we get energy and how we use it. The more coal, oil and gas we burn, the more we heat the atmosphere and the oceans. Renewable energy is becoming a greater proportion of energy consumption – however fossil fuel consumption is also increasing, and total global energy consumption per capita is growing too.

Why the climate crisis matters

All sectors of society and the economy are affected by the climate crisis: individuals, civil society, businesses, farmers, Government. For example, in Hawke's Bay, west Auckland and Nelson/Marlborough, many are still cleaning up after almost unprecedented flooding; and managed retreat is being taken seriously (<https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/te-manu-korihi/568526/it-s-got-a-lot-of-significance-spiritually-the-managed-retreat-of-marae>). We are all part of the cause, and we all feel the impacts. Some of us (mainly wealthy communities) have generated more carbon emissions than others, and others of us (mainly poor communities) are impacted more than others. Climate change touches all aspects of our lives: our lifestyles; livelihoods; access to affordable, quality food; health; politics; society; peace and security; and religion.

The climate crisis shares interconnected concerns that are common to many faiths. These are:

- **existential** because climate change threatens to make large parts of this planet uninhabitable for humans and many plant and animal species;
- **spiritual** because of connections between humans and the environment, and the impact of climate change on our sacred places such as marae and burial places in Aotearoa NZ and the Pacific;
- **ethical** and moral because the poorest individuals and sectors of society suffer first and worst from sea level rise, more extreme weather patterns, flooding and wildfires, food and water insecurity, conflict and forced migration;
- **environmental** because, along with loss of biodiversity, climate change is the most



"Yes, the planet got destroyed. But for a beautiful moment in time we created a lot of value for shareholders."

Figure 4. Thinking about our values. [Tom Toro, New Yorker, 2012]

serious challenge facing our Earth today – we need to support kaitiakitanga (guardianship);

- **economic** because our economic goals and how we produce our goods and services are key determinants of energy use; and also, because the cost of future adaptation to the impacts of a dangerous climate is likely to far outweigh the cost of acting now to reduce or avoid the problem;
- **intergenerational** because the actions we take now, or fail to take, will deeply affect future generations.

Climate change also exacerbates the deep and growing inequities of wealth between rich and poor individuals and nations, as well as between current and future generations. In addition, it weakens our defences against natural disasters, renders some locations unlivable, and will inevitably lead to large scale mass migration and increasing tension between countries.

Current efforts to respond to the rapidly changing climate

Ultimately, humanity is one and this small planet is our only home. If we are to protect this home of ours, each of us needs to experience a vivid sense of universal altruism. It is only this feeling that can remove the self-centred motives that cause people to deceive and misuse one another.

– H.H. the Dalai Lama

Mahea te rangi e tū nei, Mahea te papa e takoto nei, Mahea ngā tai o Paneiraira, Mahea ngā wai o Huriawa, Kia whakamanahia te puna mauri ora, Kia atawhaitia te tangata, Kia pai te noho! Haumi e, hui e Taiki e!

Clear the sky above, Clear the ground below, Clear the tides of Paneiraira, Clear the water ways of Huriawa, To feed the source of wellbeing, To care for our people, To live well, Forward together!

<https://www.ngatirarua.iwi.nz/content/files/2025/01/Nga-ti-Ra-rua-Climate-Strategy.pdf>

Mitigation is the focus of this guide. However, millions of people around the world (including many in Aotearoa New Zealand) are already affected by climate change and need assistance to change their lives. Their focus is adaptation. Many people facing adaptation right now live in more precarious conditions such as dangerous floodplains. Or they may rely on inefficient motor vehicles or have little income and little consumer choice. Climate change will continue to impact our world for decades to come, because of the energy already trapped in the atmosphere and oceans, even if we manage to cut greenhouse gas emissions significantly and swiftly. This means that ongoing widespread adaptation will be needed to safeguard people and nature.

The Paris Agreement is a legally binding international treaty on climate change, adopted by almost all countries in 2015. It aims to 'limit the increase in the global average temperature to well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels' and pursue efforts 'to limit the temperature increase to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels.' It also focuses on strengthening national capacity to deal with the impacts of climate change and ensuring that financial flows support low-carbon and climate-resilient economies.

Under the Paris agreement, each country is required to produce a 5-yearly nationally determined contribution (NDC). These are climate action plans that individual countries submit under the Paris Agreement, outlining their commitments to reduce greenhouse gas emissions (GHGs) and adapt to climate change impacts. New Zealand's NDC is to reduce emissions by 51-55% compared to 2005 levels by 2035 (<https://environment.govt.nz/publications/new-zealands-second-nationally-determined-contribution-submission-under-the-paris-agreement/>).

Global failure to reduce carbon emissions risk triggering irreversible tipping points such as melting of polar ice sheets or dieback of coral reefs that support diverse marine life. Like other countries, Aotearoa New Zealand can reduce carbon emissions by reducing overall consumption and swiftly substituting renewable energy for fossil fuels. We can also offset our carbon emissions by paying other countries to undertake carbon reducing activities such as planting forests or incentivising public transport. The Government's current goal is to reduce net greenhouse gas emissions (gross emissions minus offsets) to 50% below gross 2005 levels by 2030. This appears to be achievable on current policies; however these rely heavily on carbon offsets rather than real reductions in our carbon emissions.

The New Zealand Emissions Trading Scheme (ETS) puts a price on carbon emissions, by charging certain sectors of the economy for the greenhouse gases they emit. Agricultural emissions, which contributed more than half of New Zealand's gross GHG emissions in 2024 (<https://environment.govt.nz/assets/publications/GHG-inventory-2024-Snapshot.pdf>) are currently (and controversially) exempted from the Emissions Trading Scheme (ETS).

Figure 5 shows how warming of the atmosphere is projected to increase according to several potential international government policies. The goal of 1.5°C above baseline is almost certainly unreachable because of previous global failures to act decisively. With current policies globally, we can expect a rise of between 2.5°C and 2.9°C. This would be a world that is radically different from today's world.

The burden of climate change (depicted in Figure 6 for temperature in increasingly dark shades of orange, red and violet) is highest for younger people and future generations. For example, individuals born in 2020 who survive until 70 will experience around 3°C average global warming (if the world follows an intermediate carbon emissions pathway), compared with individuals born in 1970 who experienced one degree Celsius average global warming by the time they turned 70.

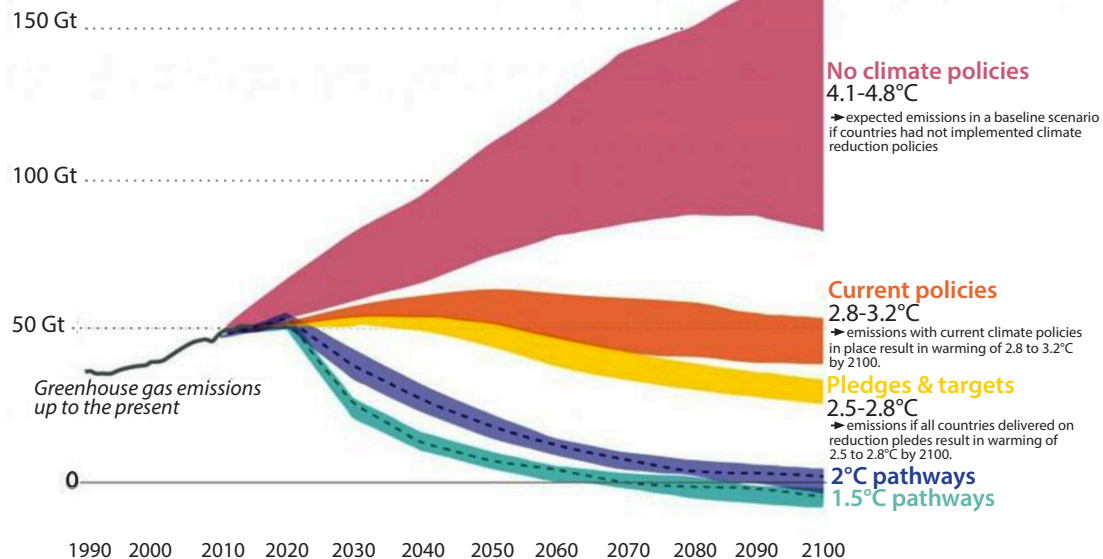
Why does climate change matter to faith communities?

Global greenhouse gas emissions and warming scenarios



Each pathway comes with uncertainty, marked by the shading from low to high emissions under each scenario. Warming refers to the expected global temperature rise by 2100, relative to pre industrial temperatures.

Annual global greenhouse gas emissions
in gigatonnes of carbon dioxide-equivalents



Data source: Climate Action Tracker based on national policies and pledges as of November 2021.
OurWorldinData.org Research and data to make progress against the world's largest problems.

Last updated: April 2022
Licensed under CC-VY by the authors Hannah Ritchie & Max Roser.

Figure 5. How much worse will the problem get? Predicted changes in surface atmospheric temperature according to various climate policies.

([https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/4/4c/](https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/4/4c/Greenhouse-gas-emission-scenarios-01.png)

[Greenhouse-gas-emission-scenarios-01.png](https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/4/4c/Greenhouse-gas-emission-scenarios-01.png))

Any technical solution which science claims to offer will be powerless to solve the serious problems of our world if humanity loses its compass, if we lose sight of the great motivations which make it possible for us to live in harmony, to make sacrifices and to treat others well. Believers themselves must constantly feel challenged to live in a way consonant with their faith and not to contradict it by their actions. They need to be encouraged to be ever open to God's grace and to draw constantly from their deepest convictions about love, justice and peace.

Pope Francis, Laudato Si, 2015

This span of earth is but one homeland and one habitation. It behooveth you to abandon vainglory which causeth alienation and to set your hearts on whatever will ensure harmony.

Bahá'u'lláh: One Habitation, Bahá'í International Community, 2022

c) The extent to which current and future generations will experience a hotter and different world depends on choices now and in the near term

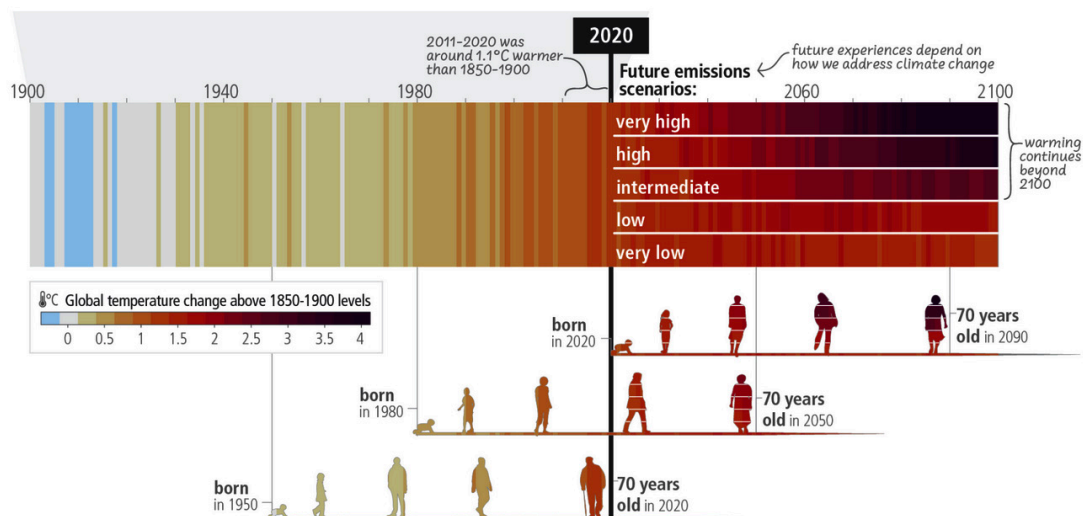


Figure 6. Predicted warming of the atmosphere over time under different emissions scenarios, showing the much higher impacts for individuals who are born after 2020. Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change: Climate change 2023 synthesis report AR6 (<https://www.ipcc.ch/assessment-report/ar6/>).

When it comes to rebuilding a shattered world or a broken dream, you don't wait for permission from Heaven. Heaven is telling you to go ahead.

Rabbi Jonathan Sachs, Covenant & Conversation, 2015

We support a human rights-based approach to climate action that prioritises listening and responding to the voices of the poor, the marginalised, and those most vulnerable to the disproportionate impacts of climate change. Ten percent of the population is responsible for close to fifty percent of emissions. There is no justice when those least responsible are the first victims.

Interfaith call to action, 2025. <https://iefworld.org/InterfaithCC2025>

It is tempting to leave this problem to governments and secular non-governmental organisations (NGOs). But we cannot, because “the world in which we live is collapsing and may be nearing the breaking point”, to quote the late Pope Francis (Laudate Deum, 2023). We are at a turning point in history in which a new sort of person is required, at all levels in society, who is living in harmony with the Earth and with fellow human beings. Pope Francis called this ‘having a spiritual relationship with the Earth’. We are engaged in a spiritual battle against the consumerism and greed that is causing destruction of our Earth and has seriously infected our political system. This cannot be solved by technology and science alone, and it needs serious community engagement. People of faith share moral and ethical values with many other people who regard themselves as secular. They also share much in common with indigenous people for

whom the connection between earth and people is sacred. In Aotearoa New Zealand, Māori see a spiritually-bound relationship between tangata (people) and whenua (land). For example, the Whanganui River has been given legal personhood and Mt. Taranaki has regained its Māori name (<https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/thehouse/540549/the-maunga-owns-itself-taranaki-histories-and-apologies>).

Faith communities are called to care for each other and for the Earth. We have a unique role in this transformation of society because:

- we believe that the Earth is sacred and/or a gift from God or the gods
- we have traditional and scriptural reasons to care for the Earth, which is our only home
- we meet regularly and care for each other acknowledging intergenerational differences
- we have a sense of the spiritual domain, and a view that a good life is different from self-aggrandisement, consumerism, wealth and power seeking, and hedonism
- we understand ‘repentance,’ viz. the need to change direction towards care for others
- we value social justice and equity
- we have liturgy, music, prayer, contemplation, and discussion to help us ‘see’ more deeply
- we believe that we are all brothers and sisters, and we seek justice, peace, joy, transcendence and hope.

What can individuals and faith communities do?

Science tells us that we need to make deep and immediate cuts in our carbon emissions (‘decarbonisation’) to reduce the risk of climate catastrophe from atmospheric temperature increases above 1.5°C. These collective actions are necessary because climate change is also a grave threat to social justice and peace for:

- the poorest and most vulnerable sectors of society in both rich and poor countries
- Māori, many of whom experience the impacts of climate change first and worst
- people in the Pacific islands and other small island states who are already suffering from rising sea levels, salinisation of fresh water supplies and land, sea surges and increasingly intense storms
- our children and grandchildren: are we good kaitiaki (guardians) and ancestors to them?

Everything helps — climate action is fundamentally about a change of hearts and minds. It is about doing things differently because climate change has already radically

altered our earth and oceans. Climate action is about creating a new relationship with the Earth. This will require major societal and lifestyle changes.

Everything counts — lifestyle changes that inspire; advocacy; political action; influencing leaders; belonging to groups that work to make changes; inspiring art and music. It involves advocacy for political and societal leaders to take necessary action at the governmental level.

Finding hope

Given the enormity of the climate crisis, many of the most hopeful people living today are those who are engaged in climate action to reduce carbon emissions. Many of the things we need to do to reduce carbon emissions also have huge benefits for social justice, our health, the way we live in communities, the types of work we do, and the health of our precious planet (Figure 7).



Figure 7. Ōruapaeroa-Travis Wetland Nature Heritage Park, Otāutahi Christchurch

If we do things well, rather than sacrificially, we are likely to have happier, more satisfying lives. Many of us have seen the birth of the civil rights movement in the USA, the reversal of apartheid in South Africa, and the nuclear-free movement in New Zealand. All these movements started because a few committed, passionate individuals acted collectively.



Figure 8. Making a better world.

Many faith-based and secular groups are pushing their governments into climate action, both internationally and nationally. Worldwide, there are inspiring examples of people succeeding in reversing negative environmental trends, halting further decline and restoring what was damaged.

Some governments have developed good legislation and programmes. Renewable energy is becoming increasingly competitive economically, and there are many other resilience initiatives which are steps forward and bring hope. Hope is contagious!

Responding to climate change provides opportunities to bring many other benefits to society (Figure 8).

Encouragingly, New Zealand's carbon emissions have declined slightly since 2019 (<https://environment.govt.nz/publications/new-zealands-greenhouse-gas-inventory-19902023-snapshot/>), but climate science tells us that much larger reductions are required urgently. To retain hope, it is essential to counter the negative influence of regressive governments and private interests worldwide, and to guard against despair, which leads to inaction. Many people working on climate action find that hope develops from working collectively with others of like mind. Inspiration comes from learning about collective actions that have proven successful; and from finding fellowship. And we need courage and persistence.

Is it all too much? For some of us, thinking about climate change can leave us feeling ill, angry, resentful, and even sad enough to withdraw. At times like this, meditation, contemplation, prayer, reflection, singing, simple music making, enjoying every-day routines with family and whānau, and watching the world immediately outside our doors produces next to no emissions, quietens our minds, and helps us live our lives with fulfilment.

We can also draw on the wisdom of our faith traditions that remind us that relationships based on love for the earth and one another create communities of abundance for all.

For times that we wish to be more proactive, however, Figure 9 suggests three important questions that may usefully guide us on where to put our energy. The answers may lead us to personal and collective **Awareness, Advocacy and Action/Activism**, as summarised in the sections that follow.



Figure 9. What can I do? (<https://grist.org/looking-forward/recapping-the-looking-forward-series-on-personal-climate-action/>)

Awareness

Learning opportunities

Understanding and learning can help us make changes in our behaviour. We can educate ourselves collectively on both global and local issues, on how to engage our wider community and how to take effective action, both to reduce our emissions and to adapt to adverse impacts on our communities. We can work together to organise interfaith and public education events that raise levels of knowledge, show the relationships between science, faith, Indigenous knowledge and action, and promote effective actions. Many such events are being held (e.g. Figure 10).



Figure 10. More than 50 Jews, Christians and Muslims at a 'Workshop on the Climate Emergency' at *Te Herenga Waka* Victoria University of Wellington.

If you know where most of your whānau's greenhouse gas emissions are coming from, you can take the actions that have the biggest impacts. See the Global Footprint Network website <https://www.footprintnetwork.org/>

- Learn more about how to reduce your carbon footprint by playing the 'My Carbon footprint' game from the Kiwi Conservation club. (<https://kcc.org.nz/portfolio/game-my-carbon-footprint/>)
- The Climate Action Group of the RDC has developed a series of short illustrated stories and videos on climate change and related topics about people of different faiths living sustainably in our common home. This series is ongoing. (<https://rdc.org.nz/rdc-climate-action-group/>).
- The United Nations provides numerous introductory climate change courses, or you can attend an international climate change introductory course (Climate Fresk) in your area.

- Faith groups from individual religions have developed resources on climate change and climate action. The set of resources provided by the Christian organisation A Rocha Aotearoa NZ is one notable example.
- Many teachers at all levels are working with children and other learners to foster a generation of people who instinctively think and act sustainably. For example, the Enviroschools network operates in primary schools throughout the country (e.g. Figure 11).



Figure 11. An Enviroschools Aotearoa sustainability activity at Grey Main School, West Coast. Photo from Enviroschools Aotearoa NZ.

- For over 10 years, Auckland Anglican Diocese has funded a ‘sustainability field worker’ who provides workshops for voluntary ‘sustainability champions’ across the diocese. These individuals lead change in their parishes.
- Many faith organisations have become involved with habitat restoration projects, either directly or through secular environmental organisations, as listed elsewhere in this guide. For example, the international Christian organisation A Rocha has a range of practical projects.
- Grey Main School on the West Coast held an inspiring Enviro Action Day bringing students together to engage in hands-on sustainability activities. The day featured water quality testing at a local stream, native tree planting, revitalisation of the school’s vegetable garden, and a waste sorting game to promote sustainable living practices (Figure 11).

- Youth and young adults leading activities and awareness-building are effective agents for inter-generational change (Skipp, 2020) as a record of two young adult interfaith forums held in Palmerston North in 2020 (Figure 12).



Figure 12. *Generation 20/20: Agents for change.* Youth Climate Change Forum in Palmerston North, 2020.

- Recognise the strength of indigenous and traditional knowledge (referred to in Aotearoa as Mātauranga Māori) in recognising, addressing and adapting to climate change, both in the past and now. See Pedersen Zari et al. (2024) and Nunn et al. (2024) listed in the 'Further Resources' section for reviews of the strengths and application of indigenous knowledge in Aotearoa New Zealand and Oceania.
- Garden to table programmes in some schools. <https://gardentotable.org.nz/>
- Community gardens – e.g. Papatūānuku ki Taurangi Earth Promise – an inner-city food garden in Auckland community garden in Ellerslie, Auckland, established by the Sisters of Mercy, which provides a focal point for community building. (<https://www.sistersofmercy.org.nz/a-matou-mahi-mercy-in-action/sisters-share-ministry-stories/earth-promise/>) Urban gardens and food cooperatives are also important adaptation measures because they increase food security in environments affected by climate change.
- Organising a pilgrimage to special sites which have an ecological, historical, cultural or spiritual story.

In Palmerston North, some young adults from four faith traditions addressed the issues of climate change and racism, to help change the world they are inheriting (Figure 12). They believe that this action must be grounded in the principles and values of their faith traditions, which places hope at the centre of the conversation.

Some organisations provide ‘carbon calculators’ which help individuals, households or businesses to quantify and reduce their carbon-equivalent emissions. For Aotearoa NZ, household emissions can be simplified into four major categories (Figure 13).

Climate denial and greenwashing

As with many scientific findings, there are controversies around climate change. Some people believe that climate change is not happening or that it is a natural

process or even a ‘scam.’ Scepticism is important in science, however much of climate denial goes beyond scepticism. There are many reasons for climate denial. Some are emotional: the problem seems too difficult or too far in the future. Some are economic: living sustainably may threaten current lifestyles or incomes. Sometimes small amounts of contrary findings (which are to be expected in science) generalise into wider beliefs that scientists can’t be trusted. Climate change denial can be used for commercial and political gain.

‘Doom and gloom’ stories cause stress, fear, paralysis and guilt, which do not work to make change. It is more helpful to focus on common values and on the positive aspects of making a transition to a more sustainable world. Answers to commonly asked questions about climate change can be found at <https://skepticalscience.com/argument.php>. A book by Hayhoe and Farley (2009) also tackles many misconceptions about global warming.

‘Greenwashing’ is a form of deceptive marketing in which companies mislead consumers and voters into believing their products or services are more environmentally friendly than they are. Governments and government entities can also mislead their constituencies. This needs to be understood for what it is and then challenged, for example by writing to the companies or governments and/or challenging their deceptive statements through mainstream or social media.

Breakdown of household consumption emissions

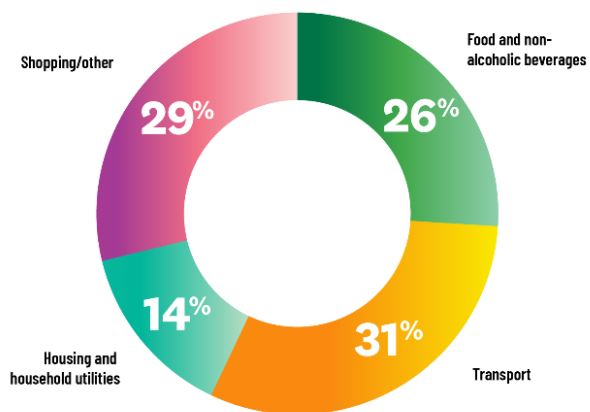


Figure 13. Aotearoa NZ household consumption carbon-equivalent emissions in 2021 (Statistics NZ).

Advocacy

Why advocate?

Advocacy is about trying to influence decisions made by political, social and economic institutions. Many groups use advocacy to advance their own interests, which are not necessarily for the good of others or the environment. Faith communities can have a powerful voice to advocate not for themselves but for the good of everybody and society as a whole. This is more effective when environmental problems are viewed in their human, family, work, social and economic contexts.

Writing to corporates and crown/council entities about their environmental impact can demonstrate that climate action is good for business and the public. If you are a shareholder in a company, or a ratepayer in the region of a local government council or council entity, your message is even stronger. Positive messages that compliment companies on good practices are also effective.

The Māori concept of ‘*waiora*’ links the health and well-being of people with the health and well-being of the natural environment. Likewise, the concept of a ‘common good’ illustrates the kind of society which people of faith aspire to create: one which meets the basic needs of all humanity. Once this vision captures the imagination, we can conceive of many ways to reach out to others.

Heating of the atmosphere and oceans leads to injustice because the poorest sectors of society and the poorest countries can suffer first and worst. For example, cheaper housing on floodplains leads to higher risk of flooding and higher insurance premiums or uninsurability. Low-lying Pacific nations are already suffering from sea level rise, which is making their land infertile and areas uninhabitable. We can advocate for climate justice for those suffering the effects of a crisis that they did not create, including our children and grandchildren whose world will be very different from ours.

On July 24, 2025, the United Nations International Court of Justice ruled that countries must address the “urgent and existential threat” of climate change, in an advisory opinion that is being hailed by small island states and environmental groups as a “legal stepping-stone to make big polluters accountable.” The inspiration for this case was a group of law students at the University of the South Pacific’s campus in Port Vila, Vanuatu. (<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2024-12-01/vanuatu-icj-climate-change-case-pacific-island-students/104657334>).

Transformational change comes about when networked individuals and communities work together. Are we too small to make a difference?

He iti te mokoroa, nāna I kati te kahikatea

The mokoroa (grub) may be small, but it cuts through the kahikatea

Although numbers or resources may be small, it is possible to achieve great things. According to the 2023 census, about half of New Zealanders identify with a religion. It can take as little as 10 to 20% of a social system to adopt new strategies for the majority to accept them (Rogers EM. *Diffusion of Innovations*, 5th Edition (2003)).

Submissions

Submissions to government, local bodies and corporations make a difference. Many NGOs make submissions, and they all count. The Religious Diversity Centre has written or coordinated a number of climate-related submissions and statements to politicians and organisations. Faith communities have done the same. As individuals we can respond to calls for endorsements of submissions or encourage leaders of our faith organisations to do so.

Petitions and visits

Petitions to government, local councils and corporates are a quick, easy way to show decision-makers that you want change. There are plenty of environmental organisations promoting submissions around climate change. The international initiative promoting the Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty providing for a just transition to non-fossil fuel energy sources is just one example (<https://fossilfuel treaty.org/>). The RDC climate action group encouraged religious leaders around New Zealand to join this call (more than 100 responded). Writing to politicians (national and local) or meeting with them encourages them to act. Visit your local MP or local regional councillor and have a conversation about responsible actions that will address the climate crisis at the local level.

Actions and activism

You cannot get through a single day without having an impact on the world around you. What you do makes a difference, and you have to decide what kind of difference you want to make.

Jane Goodall, internationally renowned zoologist and conservation/ climate change activist

Climate change is too important to be ignored! Climate activism is also about confronting social injustice in our society, and the world, and across generations. Talking about the issues with friends, family, and colleagues does make a difference. For most people, 'family and friends' are among the most trusted sources of news and

views, so never discount the value of private conversations, no matter how informal. Posting online and in social media about climate action spreads awareness and builds further momentum.

Appeal to the positive. Reflect on what matters most to you—such as your children and grandchildren, your love of nature or your faith to reinforce your commitment to helping to create a better world. We can acknowledge and change destructive behaviours, encourage and support sustainable living patterns, counter consumerism, and reconsider our own patterns of consumption of food and waste, energy and transport. Living more simply will often make us happier and healthier. Consider switching to a low meat diet, electric vehicles, solar power, electric stoves, heat pumps, natural fibre fabrics, reducing non-essential air travel, and using active transport (e.g. walking, cycling) and public transport when possible. The section below on ‘Practical actions for individuals’ provides some specific suggestions for these changes.

Act collectively

The most important thing that an individual can do right now is not be such an individual.

Bill McKibben, international climate activist and founder of 350.org

Voting is the expression of our commitment to ourselves, one another, this country and the world.

Sharon Salzberg, Buddhist meditation teacher

Nau te rourou, naku te rourou, ka ora te iwi.

With your food basket and my food basket the people will thrive.

This *whakatauki* speaks to community, to collaboration, and a strengths-based approach. It acknowledges that everybody has something to offer, and by working together we can all flourish (<https://www.maori.cl/Proverbs.htm>).

Elections shape our future, so voting is not only a critical right and responsibility of citizenship, but also a critical part of climate action. Supporting parties or candidates with strong climate policies by voting for them is a powerful step in influencing our country’s national direction in climate change response and also implementing change at the local government level. Community groups, including faith groups, can encourage people to vote and host meetings with candidates for discussion of their policies, in advance of voting day.

Transformational change comes about when networked individuals work together to reflect their own faith and amplify the voice of other activists. As members of faith communities, we can influence others by our words and our actions in our workplaces,



Figure 14. Prayer vigil at the conference of parties (CoP) in 2021.

our places of leisure and in our homes and faith communities. Peaceful protests, vigils, civil disobedience and even individual actions have sparked some of the biggest changes in history. An international example was people of many faiths being invited to join a prayer and meditation vigil at the start of the international COP26 conference in Glasgow in 2021 (Figure 14). This brought together people of all backgrounds and around the world to join together for planet Earth.

Being part of a group strengthens our collective voice. Non-governmental organisations provide expert advocacy and climate campaigns. There is a wide range of organisations to join: national and local; faith-based or secular; quiet or noisy. Different groups suit different people. Some are listed here.

- ActionStation Aotearoa treats climate change as a social and political issue, acknowledging its origins in systems of colonialism and capitalism that affect certain communities and places more than others, both now and in the past. ActionStation Aotearoa acts to honour *Te Tiriti o Waitangi* and recognises the links between these actions and actions towards climate justice in Aotearoa.
- A Rocha is a global family of Christian conservation organizations working together to live out God's calling to care for creation and equip others to do likewise.
- AVAAZ ("Voice") is a global online campaigning community to empower millions of people from all walks of life to take action on pressing global, regional and national issues, from corruption and poverty to conflict and climate change.
- Climate Club Aotearoa is powered by volunteers to help Kiwis take climate action.

- Common Grace is an ecumenical organisation that has advocacy campaigns across three areas: climate justice, economic justice and *Te Tiriti* justice.
- Environment Network Manawatu is the environment hub for the Manawātū region, connecting and inspiring communities to take environmental action. ‘We’re passionate about protecting the environment, and we know that to make a real difference, we need to stay strong ourselves. We focus on getting the right resources for the community and helping our network groups and locals build their skills. By encouraging learning, working together, and supporting volunteers, we help everyone make a positive impact.’
- Extreme zero waste is a community recycling services & resource recovery centre in Whaingaroa, founded by families in the community (2000).
- Laudato Si International Movement aims to inspire and mobilize the Roman Catholic community to care for our common home and achieve climate and ecological justice, in collaboration with all people of good will.
- Para Kore is a Māori not-for-profit organisation established in 2010, with a kaupapa (customary practice) based on whakapapa (genealogy) to Papatūānuku.
- “Talking Climate” is USA faith-based scientist Katherine Hayhoe’s weekly newsletter, which shares stories about the climate crisis plus something you can do about it.
- The Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty Initiative is an international network with strong Oceania presence, calling for a new treaty to manage a global transition to renewable energy for all.
- The Green S Welfare Force Wing from the Sikh community is a disaster relief and social welfare organization that provides selfless service to humanity in distress, including in New Zealand and is well known for tree planting.
- The International Environmental Forum helps members work together to tackle their challenges. https://iefworld.org/accounting_community.
- The New Zealand branch of the international youth-oriented climate action network 350.org has a vision for a safe climate and a better future – a just, prosperous, and equitable world built with engaged advocates.
- The New Zealand branch of the international environmental activist network Greenpeace: aims to ensure the Earth’s ability to nurture life in all its diversity through creative confrontation and non-violent action.
- The New Zealand branch of the international climate awareness network “Fridays for Future” was founded by young Swedish activist Greta Thunberg to pressure governments to take action on the climate crisis and create a society in harmony with the environment.

Hold the public and private sectors accountable

Showing up in person at a nonviolent march or rally sends a powerful message. Every person matters. Vigils can be local or part of powerful national or international movements, such as COP26 Vigil on 31st October 2021. Prepare to be surprised and uplifted by the thousands of people of all ages in our country who are working to protect their future and ours.

As part of the international “Fridays for Future” movement, secular and faith-based climate activists gather for a set hour each week outside Parliament (Figure 15) to bear witness to political inaction on climate crisis and engage in discussion with any passing politicians or interested visitors.



Figure 15. Fridays for Future at Parliament (2025).

Conservation projects

Planting trees and restoring natural habitats are important and intuitive responses to environmental damage including through climate change for many people of faith, because these are obvious ways to honour and cherish our common home. Indigenous people around the world see themselves as part of the environment, therefore protection of the environment is an integral part of their own wellbeing; but many non-indigenous people also find that practical conservation projects are good for their own wellbeing.

Many faith organisations have become involved with habitat restoration projects, either directly or through secular environmental organisations [as listed elsewhere in this guide]. For example, the international Christian organisation A Rocha has a range of practical projects.

Community gardens

St Matthew-in-the-City – a progressive Anglican church in central Auckland – is making the climate crisis a major part of its community action through a range of activities including a community garden (Figure 16).



Figure 16. Community garden at St Matthew-in-the-City, Auckland.

Religious Diversity Climate Action Day 2024 was organised by the Palmerston North Interfaith Group in collaboration with the Palmerston North City Council and Welcoming Communities to help transform a local park into a thriving habitat for indigenous biodiversity as well as an enjoyable recreational space for all (Figure 17). The event brought together entire families to affirm their common responsibility to care for the Earth and every aspect of Creation.

Actions for individuals and households

This section summarises practical steps that individuals can take to reduce their climate impacts (mainly to reduce greenhouse gas emissions). It has been collated from Government department sources, principally the Ministry of Education and others (see 'Further Reading' list). Many of the actions can be adapted for use in places of worship or faith organisation premises. Living more sustainably reduces the demand for energy, which indirectly reduces the supply of fossil fuels that emit GHGs.

Ethical investment

Investment is the act of committing money or capital to an asset such as a managed fund or a corporation, with the expectation of receiving future income or profits. Companies rely on these investments to further their operations. Many of us have investments through KiwiSaver, managed funds or other types of investments. We can disinvest in fossil fuel companies and invest in climate-positive companies. See the 'Mindful Money' website in the Reading List below.



Figure 17. Religious Diversity Climate Action Day 2024.

Carbon calculations

If you can measure it, you can manage it. Monitor and reduce your emissions using a “Household Calculator” e.g. www.futurefit.nz/questionnaire.

Transport

Reduce the number of flights you take. This has been shown to be one of the most effective climate change actions you can take.

When you fly, pay to offset your emissions by purchasing carbon credits. Most airlines offer this option when you buy tickets or on their websites. Some other organisations can advise (e.g. <https://www.ekos.co.nz/carbon-management>).

The land transport sector contributes about 20% of New Zealand’s total greenhouse gas emissions.

- Walk or cycle - it is free, has the lowest environmental impact and is good for your health

- Take public transport when available
- Carpool with friends

Nutrition

Red meat and dairy production result in significantly more greenhouse gas emissions than the production of chicken meat, fish, fruit, vegetables and cereals. It also requires substantially more water. Around 30% of the world's land area is used for livestock production, and it is one of the key reasons for cutting down forests.

Fruit and vegetables have many health benefits, such as reducing the risk of heart disease. Try having a meatless day each week. The website of the international Meatless Monday organisation <https://www.mondaycampaigns.org/meatless-monday> has great recipes to get you started. Try out these meatless recipes at Oh my veggies! Fish is an excellent source of protein, and information is available regarding ethical fishing practices and brands (<https://justkai.org.nz/>).

Energy

Most industrial energy in New Zealand comes from fossil fuels and most domestic energy from electricity. Greenhouse gas emissions are produced when we use electricity and gas in our homes. New Zealand has a high level of renewable electricity production. In 2023, approximately 88% of New Zealand's electricity was generated from renewable sources. This includes hydro, geothermal, wind, and solar power. However, because over 10% of New Zealand's electricity is still derived from burning of fossil fuels, and a much higher proportion at peak times (e.g. winter evenings), all reductions in electricity consumption from the national grid reduce carbon emissions.

- Switch off lights and appliances when they are not in use
- Use LED light bulbs
- Unplug electronic devices from the wall socket when they're not in use
- Run the dishwasher and the washing machine only when full
- Wash clothing in cold water and dry it outdoors when possible
- Try having fewer or briefer showers, or shower after 9pm when there is less fossil fuelled electricity generation

If possible, convert gas appliances such as hot water systems, stoves and stove-tops to electric. Induction hobs and heat-pump hot water cylinders are more expensive than standard versions but consume much less electricity. Likewise, electric vehicles cost more upfront but emit lower carbon over their life cycles and are cheaper to run. Solar panels reduce consumption of electricity from the national grid, and cost-effective batteries are under development for domestic use. Some energy providers, most notably EcoTricity, offset all the emissions from the energy they sell to the extent they are now certified carbon positive by Toitū, so an easy way to lower your carbon footprint from energy is to switch to them.

Retail

Buying locally helps our economy while also reducing the amount of fossil fuel energy that goes into transport, including international aviation and shipping. Buying second-hand is usually cheaper while also diverting goods from the landfill and giving items a much longer life. Second-hand suppliers run by charities such as the Salvation Army help to support those who cannot afford to buy new items.

- Buy local and in-season foods that haven't travelled long distances
- Shop at local second-hand stores or online marketplaces such as Trade Me for everything from clothes to furniture, kitchenware and books

Reduce, reuse, recycle

The best way to reduce waste is to avoid creating it in the first place. All products require energy and materials to be built, packaged, transported and sold. Reducing our consumption in general is good for the environment, and for our wallets.

- Buy only the food you need and compost your kitchen scraps and garden waste. Around half of the waste that ends up in New Zealand landfills is organic material (food, garden, paper and wood waste). When organic material decomposes, it produces methane, which is a potent greenhouse gas.
- Buy products without any packaging whenever possible and always take your reusable bags to the supermarket. Make the most of what you already have.
- Maintaining and repairing products, such as your clothes, means they don't have to be replaced so often.
- Ask yourself: 'Do I really need this?' Think about what will happen to it after you have finished with it. Will it last long? How soon will it end up in a landfill?
- Reduce plastic waste. Every faith-based group should have in place in their halls and kitchens, containers for collecting the soft plastic, disposable cups, food waste etc.

Planting and growing

Growing your own food is a great way to achieve many of the emissions reduction suggestions above and also has proven benefits for your health and wellbeing. Plant your own vegetables and fruit trees. Containers are great if you are short of space.

In New Zealand, forests offset nearly 30% of our greenhouse gas emissions. A regenerating native forest can remove more than 8 tonnes of carbon dioxide per hectare per year from the atmosphere over its first 50 years. Studies have shown that coastal vegetation can reduce erosion and minimise the impact of waves and floods, and gradual changes such as sea level rise.

Trees provide shade, which has a cooling effect in towns and cities. Placed strategically around buildings, they can reduce the amount of electricity used for cooling in summer.

- Plant native trees on your property.
- Get involved in a community forest restoration, dune care or coastal revegetation programme in your area. Nature Space is a great place to discover restoration groups in your region.
- From local to national: The Million Metre Streams project allows you to support planting projects via donations and/or volunteering if you haven't got your own area to plan and plant out.

Many faith organisations have been involved with tree planting and habitat restoration projects.

Further resources

Free newsletters and websites

Many online resources, both faith-based and secular, are available to inspire and support your actions. Many have been referenced throughout this guide. These include but are not limited to:

Anglican Communion Environmental Network (ACEN): <https://acen.anglicancommunion.org/>

Bahá'í Faith – some ideas for local action: <https://www.ourprosperousworld.com/local-action>

Caritas NZ: <https://www.caritas.org.nz/>

Climate Club Aotearoa <https://climateclub.nz/>

Greenfaith 2022: <https://greenfaith.org/>

Greenpeace Aotearoa: <https://www.greenpeace.org/aotearoa/>

Fact checker: <https://climateoftruth.co.uk/resources/#fact>

Hayhoe, Katherine: <https://katharinehayhoe.com/>

Jewish Climate Network: <https://www.jcn.org.au/> Australian Jewish network addressing climate change in diverse areas, focussing on energy, finance, transport and home.

Laudato Si International Movement: <https://laudatosimovement.org/>

Mindful Money: <https://mindfulmoney.nz/>

Pedersen Zari. M., G.L Kiddle; V. Chanse; S. Bloomfield; A. Latai-Niusulu; M. Abbott; P. Blaschke; S. Mihaere; O. Brockie; M. Grimshaw; A. Platje; K. Varshney; S. Ershadi (2024). NUWAO Nature-based Solutions Design Guide. Auckland: NUWAO. Available online at www.nuwao.org.nz.

Quaker United Nations Office resource: <https://quno.org/resource/2021/4/how-be-hero-all-our-children> also <https://quno.org/resource/2021/4/how-be-hero-all-our-children>

Quaker United Nations Office resource: https://quno.org/sites/default/files/resources/Government_officials_toolkit_EN%20HOME_PRINT%202024.pdf

Rainforest Alliance: <https://www.rainforest-alliance.org/>. International organisation focused on sustainable rainforest conservation, building climate resilience and improving the lives of farmers and forest communities. <https://www.rainforest-alliance.org/everyday-actions/6-claims-made-by-climate-change-skeptics-and-how-to-respond/>

Shah Satnam Ji Green Welfare Committee: <https://shahsatnamjigreenswelfarecommittee.org/>

Skeptical science: <https://skepticalscience.com/argument.php>. Science-based community explaining climate change science and rebutting global warming misinformation.

Sustainable Living Guide. <https://sustainableliving.org.nz/>

United Nations Development Programme: <https://climatepromise.undp.org/news-and-stories/climate-dictionary-everyday-guide-climate-change>

Helpful books and published articles

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Stanley Robinson, Kim (2020). *The Ministry for the Future*. Orbit Books.

United Nations Development Programme (2023). *The Climate Dictionary: An everyday guide to climate change*. <https://climatepromise.undp.org/news-and-stories/climate-dictionary-everyday-guide-climate-change>

Weintrobe, Sally (2021). *Psychological Roots of the Climate Crisis – Neoliberal Exceptionalism and the Culture of Uncare*. Bloomsbury.

Some technical terms

1.5 degrees Celsius (1.5°C): an increase in mean surface temperature 1.5°C above that of pre-industrial levels. Scientists have said that crossing the 1.5°C threshold risks unleashing far more severe climate effects on people, wildlife and ecosystems. Preventing it requires almost halving global carbon dioxide (CO₂)-equivalent emissions by 2030 from 2010 levels and cutting them to net-zero by 2050.

Active transport: walking, cycling, scootering, etc.

Adaptation to climate change: actions that help reduce vulnerability to the current or expected impacts of climate change like weather extremes and hazards, sea-level rise, biodiversity loss, or food and water insecurity.

Biodiversity: the richness and variety of life on Earth

Carbon credits: the Emissions Trading scheme relies on tradable units, each representing a reduction or removal of one tonne of carbon dioxide or its equivalent in other greenhouse gases, usually by planting trees.

Carbon equivalence: carbon equivalent emissions (CO₂e) is a common standardized metric used to compare the climate impact of different greenhouse gases by converting them to the equivalent amount of carbon dioxide.

Climate alarmism: the view that the impact of climate change is being exaggerated

Climate change: recent rapid changes in the global climate caused by global warming.

Climate denial: denial of the science of climate change for political or corporate reasons.

Decarbonisation: reducing emissions of carbon dioxide (from burning coal, gas and oil) and other greenhouse gases including methane (e.g. from ruminants) and nitrous oxide (from fertilisers).

Ecological overshoot: when humanity's demand for resources and services from the Earth exceeds the planet's regenerative capacity.

Emissions Trading Scheme (ETS): a financial tool for sending price signals to producers, consumers and investors. It puts a price on emissions, by charging certain sectors of the economy for the greenhouse gases they emit.

Environment: everything that surrounds us, both living and non-living.

Fossil fuels: naturally occurring, non-renewable energy sources formed from the remains of ancient organisms. They are primarily composed of hydrocarbons and include coal, oil, and natural gas.

Global warming (or heating): increases in the average surface temperature of the atmosphere and oceans above a defined baseline, largely due to human activity, especially burning of coal, oil and natural gas.

GHGs (greenhouse gases): atmospheric gases, including carbon dioxide, methane and nitrous oxide, that trap heat in the Earth's atmosphere, contributing to global warming.

Integral ecology: a new paradigm of justice which means that environmental problems are not separated from the analysis of human, family, work-related and social contexts.

IPCC: Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, which has been synthesising and reporting on climate science every 5 years since 1988.

Mitigation: efforts to reduce the warming of the atmosphere that is leading to climate change.

Mt CO₂e: mega tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent emissions (including all GHGs).

Net zero: a target of completely negating the amount of greenhouse gases produced by human activity, to be achieved by reducing emissions and implementing methods of absorbing and storing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere.

NDC (Nationally Determined Contribution): climate action plans that countries set under the Paris Agreement to achieve the global temperature goal of limiting warming to well below 2°C, and pursuing efforts to limit it to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels.

NGO: non-governmental organisation active in Aotearoa NZ such as 350.org, Greenpeace, Avaaz, Generation Zero; Forest and Bird; Greenpeace; Extinction Rebellion; Ora Taiao (health professionals).

NZETS: New Zealand Emissions Trading Scheme.

Offsetting: policies or activities to capture carbon from the atmosphere, e.g. by planting trees.

Paris agreement/accord: in 2015, almost all 200 countries including Aotearoa NZ agreed to limit global warming to well below 2°C, preferably to 1.5°C above pre-industrial (1850-1900) levels. The USA has just withdrawn but China and India which are the largest emitters remain in the agreement.

Planetary boundaries: scientifically determined limits on human activities that, if exceeded, could disrupt the Earth's stable and resilient systems. These boundaries define a safe operating space for humanity.

RDC: Religious Diversity Centre Aotearoa New Zealand.

Temperature anomaly: the difference between an observed atmospheric temperature and a reference temperature, typically a long-term average like the 1991-2020 average.

Te Tiriti: Te Tiriti o Waitangi (Treaty of Waitangi) is an agreement signed in 1840 between the chiefs of Aotearoa and the British Crown that is the founding document of Aotearoa New Zealand.



**Now is the time to stand up for the planet, the most vulnerable, and
future generations of all species of life ...**

**Achieving a better future requires ambitiously addressing the root
causes of climate change ...**

**As faith groups, we recognise that we must also build up our own
capacities, ... and help our communities ...**

**Faith communities could open a new horizon for ethical action,
prioritising global community and long-term vision while uniting people
with a shared ethical foundation. ...**

**EXTRACTS FROM: INTERFAITH LIAISON COMMITTEE OF THE
UN FRAMEWORK CONVENTION ON CLIMATE CHANGE (UNFCCC),
INTERFAITH CALL TO ACTION TOWARDS COP30, (2025)**