

# **GIVE CLIMATE HOPE THIS CHRISTMAS**

**Advent 3 worship and  
teaching resources**



**“I have faith, with God’s guidance, we will  
find the right alternative in action to our  
resilient needs.” Mrs Mafi**

**Christian World Service 2024**

# ADVENT 3: CLIMATE JOY BY JUST WATER

The suggested lectionary Gospel reading for Advent 3 is Luke 3:7-16. The Climate candle lighting invites further spirals to be added to the Advent koru. Several themes emerging from Luke 3:7-16 are woven in a Climate collect. For all ages, there is a chance to compare the rain readings from your local "home made" rain gauge (the suggested activity from Advent 1 and 2) with actual rain readings from Oceania during a cyclone in Advent 2023. Singing the *Pasefika* hymn introduces a way of singing together with our neighbours in Oceania.

The Gospel reading outlines the social, economic and environmental nature of good news and how this relates with community development. A key resource is a Samoan proverb regarding the wisdom of restraint. The proverb is introduced in the sermon and frames one of several suggestions for climate prayers for the earth and all things.

## **CLIMATE CANDLE LIGHTING – A MODIFIED ADVENT CANDLE LIGHTING**

In Advent 1, it was suggested that an Advent wreath connected to creation could be made from leaves and flowers or shells gathered from

the sea. A koru shape was suggested to evoke the new beginnings, which are themes of Advent.

The spiral of the Advent wreath could be extended further in Advent 3 as a third candle is added and lit. Again, this could be done using leaves, flowers, or shells gathered from the sea.

Leaves and flowers might need to be refreshed. This takes time but offers a way of being present in nature. Indeed, as the weeks unfold, new flowers might blossom in gardens, and so the different weeks speak of changes in the seasons.

An Advent wreath connected to creation made from leaves, flowers, or shells gathered from the seas can be participatory. As a way of encouraging all-age participation, families and children could be invited to add to the leaves, flowers, or shells as the service starts.<sup>1</sup>

As your wreath grows and unfurls during Advent, you could take a picture on your cellphone and email it to us at [cws@cws.org.nz](mailto:cws@cws.org.nz). (Try to avoid pictures with people in them unless they give their written permission). We might be in touch to ask your permission to share them on our social media platforms with other congregations who are also participating.

## **CLIMATE COLLECT – A PUBLIC PRAYER**

*(A collect is a public prayer prayed by and for the assembled church. Like the Lord's Prayer, a collect has an address, a focus on some characteristic of God, and a petition. It concludes with a word of praise).*

Collect for Advent 3

God of wisdom, who calls us to restraint,

In the season of Advent, we experience the wisdom of waiting with you, your angels, and all creation,

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<sup>1</sup> For more ideas on foraged crafts that could be woven into Advent or Christmas, including fern spirals (67-70) and twig stars (75-77), see Peter Cole and Leslie Jonath, *Foraged Art. Creative projects using blooms, branches, leaves, stones, and other elements discovered in nature* (BlueStreak Books, 2018).

Give us humility, humour, respect, courage, integrity and cultural competence,<sup>2</sup> through Jesus Christ, bringer of good news to all flesh,

through the grace of the Holy Spirit, Amen.

## **CWS ANNOUNCEMENT**

*(We provide a brief (60-second/100-word) introduction to the Give Climate Hope this Christmas appeal each week. The announcement could be read as part of the notices or before or after the Climate Collect).*

### **Advent 3 - local organisations across Oceania**

In Advent 1 and 2, we met Mrs Mafi, working to make sure “No one is left behind.” In Advent 3, we learn about local organisations providing hopeful climate solutions across Oceania. Mrs Mafi is connected with the Tonga Community Development Trust, TCDT for short. TCDT bring local communities together. TCDT provide local training in home composting and organic gardening. Your CWS gift this Christmas is a way of sharing climate hope with TCDT and many local organisations working for hope across the Pacific and the globe this Christmas. The CWS 2024 appeal flier has more information (*wave flier*).

## **SONGS – THAT CONNECT WITH THE SERMON IDEAS INCLUDING YOUTUBE LINKS**

Singing the *Pasefika* hymn would continue to give voice to sharing Advent with our neighbours in Oceania this Advent. (We are hoping to source music, which will be placed at <https://tinyurl.com/pasefikahymn>). The Venerable Famausili Chris Solomona's thoughts about it being sung as “a hymn of ONENESS within the creation of God” are special.

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<sup>2</sup> I would not normally pray six words, but all six are included in U. Lumā Vaai. (2023). Philosophical vectors of oceanic diplomacy and development: the Samoan wisdom of restraint meets the Australian indigenous relationalist ethos. *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, 77(6), 680. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10357718.2023.2268049>.

One of the challenges during Advent is finding hymns that remain in Advent and don't rush to Christmas.<sup>3</sup> Well-known Advent hymns include

*Come, thou long-expected Jesus* (Church Hymnary 472/Mission Praise 102). The Youtube version by Red Mountain Music, sung by Ashley Spurling and from their album "Silent Night" has a contemporary feel (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vRAFQCOKjgE>).

*Christ is coming! Let creation* (Church Hymnary 475) has a strong Earth focus; for example, verse 2, "Earth can now but tell the story." (For a choir setting, see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t822vzkF9mo> by the Scottish Festival Singers on The Hymn Makers: Scottish Hymns album, although it ends abruptly.)

The Gospel reading from Luke 3:7-16 continues to focus on the ministry and mission of John the Baptist. Hence, some of the songs that worked in Advent 2 also work in Advent 3, including *Through the prophets* (*Christ is here*) (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9HKoAFUjGAM>).

Phrases from Luke 3:7-18 are picked up in *Wild and Lone the Prophet's Voice* (Singing the Faith 189). "Lives of justice, truth and love" picks up on the sharing of resources. A version with lyrics is at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mtTEGi2tbCA>.

*On Jordan's bank, the Baptist's cry* was mentioned in Advent 2 but could work in Advent 3, although you might want to omit verse 2, given the lyrics refer specifically to the passage from Advent 2. (Youtube version at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Il3adNhVgL4>)

## **CREATIVE IDEAS THAT ENGAGE A RANGE OF GENERATIONS (CAN BE USED AS A CHILDREN'S TALK**

This week we are going to guess how much rain falls during a cyclone.

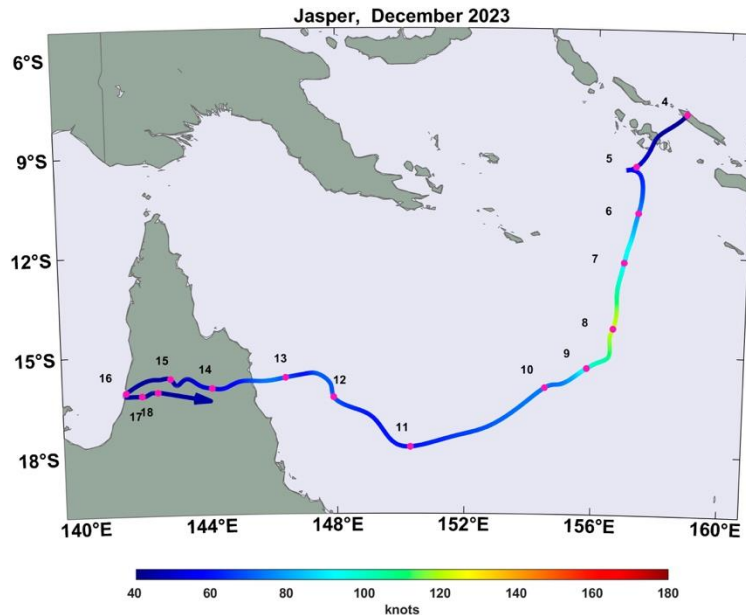
In Oceania, cyclones are changing. As the oceans get warmer, cyclones are picking up more energy. This means that when they hit land, the rain is heavier, and the wind is stronger.

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<sup>3</sup> As with Advent 1, I acknowledge the song resource archive provided by Trinity College, Glasgow (<https://www.trinitycollegeglasgow.co.uk/songs-for-sunday>).

A few weeks ago, we made a rain gauge. It was a way of thinking about Advent as a time of watching for love and justice and praying for people taking action as part of God's redemption.

Has anyone recently checked their rain gauge? How much rain did we have?



During Advent last year, Tropical Cyclone Jasper hit the Solomon Islands, then Australia. Here is a map of the cyclone (Image from this article).<sup>4</sup> (Point to the red dot, where the cyclone started, around Solomons Islands. Point to how the cyclone moved

over the sea. Remind them that as average temperatures rise and oceans get warmer, cyclones are picking up more energy. This means that when they hit land, the rain is heavier, and the wind is stronger.)

So, any guesses on how much rain fell in rain gauges in Australia?

10 cm? 50 cm? 1 metre? More ...

Kuranda Railway Station recorded 1.9 m over 5 days

Whyanbeel Valley recorded nearly 2.1 m over 5 days

*(It would help to actually demonstrate 2 metres. A bamboo garden stake is around 1.8 metres and placed by the rain gauge would make a powerful visual symbol).*

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<sup>4</sup> Kerry Emanuel, "Cyclone Jasper's Rains in the Context of Climate Change," *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 121, no. 15 (2024), <https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.2400292121>.

Cyclone Jasper was probably the "wettest tropical cyclone in Australian history." It is estimated to have caused around Australian \$1 billion of damage.<sup>5</sup>

So, weather gauges are important because they help us prepare to take climate action in the future. Next week, we will look at love in action and learn an action song about mercy and love.

So, a prayer like what we prayed last week:

God, we thank you for rain gauges. We thank you for the way that rain gauges help us keep watch and be better prepared for the future. God, help us keep watch, not only for rain but also for people who are love in action, who help prepare communities before cyclones and who give to help with rebuilding after cyclones. Bless those who give climate hope this Christmas, we pray.

## **SERMON IDEAS –**

*(The suggested lectionary Gospel reading for Advent 3 is Luke 3:7-16. The sermon ideas below focus on good news, including practical, social and environmental elements of good news. It ends with a connection between overseas development and local activity. As with last week, you can build a sermon around one, two or three of these points, depending on how long your church tradition preaches for. Another way to shorten the sermon would be to only develop one of the two items in social and economic consequences (saving 270 words)).*

### **Introduction**

When you google the words "good news" and look at the pictures suggested by the internet search engine, many images have loud hailers.

You get the sense that good news is words being spoken loudly. Very loudly. With "shouty voices," as one of my children used to say.

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<sup>5</sup> D. Nicholson, Cyclone Jasper damage bill estimated to hit \$1 billion. *The Cairns Post* (2023). <https://www.cairnspost.com.au/news/cairns/more-assessors-on-the-ground-in-fnq-to-aid-recovery-from-cyclone-jasper/news-story/70a712eb54756195c16c347986cd37d8>. Taken from Kerry Emanuel, "Cyclone Jasper's Rains in the Context of Climate Change," *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 121, no. 15 (2024), <https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.2400292121>.

The reading for this week, from Luke 3, ends in verse 16 with "good news." "John ... preached good news to them." In the reading, "good news" is much more than words. Good news has social, economic and environmental consequences.

### **Social consequences of good news**

The social consequences of good news appear in two places.

First, in 3:7-9, we learn that people are using their social connections as an excuse.

The passage starts with "We have Abraham as our Father" (3:8). People are saying that their history and who they're related to allows them to act differently.

These relationships entitle them to not change. We don't need to change and act differently. We're special. We're connected to Abraham.

The mention of Abraham is interesting.

The Gospel of Luke has 15 references to Abraham across 6 chapters.

For those who like a bit of 'compare and contrast'

John has 11 references to Abraham, clustered around 1 chapter.

Matthew has 7 references to Abraham, clustered around 4 chapters.

Mark has 1 reference to Abraham, clustered around 1 chapter.

So Abraham is quite important for the unfolding story of good news in the Gospel of Luke.

In chapter 13:16, the woman healed by Jesus is called a daughter of Abraham. She straightens up and praises God (13:13).

In chapter 19:9, a tax collector who commits to sharing resources and halting economic injustice is called a son of Abraham.

So, the Gospel of Luke redefines social connections. You're connected to Abraham when you're healed and when you act justly. That's one of the social dimensions of good news.



A second social consequence of good news involves the three groups named: crowds in verse 10, tax collectors in verse 12, and soldiers in verse 14.

What is fascinating about Luke 3 is that all three of these groups can be part of good news.

We often think of the story of Jesus as starting with Jewish people. But from the beginning, Luke includes tax collectors and soldiers as people worthy of hearing good news.

Good news in Luke is for the nations, for all flesh, as we've heard in Luke 3:6.

Good news is not just for certain cultures and communities. Good news is for tax collectors and soldiers, daughters who are healed and sons who act justly. These are the social consequences of good news.

### **Economic consequences of good news**

As I said at the start, a google search of images for good news offers pictures of loud hailers and shouty voices. In Luke 3, good news has economic consequences.

If you're in the crowd (3:11), good news is you sharing your second tunic with a person who has none (3:11). Not words but economic actions.

If you're a tax collector (3:13), good news is acting justly.

Some background might be helpful here. Two types of taxes existed during this time. Direct taxes – for land – these were collected by the Jewish Inland Revenue Department.

Indirect taxes – for tolls and customs – were collected by private individuals. Business people made a bid to collect indirect taxes and paid a lump sum upfront. These business people were then free to collect the taxes. Which opens a space for private profiteering on the side. Make a profit by collecting more from individuals than you initially invested. So, in this context good news is refusing to make a profit by collecting more from individuals than you invested at the start.

In Luke and Acts, several tax collectors - like Zacchaeus - come to faith and are challenged about the economic consequences of good news.

If you're a soldier (3:14), good news is not to use your position or strength to make up stories for your own gain.

Again, some background can be helpful here. Soldiers were most likely paid foreign troops, present to enforce Roman rule. Good news is soldiers not using their power or their weapons to threaten people.

In Luke and Acts, several soldiers - like the Centurion's daughter in Luke 7 or Cornelius in Acts 10 - come to faith and are challenged about the social and economic consequences of good news.

What is interesting is that here, Luke doesn't say to stop being a tax collector or a soldier.

Good news here in Luke doesn't mean finding new work. Instead, it means staying within and acting justly within the existing systems and everyday activities of being a tax collector or a soldier.<sup>6</sup>

None of us here today are first-century tax collectors or soldiers. But each of us can examine our everyday actions and think about what it means to live in ways that share resources and avoid misusing our power.

This is what good news looks like. In everyday lives and in daily ways, resources are shared. Private profiteering stops. The misuse of power is halted. These are the economic consequences of good news.

### **Environmental consequences of good news**

To think about the environmental consequences of good news, I want to pick up on Luke 3:13 - "Don't collect more than you are required to."

I want to bring this verse into conversation with the Samoan concept of the *tofā taofiofi*, the wisdom of restraint.

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<sup>6</sup> For more discussion, see Joel Green, *The Gospel of Luke, The New International Commentary on the New Testament*, Eerdmans, 1997, pp. 178-180.

I'm not Samoan. So, I'm drawing from some writing by Upolu Vaai, Principal of Pacific Theological College.<sup>7</sup>

In an Advent focused on our neighbours in Oceania, reading and reflecting on Scripture in conversation with local Christian leaders and thinkers seems appropriate.

Tōfā is wisdom and taofiofi comes from the root word tāofi, which means to stop, to restrain, to control, to contain, to limit, to wait.

To learn about tofā taofiofi in the words of Upolu Vaai:

“wisdom of restraint ... is attuned to interconnection” (p. 679)

“wisdom of restraint is ... also about the wellbeing of the fanua, the land” (p. 679)

“wisdom of restraint ... requires maintaining the four harmonies: harmony with the self; harmony with others; harmony with the cosmos; and harmony with God” (p. 680)

We live shaped by a Western culture that constantly demands growth.

If we make less things than last year, our GDP falls and we are in recession. So we must always be making more, doing more.

In contrast, Luke 3 sounds like the wisdom of restraint - “Don't collect more than you are required to.”

Words for a tax collector (3:12), yet wisdom for all who listen.

Wisdom to show restraint and sleep. We, as humans, are made to rest.

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<sup>7</sup> U. Lumā Vaai. (2023). Philosophical vectors of oceanic diplomacy and development: the Samoan wisdom of restraint meets the Australian indigenous relationalist ethos. *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, 77(6), 677–681. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10357718.2023.2268049>. For a more accessible reading, see Tupua Tui Atua. 2017. “Le Tōfā Taofiofi: The Wisdom of Restraint.” Keynote Address for the Launch of the Mana Moana Experience. December 8, 2017. <https://www.leadershipnz.co.nz/blog/latest-news/2018/3/11/le-tof-taofiofi-the-wisdom-of-restraint>. His Highness Tui Atua Tupua Tamasese Ta'isi Efi is a former Head of State, Prime Minister and MP for Samoa. He is widely acknowledged to be one of the leading cultural custodians in Oceania.

Wisdom to show restraint and sabbath. We can't work 7 days a week. We are wise to rest.

Wisdom to show restraint and listen. As humans, the presence of two ears and one mouth suggests we are wise to restrain our tongues and instead to listen in our social interactions.

Tofā taofiofi connects this to Oceanic development and responding to climate change. Wisdom to show restraint by accepting the natural process of renewal within land and habitats.

Wisdom to show restraint and accept less profit, less growth, and less production,

These are the environmental elements of good news.

## **Connection**

For those who like contemporary connections it's important to remember the different approaches people can take to being economic, social, and environmental good news.

One is dependence – we give and share in ways that create a reliance on someone or something else.

A second way is independence – We do not give and do not share because we are self-contained. Don't need others. Learn to stand on your own two feet. 'You do you and I'll do me'.

A third is inter-dependence – We give and share in ways consistent with our unique sense of self, giving others the freedom to make decisions without fear of what will happen in the relationship.

During Advent, we've heard about Mrs Mafi, and Christian World Service, and their work in Oceania. Christian World Service is the development, justice and aid organisation of the churches in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Christian World Service is New Zealand's longest-serving home-grown development and aid agency. It began in December 1945, when the National Council of Churches made its first Christmas Appeal for overseas relief for post-war Europe.

As the longest-serving home-grown development and aid agency in Aotearoa, CWS has learnt some things about economic, social and

environmental good news. Some of their learnings are in their Annual report:<sup>8</sup>

- “• We do not parachute into a community
- We work at the grassroots ... through long-term partnerships
- We trust the wisdom of the local community to know what is needed and how best to do it.”

This sounds like interdependence – don’t parachute, partnerships, trust local wisdom.

This is wisdom in economic, social and environmental good news learnt from overseas. It’s a wisdom that can help us as churches in Aotearoa engage local communities.

To often we limit words like gospel and spiritual. We forget that good news has economic, social, and environmental consequences.

When we start to consider economic, social and environmental consequences, we quickly realise there are plenty of other groups in our communities working for social, economic and environmental consequences.

We suddenly find partners.

So, the international learnings of CWS offer guidance as our congregation seeks to connect with our community.

Don’t parachute. Seek partnerships. Trust the wisdom of local communities.

## **Conclusion**

Advent prepares us for good news. Not good news as "shouty voices" and loud hailers.

Good news in actions, with social, economic and environmental consequences.

As we embrace this expansive and challenging vision of good news, we find partners: other groups in our communities seeking social, economic, and environmental justice.

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<sup>8</sup> *Annual Review 2022 – 2023*, [https://cws.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/CWS-Annual-Review-2023\\_web.pdf](https://cws.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/CWS-Annual-Review-2023_web.pdf), p. 12.

As we consider working with and alongside others for good news with social, economic and environmental consequences, there is wisdom from CWS. Don't parachute. Build long-term partnerships. Trust the wisdom of local communities.

Be good news.

## **CLIMATE PRAYERS FOR THE EARTH AND ALL THINGS**

*(A prayer for the earth and all things could take two directions. One direction is again to use Mary Oliver's poem "Instructions for living a life." This will build continuity for those regularly present and be something fresh for others. A second direction is to pray using the Samoan proverb, tofā taofiofi, the wisdom of restraint.)*

### **Pray using the poem by Mary Oliver**

Direction one is to use Mary Oliver's poem "Instructions for living a life" and the three phrases "Pay attention," "Be astonished," and "Tell about it" to frame a prayer.<sup>9</sup>

Below, I provide an example. The three phrases from the Mary Oliver poem are bolded. I then suggest some words, imagining I am praying in my own local congregation drawing from Luke 3:7-16. However, given your unique context and that I write this in September in a rapidly changing world, I also offer some prompting questions (in italics) that could help you connect the phrases with your local congregation and contemporary community needs.

God of all things,

We pray using the words of Mary Oliver.

**Pay attention** – We hear the call in the Gospel of Luke to prepare for good news, and so we pay attention to places where good news is particularly needed,

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<sup>9</sup> Excerpted from the poem "Sometimes," from *Red Bird*, Boston: Beacon Press, 2009, page 37.

Socially, we ask for healing for those we know who are sick, comfort for those who feel isolated, friendship for those facing mental health challenges and courage for those in toxic work or home environments.

Economically, we pray for justice for those seeking work and those who experience exploitation, including workers on minimal-wage and zero-hour contracts.

Environmentally, we pray for the challenges of climate adaptation. We ask for behaviour change from those who need to show the wisdom of restraint.

*What might God call us to pay attention to? Is there something from the Gospel reading, the life of the congregation, the current news, or the CWS Give climate hope this Christmas brochure?*

**Be astonished** – As we think about good news, we give thanks for those in our communities who work for social, economic and environmental justice,

We are thankful for local leaders, politicians, councils and community groups. May they work in interdependence with the marginalised.

We are thankful for partnerships and all those who work to increase communication and connection, including local Facebook community pages and newspapers. Bless them as they work for peace and justice we pray

We are thankful for organisations like Tonga Community Development Trust, CWS and many others across Oceania and the world who work for social, economic and environmental justice. Bless them as they work in interdependence for a whole of life righteousness we pray

*Where is social, economic and environmental justice bringing surprise?  
What can we be thankful for?*

**Tell about it** – As we think about the love and justice of God's salvation, we pray for us as we hear your Word, may we have the courage to be good news. Forgive us for the times we shout, Bless us as we partner with you in sharing love and justice in our communities,

And we pray together, using the words that Jesus taught us to pray ...  
(The Lord's Prayer)

*What local expressions of good news in words and deeds could we name before God?*

### **Pray using wisdom from Samoa**

*(Direction two is to utilise the Samoan understanding of tofā taofiofi, the wisdom of restraint. Tōfā is wisdom and taofiofi comes from the root word tāofi, which means to stop, restrain, control, contain, limit and wait.<sup>10</sup> Each of these words can be a prompt for prayer. I offer an example as I consider praying these words for our neighbours in Oceania)*

Tofā taofiofi, God of wisdom, who calls us to restraint,

Stop those who are bottom trawling by dragging nets along the very bottom of the Pacific ocean, destroying coral and natural seafloor habitat and working to oppress indigenous peoples.<sup>11</sup>

Restrain those who use Oceania as a dumping ground for plastics and pollution.<sup>12</sup>

Control and contain those who are introducing illicit drugs to the Pacific,<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Upolu Lumā Vaai. (2023). Philosophical vectors of oceanic diplomacy and development: the Samoan wisdom of restraint meets the Australian indigenous relationalist ethos. *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, 77(6), 677–681. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10357718.2023.2268049>. For a more accessible reading, see Tupua Tui Atua. 2017. "Le Tōfā Taofiofi: The Wisdom of Restraint." Keynote Address for the Launch of the Mana Moana Experience. December 8, 2017. <https://www.leadershipnz.co.nz/blog/latest-news/2018/3/11/le-tof-taofiofi-the-wisdom-of-restraint>. His Highness Tui Atua Tupua Tamasese Ta'isi Efi is a former Head of State, Prime Minister and MP for Samoa. He is widely acknowledged to be one of the leading cultural custodians in Oceania.

<sup>11</sup> Information via the U.S. Geological Survey, "What a Drag: The Global Impact of Bottom Trawling," <https://www.usgs.gov/programs/cmhrp/news/what-drag-global-impact-bottom-trawling>.

<sup>12</sup> "Great Pacific Garbage Patch," <https://education.nationalgeographic.org/resource/great-pacific-garbage-patch/>.

<sup>13</sup> "Illicit Drugs Are Undermining Pacific Security," <https://www.usip.org/publications/2024/03/illicit-drugs-are-undermining-pacific-security>.



Limit the lifestyle and habits of the richest 1% of humanity who are responsible for more carbon emissions than the poorest 66%,<sup>14</sup>

God of wisdom, as we wait with you for good news that is social, economic and environmental, may we always hear the voices of the most vulnerable, the cry from our neighbours in Oceania, "to make the ocean front and centre of our church, the message, the preaching, the discussions, the intercessions, the prayers."<sup>15</sup>

Give us courage to say yes to Your call, to work with you in interdependence, so that our neighbours, local and overseas, will see the social, economic, and environmental consequences of good news. Amen.

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<sup>14</sup> "Richest 1% emit as much planet-heating pollution as two-thirds of humanity," <https://www.oxfam.org/en/press-releases/richest-1-emit-much-planet-heating-pollution-two-thirds-humanity>.

<sup>15</sup> Fe'iloakitau Kaho Tevi, Advisor to the Bishop of the Diocese of Polynesia, <https://www.facebook.com/share/v/3CDMeWJ32xXii7it/>.