

OCEAN SUNDAY 2016

Introduction

Thanks for joining in the Season of Creation this year, with a growing number of churches around the world. *You can save the videos we mention by going to www.keepvid.com and pasting the link there.*

In our first service we are blessed and challenged to hear from Tau'alofa Anga'aelangi (Lofa). She is a first generation Tongan-Australian, and a candidate to the minister of Deacon.

Lofa challenges us to embrace the concept of tauhi Vā, or reciprocity, in our relationship with the rest of Creation- to see ourselves as part of the big family of life. Through the challenge of Job we can see ourselves more humbly, and perhaps return, like the prodigal son, to our proper place in the family.

This challenge comes from the churches of Oceania which have, to a large degree, lived like the older brother in that tale- living within the means of the family. They are increasingly the canary in the coal mine- on the front line of climate change impacts, even though they are doing little to contribute to the problem. Like Job we ask, where is the justice when the innocent suffer?

As the canaries are forced to flee to new homelands to survive, will the major consumers amongst us pay heed to their plight, return to God's earth family, and help create a future where if anyone has their teeth set on edge, it will be because they are their own sour grapes?

As we are called to worship by Psalm 109, we are forced to ask, how do we live as disciples in a world where the waters are no longer constrained by their boundaries (v9)?

This year 350 Pacific is inviting churches to be part of praying for the Pacific in September, which you will be doing by using this liturgy! You can use the tag #PrayForOurPacific to let others know. You can also go to their website <http://350pacific.org/prayforourpacific/> to register your participation and get even more resources.

Finally, in the "act" section of the liturgy you will see reference to a campaign to switch energy providers to some that do more to help shift our economy to renewable energy. This is an action idea that came out of the "open space" sessions at Synod 2016. For more information visit www.unitingearthweb.org.au/make-the-switch.

We would love to hear your feedback about your celebration of Oceans, and the usefulness or otherwise of the resources we have included.

Sentences in italics are comments to the worship leader.

Jason John & Miriam Pepper, Uniting Earth, www.unitingearthweb.org.au ,

Call to worship

Psalm 104:1-9,24-26

Welcome

We come to renew our relationship with the creatures of the Ocean, with our Ocean neighbours, and with the God who has brooded over the face of the deep since the birth of Earth.

Come and be humbled with Job, and challenged to remember the tauhi Vā, or reciprocity, required of us in our relationship with the rest of Creation: God's big family of life.

Opening prayer and acknowledgment

God of the oceans, of the whirlwind, of this vast family of life. Thank you for your presence here amongst us, you are welcome here.

Inspire us through prayer and reflection and scripture and song to walk the way of Jesus together, seeking life and light and salvation together, and sharing it with your world.

Remind the church of the wisdom of the traditional custodians of this place, the ⁱ _____ people*, whose ancestors lived here in relationship with God through law, custom and ceremonyⁱⁱ for millennia before Jesus was born.

Challenge us with the courage and wisdom of those who set sail across the Pacific thousands of years ago, the people of the Moana (oceans), even as their descendants find themselves on the frontline of climate change**.

(or, if this prayer is being read by a traditional custodian, "Remind the church of our wisdom, handed down from our ancestors, the _____ people, who lived here...")*

*(**or, if this is being used in the Pacific, exclude paragraph 3 and amend para 4 to be "even as we find ourselves on the frontline of climate change")*

Song TIS 181: Come, O God of all the Earth

We suggest singing verses 1 & 5, with this special verse for Ocean Sunday (prepared by South Sydney Uniting Church) in the middle:

Come, O God of oceans wide:
shifting sands and crashing waves;
fish of every shape and size,
creatures of the reefs and caves.

Videos

We organised a video for each week for Project Reconnect, (<http://www.projectreconnect.com.au/>) which provided worship DVDs to congregations, but you can download the all ages talk and sermon free from the Uniting Earth website (see links below).

All ages video

Available at <http://unitingearthweb.org.au/worship/soc/88-soc-oceansun.html>

Bible reading Job 38:1-18

If you are using the video sermon by Tau'alofa Anga'aelangi, it includes the Job reading – so no need to read it here. Her reflection fits well very early in the service, even before the confession. If you are using another reflection you might like to do it after song 176, below

Sermon/reflection- video

Available at <https://youtu.be/5rjZ8Q3ARsY>

Confession

"The parents have eaten sour grapes, But the children's teeth are set on edge." (Jer 31:29)

Jeremiah promised an end to this saying, yet it continues to be experienced throughout the world, in our family life, in communities, across nations, and now globally as one generation changes the very climate for the next.

Part of the family eats too much, so others starve.

Part of the family consumes too much, so the very land begins to drown.

Whether in our little home family, or the global earth family...

In the silence talk to us about where our actions are hurting others, and give us the courage to change what we can.

In the silence talk to us about where others' actions are hurting us or those we love, and give us the courage to change what we can.

A time of silence

Reading Luke 5:1-11

Assurance

Perhaps we have laboured a long night for nothing

Perhaps we are afraid of our success.

Perhaps we are Sinking.

Or overwhelmed by our sin.

Hear, or hear again, Jesus' words, "Do not be afraid."

From now on you will be getting on with the real job I have for you.

Leave everything, and follow.

Because nothing in the highest heights, or deepest depths, can separate us from the love of God, revealed in the life and teachings of Jesus.

Song TIS 176: The sounds in God's world all agree

Discussion questions

Discussing ideas makes them much more likely to be remembered, and lead to action, than just hearing them in a sermon.

We invite your congregation members to turn to some people around them and discuss the following questions. They might have to pick one or two. Perhaps your weekly bible study or fellowship groups could discuss them to remind people about the sermon.

Lofa talked about tauhi Vā, or reciprocity...

1. How important to you think reciprocity is as a part of relationships in general?
2. What does reciprocity mean in terms of our relationship with the Earth?
3. If you accept the idea of reciprocity, and humanity as part of the family of life on Earth, then how can your faith community reflect that as a core of its worship and practice? How can our worship, prayers, scripture reading move us beyond the needs of the human beings and our own self-centeredness.
4. Increasing numbers of pacific islanders, the canaries in the coal mine, are being forced to relocate as climate refugees. How will you raise awareness to your local member of parliament and other parts of the community?

Video idea

Trailer for "Once was an Island." You can download it to your computer to play later. <https://vimeo.com/11017386>

Or Song idea: Pasifika

Words and demo recording available from <http://unitingearthweb.org.au/worship/soc/88-soc-oceansun.html>

Offering

Prayers of the people

Lofa said,

"The words I often hear from my brothers and sisters from the South Pacific is "Why are we paying for the sins of those big polluters, when we have looked after nature and stayed faithful to the reciprocal relationship set by our ancestors?" "Why are we the poorest countries drowning when it's the big empires who created all this this chaos of nationalism, globalisation etc?"

Here is a prayer by Archbishop Winston Halapua of the Diocese of Polynesia, Anglican Church of Aotearoa/New Zealand

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D82UUugxm4w>

this prayer offers prayers for the creatures of our exploited oceans, for communities affected by rising seas, for the communities of the

Pacific who are at the frontlines of climate change, and for a renewed relationship of love and care for the Earth.

Actions (1 John 3:17-18)

If you have decided to encourage your congregation to look into switching energy providers, this week would be a good week to hand out the flyer for people to take home and read, and encourage them to make the switch!

Available from www.unitingearthweb.org.au/make-the-switch

Commissioning

We are part of the family, with our reciprocal responsibilities to other creatures, including humans, whose livelihoods depend on our oceans.

Let's not be discouraged, or overwhelmed, or paralysed by our own sense of sin and complicity.

Let us instead hear the words of Jesus- Do not be afraid! Come!

Blessing

May the love of God, the kindness of Jesus, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all, now and always.

Amen.

Song

TIS 674: Inspired by love and anger

ⁱ If you are unsure, have a look at <http://aiatsis.gov.au/explore/articles/aiatsis-map-indigenous-australia>

ⁱⁱ From the preamble to the UCA constitution, <https://assembly.uca.org.au/resources/covenanting/item/668-the-revised-preamble>