

Matariki 2026

SEASONS OF GRACE

QUARTERLY MAGAZINE
OF THE ALEXANDRA CLYDE LAUDER UNION PARISH



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Editorial



July is Bible month. I am sometimes asked for suggestions of what Bible to buy. There are two kinds of Bible publication. One prioritises accurate translation. The other paraphrases for impact.

The most accurate recent translation, faithful to the original languages, is the New Revised Standard Version Updated Edition (NRSVue) published in 2021. It updates the NRSV published in 1989, the translation on the Table at Church. Why an updated version? Thirty years of discoveries of ancient texts and new insights needed to be incorporated. The NRSVue is the most ecumenical translation. I mostly use the NRSV versions. They are suitable for reading in Church.

Another version might be used for a special reason. Most other versions are paraphrases. For example, when I was first a Christian, I read the Living Bible that used popular language.

Does the version matter? Yes, it does. Versions change meanings. The NRSV versions say “the kingdom of God is among you.” (Luke 17:21). The Good News Bible, a paraphrase rather than a translation, says “the kingdom of God is within you.” A very different meaning.

The Bible is one of the ways God engages us so we keep reading, listening and meditating.

Kerry Enright




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MISSION

To follow Jesus, joining with people in responding to God's Spirit in our communities.

VISION

A vibrant faith community where generations and cultures grow together, constantly being renewed and engaging our district.



Alexandra Clyde Lauder
UNION PARISH

SIGNPOSTS

- Engage district
- Speak out
- Lead effectively
- Renew worship

Focus physical and financial resource

Matariki - Puaka

In 2024 I had a task with a difference as St John chaplain: blessing newly installed solar panels at the Wānaka Ambulance Station. It was the week of Matariki, or Puanga/Puaka where geography blocks Matariki itself from first sight, as here in the south and in Taranaki, for example. This star is connected with health and well-being. Other stars relate to food from the land and food from the sky, fresh water and sea water and their creatures, the winter weather and the winds that help forecast next season's weather. There is a star for future hopes, and the star Pōhutukawa is for remembering our loved ones who have died.

Matariki/Puaka is a time to pause, to remember and to be thankful for the sources of our livelihood. And it is a time for hope; a time with the short days of mid-winter and therefore reduced activity, though on the land, it can be very busy feeding out and shifting breaks.

So back to the St John task: how does one bless solar panels?

Marking Puaka involves looking upwards, a focus we were also asked to take on Ascension Sunday in mid-May. This is clearly relevant to solar panels, which are aimed to face the northern sky. If you think about it, these panels are amazing things. Like chlorophyll in plants they tap energy directly from beyond the planet. Not confined to the energy that is stored in the planet - which as it is used does harm to the planet's delicate balance mechanisms - you could say that they open and receptive, drawing energy from beyond.

A good faith model too.

Connecting, then, with Puaka, I adapted a prayer by Bronwyn White.

Light of Matariki stars
Light of Mārama – the moon
Light of Rā – the sun

our father the sky
the atmosphere around us;
dreamers and scatterers of stars.

Light of worlds and galaxies
reflect off us
shine in us

Light
Lightened
Weightless
Enlightened:

that we may be light-sharers
peace-makers
care-givers
ngā tamariki – children
of earth and sky

Let us be light.
Let us shine!
Amen

Robyn McPhail

Election year pondering

Vote for Resources to Thrive

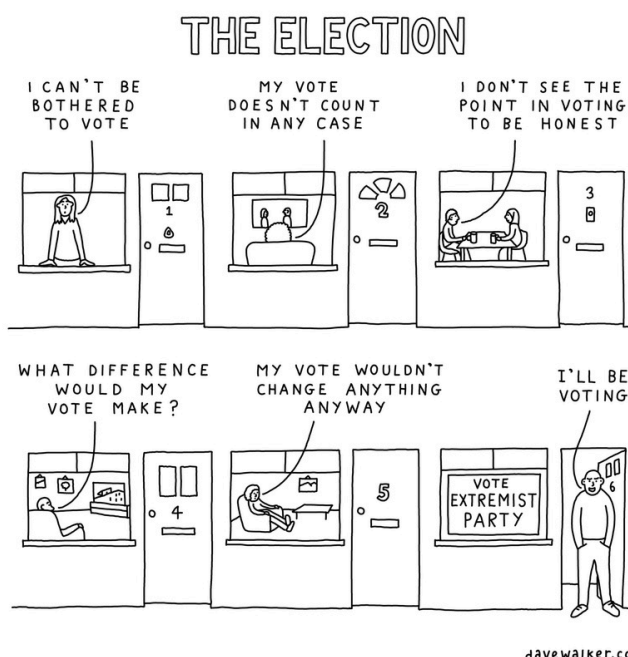
Following the 2017 election there was a strong commitment across Parliament to reduce child poverty. Three elections later our governments have failed to reach the targets set by agreement in 2018. One in seven children now live in households who cannot afford basic essentials.

It hasn't always been like this. Until the 1980s our welfare system worked fairly well to provide a minimum standard of living for almost everyone. Policy changes since then benefitted people already wealthy, and steadily reduced income support for those with least.

Households living without the resources they need work hard to find ways to care for their families, stretch every dollar, and navigate complex systems. However, no one can thrive when they have no real options.

As we approach the election later this year, we can ask our candidates and political parties to make responsible and wise decisions that benefit everyone in society. Policies that raise income support, build affordable housing, and strengthen workplace protections can open the way for households to live well. When households have capacity to plan, children will be able to get what they need to thrive, now and through to adulthood.

There can be enough for everyone with well-designed systems and policy.



For more detail please see Child Poverty statistics at:

www.stats.govt.nz ; Child Poverty Action Group www.cpag.org.nz (various fact sheets);

Mana Mokopuna Children & Young People's Commission
www.manamokopuna.org.nz (Position Statement on child poverty reduction)

Mavis Duncanson
Parish Council,
Speaking Out portfolio

Seven Spiritual Practices

For Bible month in July the Bible Society invites us to sign up to 52 Bible Reading Plan, reading the Bible through the coming year.

Find out more at biblesociety.org.nz/be-equipped/

For this issue's Seven Spiritual Practices, here is the first week. And note a rest day is a spiritual practice!



Read

Day 1	Genesis 1:1-5	Day 5	Genesis 1:26-28
Day 2	Genesis 1:6-13	Day 6	Genesis 1:29-31
Day 3	Genesis 1:14-19	Day 7	Rest Day
Day 4	Genesis 1:20-25		

Why not go deeper and discover how the whole of Scripture comes and works together by also reading: Job 38:4-11, Psalm 8:5-8, Psalm 139:13-18 and John 1:1-5.



Look

- What does this passage say about God?
- What does this passage say about you?
- Which verse stands out to you most and why?



Live

- If you are able, get outdoors for a walk this week and thank God for his world.
- Use some crayons, pencils or paints to create a self/family portrait to celebrate your unique identity.



Pray

Father God, how incredible it is to know that you are the maker of all things, including me. I thank you, that for all the vast galaxies, deep blue oceans, and wonderful wildlife, that I am the one made in your image. I thank you, Father, that I am fearfully and wonderfully made; a masterpiece. Help me, Lord, to not only remember this, but to see and love all others who are also made in your image as you do. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

From the World Church Family

The World Council of Churches interviewed our Methodist Church president recently. In the interview Dr Te Aroha Rountree reflects on an ongoing journey of faith, climate justice, and community identity.

Her people from the far north were among the first converted to Christianity. With experience and identity as Christians somewhat different to the apparent mainstream, their ways of understanding and practising Christianity are shaped by their cultural worldview.

On the question of building relationships and bridges across different communities, she values her experience with Te Runanga Whakawhanaunga i ngā Hāhi, the National Māori Council of Churches. Māori are instinctively relational and ecumenical by default: “Our cultural values require us to be inclusive.” Her teaching at University also emphasises interfaith engagement.

Asked about the challenges facing churches in the Pacific, Te Aroha says the greatest is climate justice. Pacific communities have contributed the least, yet they are among the most immediately and severely affected. She says that we need address the realities, locally and globally, and “it’s not enough to talk – we must act. That action must be collaborative, working alongside those most impacted rather than trying to ‘fix’ things from the outside.”

She also mentions social issues: family violence is a significant concern and faith can be both a help and a hindrance. Honest conversations can be blocked by faith that says “just pray more and things will get better,” the root causes remaining hidden. With sometimes a disconnect between what is preached publicly and what happens in private, Te Aroha says we need to work on “how to address these contradictions in meaningful and effective ways.”

The full interview is available at oikoumene.org/news, scroll down to In depth

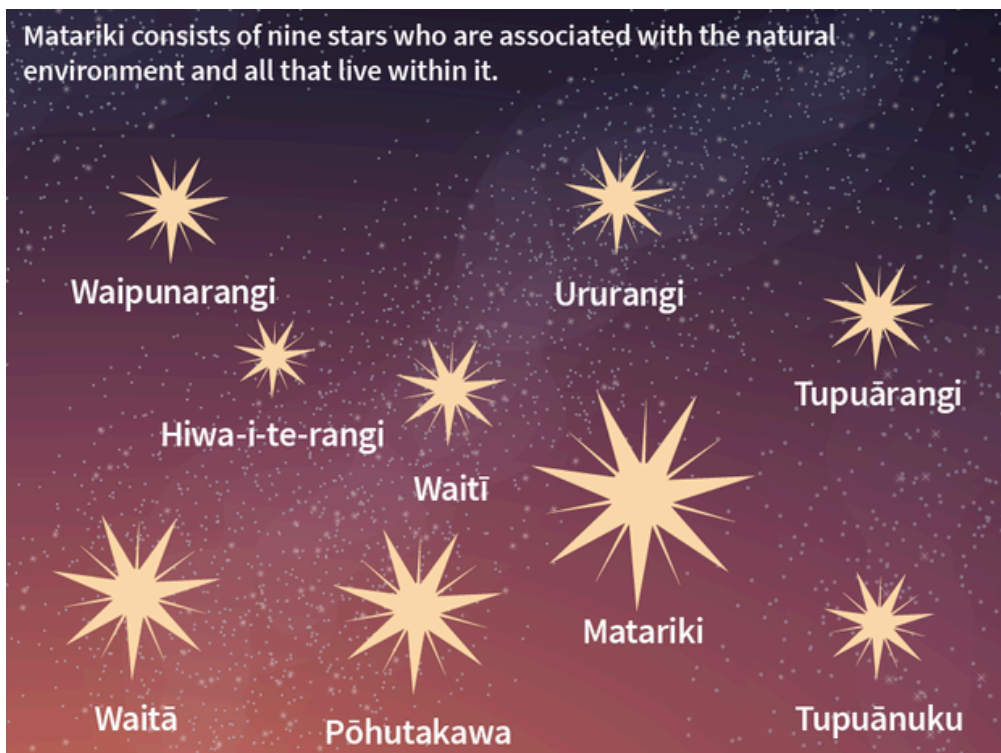
Photo: Marcelo Schneider/WCC



Children in Church

Our Parish welcomes people of all ages to participate in activities including Sunday morning worship. We are fortunate to have children who attend most Sundays and enrich our time together. Our time together each week provides a chance for different generations to learn from each other. Check out our Ascension diarama on our website: <https://alexchurch.org.nz/join-with-us/worship-with-us/>

The activities on these pages are for people of all ages to make Matariki visibly part of your household and make connections with stories from our Christian faith.



Stars

Check out these stories from the Bible where stars are up front and talk about what they get you thinking:

Genesis 1:14-66

Genesis 15:5

Amos 5:8

Psalms 8:3-4

Genesis 22:17-18

Matthew 2:1-12

Children at primary school and day care will have their creative juices running in the lead up to 10 July. You can continue this at home and get the adults involved too. Tamariki, you be the teachers!

This video shows you how to weave a vibrant yarn star

[instagram.com/reels/C7QlrgFvf2Q/](https://www.instagram.com/reels/C7QlrgFvf2Q/)

Name: _____

GOD'S PROMISE TO ABRAHAM



God said to Abraham “Look up at the sky and count the stars – if indeed you can count them. So shall your descendants be.” –Genesis 15:5

Colouring In is not just for kids,
feel free to share photos of your completed work with us online
email to comms@alexchurch.org.nz

Unity in a Polarising Age

Social cohesion is weakening in New Zealand according to a recent report from the Helen Clark Foundation. There is opportunity for the Church to consider how it can help strengthen it. That is a reason a recent theological conference in Dunedin discussed unity in a polarising age.

The conference was part of the celebration of the 150th anniversary of Presbyterian theological education in Dunedin and the 125th anniversary of the Presbyterian Church. Andrew Howley, Mavis Duncanson and Kerry Enright from our congregation attended.

Ecumenism of the Head, Heart, and Feet

The Rev'd Dr Jordan Redding, minister of St Heliers Presbyterian Church in Auckland, argued that rising polarisation and declining social cohesion—seen in falling trust, widening inequality, and global political unrest—demand a renewed Christian vision of unity. Drawing on insights from the Sixth World Conference on Faith & Order of the World Council of Churches, he highlighted “ecumenism of the head, heart, and feet,” emphasising the last as a call to humble, justice-oriented service. Foot-washing symbolises Christlike meekness that resists wealth accumulation and nurtures the common good.

Redding urged the Presbyterian Church to foster belonging, worth, inclusion, participation, and acceptance so that it becomes a unifying presence in a fractured society.

Grounded in Whenua, Covenant, and Truth-telling

The Rev'd Tara Tautari, General Secretary of the Methodist Church of New Zealand, Te Hāhi Weteriana o Aotearoa, reflected on the theme by grounding the Church's calling in whenua, covenant, and truth-telling. She argued that what appears as polarisation may actually be “the breaking of relationships that were never ‘just’ to begin with,” and insisted that unity must confront history, power, and cost.

Te Tiriti o Waitangi shapes authentic unity through shared power, honouring difference, and embracing loss for justice. She challenged the Church to face its complicity, remain within unresolved tensions, and live into the unsettling truth that “we belong to one another in Christ,” allowing that belonging to transform us.

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Blessed are the Peacemakers

The Rev'd Dr Rebecca Dudley of Dunedin, a theologian with a doctorate in international law, teaches diplomats negotiating skills. Rebecca reflected on peace-making through the lens of the Beatitude "Blessed are the peacemakers," drawing on her experience in Northern Ireland and the Corrymeela Community. She illustrated unity through the courageous witness of a Presbyterian minister and Catholic priest who chose to meet publicly and visit bereaved families together during the Troubles.



Dudley identified two core peace-making gifts—awareness and intention—including confession, resisting fascination with conflict, attending to the stories we tell, and noticing when identities harden. She urged relationships across difference and building just, trustworthy institutions, reminding us that peace-making offers no quick fixes but carries a Gospel blessing.

Alexandra reflects the wider trends. The gospel offers ways for cohesion to be strengthened and polarisation to be limited. Proclaiming that gospel helps our communities.

Kerry Enright



Rev Tamiana Thrupp, Moderator Te Aka Puahou, and Rev Alofa Lale, minister of First Church, presiding at communion during the 150th celebration service

An Eco-Lens on Energy Disruption

Global instability is again exposing the fragility of our dependence on fossil fuels. The standoff following Israeli and US military action against Iran, and Iran's subsequent retaliation, has led to severe disruption in the Strait of Hormuz. This narrow waterway carries a significant proportion of global oil supply, and its partial closure and militarisation has intensified the US/Israel action against Iran into a global fuel crisis.

For many in our communities, the effects are crippling. Rising fuel costs are felt in food prices, transport costs, and the growing pressure on parish budgets and social services. The Eco Church framework helps us interpret this not only as an economic disruption, but as a spiritual and ecological challenge about how we live within creation and how systems of extraction shape human and environmental wellbeing.

How are our Churches Responding?

Across our partner churches, Presbyterian, Methodist, and Anglican, there is a shared conviction that caring for creation is integral to Christian faith and mission. Alongside this, the global church's Ecumenical Decade of Climate Justice Action (2025–2034), *“Moving Together in Ecological Metanoia for Transformation,”** calls Christians worldwide into deeper repentance and transformation. It frames climate justice as an expression of faith in the triune God and an integral part of discipleship.

At its launch, Rev. Charissa Suli described how “a new Passion narrative is unfolding—not just in Scripture, but in species loss, in droughts, and in floods.” Yet this is not without hope. Even amid climate breakdown, the Church confesses that God is at work—restoring, redeeming, and renewing creation—and that we are called to participate as co-workers in that transformation.

Profiting from Crisis

A recent *Guardian* article noted that major oil and gas companies, along with producers, are positioned to make an estimated US\$234 billion windfall profits if prices remain near US\$100 per barrel. This raises uncomfortable but necessary questions about the relationship between energy, conflict, and profit.

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*oikoumene.org/what-we-do/care-for-creation-and-climate-justice/ecumenical-decade-of-climate-justice-action

Theologically, this invites reflection. Oil is part of God's created order, yet its extraction and combustion at industrial scale have become deeply destabilising to creation. It also exposes injustice: energy crises are never experienced equally. The poorest households, Pacific nations, and future generations bear the greatest burden, while others accrue significant financial gain.

Kaitiakitanga - Being Faithful Guardians

An eco church response provides us with hope and a way forward. This includes practical steps such as energy audits of church buildings and installing solar panels.

Transport practices are equally important. Parishes are exploring carpooling, cycling, shared parish transport, and even shifting some meetings online. These are simple acts, but they are also visible signs of change—shaped by both economic pressure and ecological awareness. They remind us that discipleship is embodied and that faith is lived in ordinary living.

Liturgically, there is also a deeper invitation. The Church is called to make space for lament and repentance over ecological harm and fossil fuel dependence. Creation theology reminds us that we are not separate from the earth but formed from it. Justice demands we name unequal impacts. And worship becomes a place where grief, confession, and hope are held together before God.

From Vulnerability to Metanoia

The current fuel crisis exposes how vulnerable we are to systems built on concentrated fossil fuel dependence and geopolitical chokepoints. It also reveals deep inequality in who bears the cost. As churches, our response must therefore be both pastoral and prophetic: caring for those in need while also naming the systems that generate instability and harm.

In this season, the Church is called into ecological metanoia—conversion not only of belief, but of practice, imagination, and worship. The sight of people arriving at church by bike and on foot is not a solution to a global crisis, but it is a sign that another way of living is possible and indeed is already taking shape among us.

Andrew Howley,
abridged from article for Touchstone May 2026

***Touchstone* is produced monthly and can be accessed at
methodist.org.nz/whakapapa/news/touchstone/**



News from Parish Council

Parish Council held its monthly meeting on Wednesday 20 May.

- Based on feedback received, worship will remain at 10a.m. each Sunday
- Soup with bread rolls will be served after worship for six weeks from Sunday 21st June. Volunteers are requested to make soup. Please bring empty ice cream containers to church to freeze leftovers.
- Parish Council is reviewing and improving our health and safety systems. Simon Checketts has been appointed our Health and Safety officer.
- Members of Parish Council and worship leaders attended Child Safety WOF training on Saturday 23rd June. A child protection officer is to be appointed.
- The Parish Council is progressing the “focus physical and financial resource” signpost. This has involved so far the installation of additional heat pumps to the worship space to enable comfortable all year use, consultation with the Synod of Otago and Southland property enabler, a comprehensive building inspection by Breens, the seeking of a report into hazardous materials in the building (Asbestos), and a professional review of the Audio systems.

Parish Council: Linda Armstrong, Steve Battrick, Simon Checketts, Mavis Duncanson, Peter Griffeon, Sue Melville, and Rev Andrew Howley (moderator).

Secretary: Helen Williamson

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Email comms@alexchurch.org.nz or visit:
alexchurch.org.nz/parish-magazine-signup/

Upcoming Worship

Sunday 7 th June	Monthly Communion - Pentecost 2	10am St Enoch's Alexandra
Sunday 14 th June	Pentecost 3	10am St Enoch's Alexandra
Sunday 21 st June	Pentecost 4 Soup Brunch	10am St Enoch's Alexandra
Sunday 28 th June	Pentecost 5 Soup Brunch	10am St Enoch's Alexandra
Sunday 5 th July	Monthly Communion - Pentecost 6 Bible Month begins, Soup Brunch	10am St Enoch's Alexandra
Sunday 12 th July	Matariki Soup Brunch Matariki Worship and Shared Kai	10am St Enoch's Alexandra 2pm Omakau School
Sunday 19 th July	Rev Andrew Doubleday (UCANZ Ministry Facilitator), Soup Brunch	10am St Enoch's Alexandra
Sunday 26 th July	Pentecost 10, Bible Month Concludes, Soup Brunch	10am St Enoch's Alexandra
Sunday 2 nd August	Monthly Communion - Pentecost 11	10am St Enoch's Alexandra
Sunday 9 th August	Pentecost 12	10am St Enoch's Alexandra
Sunday 16 th August	Pentecost 13	10am St Enoch's Alexandra
Sunday 23 rd August	Pentecost 14	10am St Enoch's Alexandra
Sunday 30 th August	Shared Worship with Dunstan Anglican Parish	10am St Aidan's Alexandra

Contact Details

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