



**World Day of Prayer**

**7 March 2025**

***I made you wonderful***

Shortened version of the Worship Service  
prepared by the Christian women of the Cook Islands

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## **BEFORE THE SERVICE**

Have the sound of ocean waves playing as participants arrive (10-15 minutes before the service starts). These ocean waves can be audio or video recordings. Distribute a flower to each person who enters and invite them to put it behind their ear or wear it. Leaders 1, 2 and 3 stand together at the front of the congregation as the service begins. The congregation says the words in bold.

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## WELCOME

**Leader:** Kia orana! Today's worship service comes to us from a group of ecumenical Christian women from the Cook Islands in the Pacific. Kia orana is a phrase in the Maori language that Cook Islanders use to greet each other. Kia orana means more than just hello. It means: May you live long and may you live well. May you shine like the sun. May you dance with the waves. Our sisters in the Cook Islands have invited the whole world to greet each other today with this Maori phrase. Kia orana!

**All: Kia orana!**

## OPENING PRAYER

**Leader:** Let us pray to God our Creator. God who made us wonderful, thank you for this fellowship of sisters and brothers around the world. As we come together, help us open our hearts to you and to each other. Still our minds from all the worries that preoccupy us. Reconnect us to you and to each other so that we all may glow brightly and radiate your love to the world.

**All: Amen**

**Leader:** Take a moment and notice your own breathing. Notice how your breath comes in and out, like the waves of the sea. *[Pause]* Every one of us gathered here is animated with the breath of life! All of us share in that astonishing gift of life. As surely as the waves of the ocean rise and fall, our breath flows in and out. Let's take a moment to connect. Imagine the blood flowing through your veins and arteries; flowing like rivers. Just as a river brings nutrients to the shores and the fields of the earth, your blood brings nutrients to every organ in your body. *[Pause]* Isn't it amazing that God created our bodies to work this way; to bring health and life to every organ within; to keep us strong, alive and vibrant each and every day.

## HYMN: O GOD, YOU SEARCH ME AND YOU KNOW ME

Bernadette Farrell

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## AFFIRMATION OF FAITH

**Leader:** God made us wonderful from the very beginning, weaving us together in our mother's womb.

**All: Amen.**

Leader: Every single one of us is unique and deeply loved by God whose Son, Jesus, died on the cross for us and rose again defeating death.

**All: Amen.**

Leader: And the Holy Spirit continues to flow through every moment of every day, helping us to feel the astonishing gift of life.

**All: Amen.**

**Leader:** Think about all who are gathered here today, both in this space and all around the world. Take a moment to look around and appreciate the gift of each other! *[Pause]*

## THE WORD OF GOD

PSALM 139:1-6 (NRSV)

**Reader:** O LORD, you have searched me and known me. You know when I sit down and when I rise up; you discern my thoughts from far away. You search out my path and my lying down and are acquainted with all my ways. Even before a word is on my tongue, O LORD, you know it completely. You hem me in, behind and before, and lay your hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is so high that I cannot attain it.

**Mii:** Kia orana.

My name is Mii. I am fifteen years old. February 2022 was a scary month for me. It was the month that my family first had contact with someone who was Covid19 positive. When I first heard about it I freaked out.

My dad felt bad because he was the one who brought it into our home. I was really upset because I thought we were going to die. I knew people who had died from Covid. I thought that I would die and not see my nephew when he was born.

I started to think about things that I haven't experienced yet. I started to pray. I pleaded with God to look after my family. I didn't know what would happen next. I turned to the Lord and asked for guidance. I was terrified and scared but I knew that prayer would help me to feel calm and it worked.



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I stopped crying and the pressure lifted from my heart.

Just then I realised that God knows every detail of my life. God knows my distress and fear. Knowing that God knows, and cares about me, helps me to feel calm when I am afraid. God knows me and God knows you. God knows everything we are going through.

### **PSALM 139:7-12 (NRSV)**

**Reader:** Where can I go from your spirit? Or where can I flee from your presence? If I ascend to heaven, you are there; if I make my bed in Sheol, you are there. If I take the wings of the morning and settle at the farthest limits of the sea, even there your hand shall lead me, and your right hand shall hold me fast. If I say, "Surely the darkness shall cover me, and night wraps itself around me," even the darkness is not dark to you; the night is as bright as the day, for darkness is as light to you.

**Vainiu:** Kia orana. My name is Vainiu. My grandmother, Mama Mereanu, encouraged her grandchildren to speak Maori. I looked up to her and she had a huge impact on my childhood. It was through her that I learned the valuable and lifelong skills of how to plant and prepare food, and to speak the Reo Aitutakian dialect properly. I strongly believe that our elders play a significant role in shaping who we are and where we come from.

Formal education during the early years of my life did not have a positive impact on me because what I learned at home from my parents, grandparents and family contradicted what I was taught by my teachers in a Western classroom.

I used to think to myself, how do English books and lessons help me plant vegetables, cook food, wash the clothes and feed the chickens and pigs. A strong feeling of loss led me to withdraw from engaging in the classroom.

One time in school I remember being caught speaking our indigenous language. My teacher punished me by making me wear a cardboard sign that said, 'I am a Maori speaker'. She put me in detention and, on a hot day, made me pull out prickly weeds called 'pikikaa' on the school playground. I was humiliated and shamed in front of my peers. I never forgot that day and so, as a result of that experience, I was determined to speak English and say little in my mother tongue. This is just one example of how my language and culture were devalued.

God gave us unique and special languages throughout the world, and we should honour and respect those languages. I believe that the Maori language needs to be paramount in our teaching and learning environments. Teachers and students can encourage Maori to be spoken,

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taught and written in all subjects and parents can give our Maori language a chance to survive by speaking it at home.

During those formative years in my childhood, even though I was devalued and shamed by the school system, I knew that God was still with me. Even when we are cast out and treated with disrespect, God is still with us.

God goes with us to the darkness at the bottom of the ocean, where there is no light, and God helps lead us out of that darkness into a wonderful light.

### **PSALM 139:13-18 (NRSV)**

**Reader:** For it was you who formed my inward parts; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; that I know very well. My frame was not hidden from you, when I was being made in secret, intricately woven in the depths of the earth. Your eyes beheld my unformed substance. In your book were written all the days that were formed for me, when none of them as yet existed. How weighty to me are your thoughts, O God! How vast is the sum of them! I try to count them—they are more than the sand; I come to the end—I am still with you.

**Dr Dawn:** Kia orana. My name is Dr Dawn. Becoming a doctor was one of the hardest things I have ever done but it's worth it when a mother shares that her child is now healthy and thriving after I did my part in helping to save that child's life. It truly warms my heart.

One of my first priorities as a baby doctor was to make sure all newborn babies get a check-up by our team within 24 hours. I also helped my Paediatric Department become better equipped and skilled to handle very sick and premature babies. We established guidelines and protocols to help direct our work. We improved the connection between the Cook Islands and our great supporters at the Starship Children's Hospital in Auckland, New Zealand.

Having more specialised care has been a major factor in improving the health of our children. We pride ourselves on being the only Pacific island country to have no maternal deaths since 1995. I enjoy working with children so much. They give me the strength to go on serving at a time when the Cook Islands face the threat of our workforce leaving the country.

God made me wonderful and blessed me with motivation and the opportunity to study medicine. I responded to God's blessing by serving the people of the Cook Islands as a doctor.



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As I have worked in healthcare over the years, I realise more and more that God has made all of us wonderful. Our bodies, minds and spirits are knit together by our loving Creator. We are all fearfully and wonderfully made.

## **PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION**

**Leader:** As we come to our time of prayer, let us prepare our hearts to come before God. When we pray, we deepen our relationship with God and become more connected to all of God's creation.

As we open our hearts and spirits to God, let us pray:

Magnificent God, we are in awe of you. We give you glory because of who you are: the Creator of the entire world. You created the beautiful Cook Islands: the fertile lands, the mountains and the oceans. You created beauty in every part of the world. You created roosters on the land and whales in the sea. You formed us human beings; we are fearfully and wonderfully made in your image. All creation reveals your majestic glory.

**All:     God who knows us, God who is with us,  
          God who made us, to you we pray.**

**Leader:** Faithful God, thank you for taking care of us in every moment of our lives. You have been with us in our fear and our anxiety, our depression and our frustration. You have helped us bear financial limitations and uncertainties about the future. You have been present with us through cyclones and tsunamis, wildfires and earthquakes. You held us through the COVID-19 pandemic that still affects the physical and mental well-being of so many.

Thank you for all the women leading our powerful prayer movement. We praise you for those who have passed the World Day of Prayer baton from the past into the present. We are truly grateful for your abundance and we cannot help but praise you for your faithfulness.

**All:     God who knows us, God who is with us,  
          God who made us, to you we pray.**

**Leader:** God of Mercy, we come before you with humble hearts seeking your forgiveness of our many sins – in word, in deed and in thought. We have spoken unkind words to those around us, neglecting to treat them as wonderfully made by you. We have polluted the oceans and destroyed the environment, failing to care for your beautiful creation. Our pride and lack of courage have caused harm to ourselves and others. All of this has caused us to miss out on your blessings and love.

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**All:     God who knows us, God who is with us,  
          God who made us, to you we pray.**

**Leader:** Gracious God, please hear the longings of our hearts. Re-create your character and image within us. Open our spiritual eyes and minds to accept our divine beauty and inspire us to share this beauty with others.

God, help us to honour the divine beauty in everyone, appreciating each person that you have created.

Wise Teacher, help us to recognise that you are always present, no matter what circumstances we face.

Loving Spirit, we need your embrace, so that we might shine and radiate your love to the whole world.

**All:     God who knows us, God who is with us,  
          God who made us, to you we pray.**

**Leader:** God of Wisdom, we pray for the leaders in our world.

Guide their hearts and minds to have integrity as they make decisions. Inspire them and bless them with vision to move our world towards unity and peace.

We pray for women and girls who are vulnerable in our societies. Create the conditions so that elderly women can live with respect and dignity. Give our young women the education, aspiration and vision to develop promising futures. Provide strength, courage and patience to all women experiencing domestic violence.

**All:     God who knows us, God who is with us,  
          God who made us, to you we pray.**

**Leader:** God of Healing, restore us to wellness. Heal us from physical diseases such as cancer, diabetes and heart disease. Relieve us from mental illness and heal our emotional wounds. Protect us from the selfishness and greed that threaten our spiritual well-being.

God, help our World Day of Prayer movement unite our communities in prayer. Help us make your love visible. Strengthen us to continue loving and supporting all who are in need. Lead us to treat others as wonderfully made by you, so that all people feel they are important, cared for and treasured

**All:     God who knows us, God who is with us,  
          God who made us, to you we pray.**



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**Leader:** Let us conclude our intercessions by saying the Lord's Prayer together.

**All:** Our Father in heaven,  
hallowed be your name,  
your kingdom come,  
your will be done,  
on earth as in heaven.  
Give us today our daily bread.  
Forgive us our sins  
as we forgive those who sin against us.  
Lead us not into temptation  
but deliver us from evil.  
For the kingdom, the power,  
and the glory are yours  
now and for ever.  
**Amen.**

## **COMMITMENT TO PRAYERFUL ACTION**

**Leader:** So what now? What happens when we realise that God is with us and for us? What changes when we recognise that we are fearfully and wonderfully made? What we believe often becomes our reality. When we think differently, we live differently. Changing the way we think changes the way we act. Each one of us is God's masterpiece. How will that realisation cause us to live differently?

**Mii:** When we realise that God knows us, we can find peace amidst our fears.

**Vainiu:** When we trust that God is always with us, we can find strength even in the midst of struggles.

**Dr Dawn:** When we understand that we are unique and special, made wonderful by God, we can use our gifts and talents to serve and bless the world.

**All:** **Amen!**

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**Leader:** As we come to the end of our service let us join together in our closing hymn.

## **HYMN: THE DAY THOU GAVEST, LORD, IS ENDED**

The day Thou gavest, Lord, is ended,  
The darkness falls at Thy behest;  
To Thee our morning hymns ascended,  
Thy praise shall sanctify our rest.

We thank Thee that Thy Church unsleeping,  
While earth rolls onward into light,  
Through all the world her watch is keeping,  
And rests not now by day or night.

As o'er each continent and island  
The dawn leads on another day,  
The voice of prayer is never silent,  
Nor dies the strain of praise away.

The sun that bids us rest, is waking  
Our friends beneath the western sky,  
And hour by hour fresh lips are making  
Thy wondrous doings heard on high.

So be it, Lord, Thy throne shall never,  
Like earth's proud empires, pass away;  
Thy kingdom stands, and grows forever,  
Till all Thy creatures own Thy sway.

*John Ellerton*

## **BLESSING**

**Leader:** Go now and live this good news: God is our Creator. God made us wonderful. God knows us and God is with us. Treat yourself as a precious and beloved child of God, and treat others as precious and beloved children of God.

**All: Amen!**

## **NOTES FOR THE SHORTENED SERVICE**

*The shortened service is designed for smaller groups, where it is not possible to hold a full service (eg. Residential care homes, prisons etc.) It will not be appropriate in every situation. Sometimes, a short introduction to the World Day of Prayer, a brief PowerPoint presentation, singing or listening to the hymns, followed by the reading and a prayer reflecting the theme will be enough.*

*If you or anyone who attends the service wishes to make a donation towards the work of the WDP, this can be done:-*

*By cheque, made payable to WDP and sent to WDP, Commercial Road, Tunbridge Wells, Kent TN1 2RR.*

*By online donation via our website: [www.wwdp.org.uk](http://www.wwdp.org.uk) minimum £5*

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