

JAEI February 2023 Environmental Prayer Diary

The purpose of this Prayer Diary is to provide subjects for your reflection and prayer as the Spirit moves you.

Wednesday	1	"Someday the Earth will weep. She will beg for her life. She will cry tears of blood. You will make a choice – if you will help her or let her die, and when she dies, you too will die."
		Hollow Horn Bear, Oglala Lakota, 1932
		World Wetlands Day
Thursday	2	Theme for 2023: "Wetland Restoration".
		What is a wetland? – the term "wetland" includes fresh and saltwater marshes and swamps – any land area that can keep water long enough to let wetland plants and soils develop. They function like a sponge, soaking up water that comes in with excessive rain,
		tides, or from periodically flooding rivers.
		Wetlands are our natural assets and natural infrastructures able to provide a range of products, functions and services - free of charge. Once considered valueless wastelands that needed to be converted to other uses in order to improve their usefulness to people, wetlands are in fact unique, productive ecosystems where terrestrial and aquatic habitats meet and play a critical role in maintaining many natural cycles and supporting a wide range of biodiversity and purify and replenish our water – especially in rural areas. Wetlands have been used for centuries as grazing for domestic stock, and as a source of reeds used for thatching, hut construction and basket weaving. Wetlands of Southern Africa are of international importance as they are the southern destination for many migratory wading birds.
		Sadly, In South Africa, wetlands around the country have been degraded by human induced activities such as agriculture and residential development where the vegetation, soils and/or hydrology have been adversely altered, resulting in lost or reduced functional value. About half of South Africa's wetlands have already been destroyed or converted through draining, the building of dams, incorrect burning and overgrazing, invasive alien species, waste disposal, water abstraction, agricultural, urban development and inappropriate land management, leading to the present precarious state of our wetland assets. The consequences of wetland loss include diminished water security, desertification, reduced food security, reduction in biodiversity, lost livelihoods and increased vulnerability to natural disasters, especially floods

		and droughts. With climate change predicted to change rainfall patterns, our wetlands will play a more important role than ever before in reducing the impacts of floods and droughts.
		Wetland restoration is crucial to our future water security and also biodiversity. It is possible to restore or recreate a wetland, but it is an expensive and time- consuming exercise. The "Working for Wetlands" programme was established in 2002 which is a joint initiative of various environmental Government Departments and is engaged in removing thirsty invasive alien plants that pose a threat to the country's water security, agricultural productivity and biodiversity.
		The benefits accruing from the wetlands rehabilitated by Working for Wetlands include improved livelihoods, protection of agricultural resources, enhanced biodiversity, cleaner water, reduced impacts from flooding and sustained base-flows in rivers
		However, we – as citizens – also have a part to play in protecting our precious wetlands.
		We can:
		 Plant only indigenous trees, shrubs and flowers Use paper and recycled products Use non-toxic products for household cleaning and garden care Reduce, reuse and recycle household items and waste Use pesticides and fertilizers sparingly Remove invasive alien plants
		Examine your own actions continually.
Friday	3	
		Caring for the Earth isn't some
		"weird hippie" thing. It's more of
		a badass survival thing.
		If we don't have a healthy
		planet, there won't be a
		healthy anything.
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		"It becomes over clearer that climate change is the greatest threat we and
Saturday	4	"It becomes ever clearer that climate change is the greatest threat we and future generations face. A true horseman of the apocalypse."
		<i>Justin Welby,</i> Archbishop of Canterbury
Sunday	5	Jesus, Redeemer of the World, Remind us to consider the lost lilies, the disappearing sparrows; teach us not to squander precious resources; help us value habitats: seas, deserts, forests and seek to preserve this world in its diversity. Alert us to the cause of all living creatures destroyed wantonly for human greed or pleasure; Help us to value what we have left and to learn to live without taking more than we give. Amen
Monday	6	"The earth is our origin and destination. The ancient rhythms of the earth have insinuated themselves into the
		rhythms of the human h is not outside us; it is within: the clay from where the tree of the body grows.
		When we emerge from our offices, rooms and houses, we enter our natural element. We are children of the earth: people to whom the outdoors is home. Nothing can separate us from the vigour and vibrancy of this inheritance. In contrast to our frenetic, saturated lives, the earth offers a calming stillness. Movement and growth in nature takes time. The patience of nature enjoys the ease of trust and hope. There is something in our clay nature that needs to continually experience this ancient, outer ease of the world. It helps us remember who we are and why we are here."
		John O'Donohue Priest, Author & Irish Poet
Tuesday	7	Though the fig tree should not blossom, nor fruit be on the vines, the produce of the olive fail and the fields yield no food, the flock be cut off from the fold and there be no herd in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the Lord; I will take joy in the God of my salvation.
		Habakkuk 3:17–18 (ESV)

Wednesday	8	"God is the friend of silence. Trees, flowers, grass grow in silence. See the stars, moon, and sun, how they move in silence." Mother Theresa
		The Substance of God
Thursday	9	 Many indigenous spiritualities, Franciscans, and Celts saw creation as good, as a theophany or revelation of God's very being, just as Genesis taught. How did Christianity come to be so divorced from nature? John Philip Newell (b. 1953), a poet and scholar known for his work in the field of Celtic spirituality, traces the roots and impact of the doctrine creatio ex nihilo. He offers an alternative, still orthodox, view of creation based on the writings of Irenaeus, Bishop of Lyon: Irenaeus [130-202] taught that the whole of creation flows from the very "substance" of God. All things carry within them the essence of the One. Irenaeus signalled his concern about the doctrine of <i>creatio ex nihilo</i>, creation out of nothing This was to become the standard of Western Christianity's approach to creation. Creation
		would be viewed not as coming forth from the substance of God but as fashioned from afar by a distant Creator, made out of nothing from on high.
		Irenaeus intuited that this would be a disaster, that to neutralize matter, to teach that creation does not come from holy substance, would lead to the abuse of creation. It was a convenient "truth" [meaning] that the empire could do whatever it wished to matter. Matter was not holy. It had not come forth from the womb of God's Being. Rather it was made from nothing. It was essentially devoid of sacred energy. So, every imperial mind could ravage the earth's resources with impunity. It could disparage the rights of creatures and subordinate the physical well-being of its subjects. Religion had become the accomplice of the state's subordination of the earth. It had sanctioned the separation of spirit and matter.
		Irenaeus passionately taught that the substance of the earth and its creatures carries within itself the life of the Holy One. God, he said, is both "above us all and in us all." God is both transcendent and immanent. And the work of Jesus, he taught, was not to save us from our nature but to restore us to our nature and to bring us back into relationship with the deepest sound within creation. In his commentary on the Prologue to St. John's Gospel, in which all things are described as spoken into being by God, Irenaeus sees Jesus not as speaking a new word but as uttering again the first word, the sound at the beginning and the heart of life. He describes Jesus as "recapitulating" the original work of the Creator, as articulating again what we have forgotten and what needs to be repeated, the Sound from which all life has come. Jesus re-sounds the beginning. He resounds with what is deepest in the matter of the universe.

		 The Christ story is the universe story. The birth of the divine-human child is a revelation, a lifting of the veil to show us that all life has been conceived by the Spirit in the womb of the universe, that we are all divine-human creatures, that everything that has being in the universe carries within itself the sacredness of Spirit. From Richard Rohr's daily meditations www.cac.org
Friday	10	WE ARE NOT ALL IN THE SAME 'BOAT' WE ARE IN THE SAME 'STORM' SOME HAVE YACHTS, SOME HAVE YACHTS, SOME HAVE CANOES AND SOME ARE 'DROWNING' JUST BE KIND & HELP WHEN YOU CAN!
		Joel 1:13-20
Saturday	11	A Call to Lamentation
		 ¹³ Put on sackcloth, you priests, and mourn; wail, you who minister before the altar. Come, spend the night in sackcloth, you who minister before my God; for the grain offerings and drink offerings are withheld from the house of your God. ¹⁴ Declare a holy fast; call a sacred assembly. Summon the elders and all who live in the land to the house of the LORD your God and cry out to the LORD. ¹⁵ Alas for that day! For the day of the LORD is near; it will come like destruction from the Almighty. ¹⁶ Has not the food been cut off before our very eyes - joy and gladness from the house of our God? ¹⁷ The seeds are shrivelled beneath the clods. The storehouses are in ruins, the granaries have been broken down, for the grain has dried up. ¹⁸ How the cattle moan! The herds mill about because they have no pasture; even the flocks of sheep are suffering. ¹⁹ To you, LORD, I call, for fire has devoured the pastures in the wilderness and flames have burned up all the trees of the field.
		flames have burned up all the trees of the field. ²⁰ Even the wild animals pant for you; the streams of water have dried up and fire has devoured the pastures in the wilderness.

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		Joy in God's Creation
Sunday	12	O heavenly Father, <i>who hast</i> filled the world with beauty: Open our eyes to behold <i>thy</i> gracious hand in all <i>thy</i> works; that, rejoicing in <i>thy</i> whole creation, we may learn to serve <i>thee</i> with gladness; for the sake of him through whom all things were made, <i>thy</i> Son Jesus Christ our Lord. <i>Amen.</i>
Monday	13	Encyclical Letter <i>Fratelli Tutti o</i> f Pope Francis on the Fraternity and Social Friendship
		Chapter Two
		A story constantly retold
		69. The parable is clear and straightforward, yet it also evokes the interior struggle that each of us experiences as we gradually come to know ourselves through our relationships with our brothers and sisters. Sooner or later, we will all encounter a person who is suffering. Today there are more and more of them. The decision to include or exclude those lying wounded along the roadside can serve as a criterion for judging every economic, political, social and religious project. Each day we have to decide whether to be Good Samaritans or indifferent bystanders. And if we extend our gaze to the history of our own lives and that of the entire world, all of us are, or have been, like each of the characters in the parable. All of us have in ourselves something of the wounded man, something of the robber, something of the passers-by, and something of the Good Samaritan.
		70. It is remarkable how the various characters in the story change, once confronted by the painful sight of the poor man on the roadside. The distinctions between Judean and Samaritan, priest and merchant, fade into insignificance. Now there are only two kinds of people: those who care for someone who is hurting and those who pass by; those who bend down to help and those who look the other way and hurry off. Here, all our distinctions, labels and masks fall away: it is the moment of truth. Will we bend down to to touch and heal the wounds of others? Will we bend down and help another to get up? This is today's challenge, and we should not be afraid to face it. In moments of crisis, decisions become urgent. It could be said that, here and now, anyone who is neither a robber nor a passer-by is either injured himself or bearing an injured person on his shoulders.
		71. The story of the Good Samaritan is constantly being repeated. We can see this clearly as social and political inertia is turning many parts of our world into a desolate byway, even as domestic and international disputes and the robbing of opportunities are leaving great numbers of the marginalized stranded on the roadside. In his parable, Jesus does not offer alternatives; he does not ask what might have happened had the injured man or the one who helped him yielded to anger or a thirst for revenge. Jesus trusts in the best of the human spirit; with this parable, he encourages us to persevere in love, to restore dignity to the suffering and to build a society worthy of the name.
		Prayerfully consider how this is affecting our own Country

Tuesday	14	Lord, teach us to value our possessions in the right way. Make us willing to use them freely for the good of others and to share them generously without grudging. May our enjoyment of possessions be wholesome and right, and may we hold lightly all that we own. For the sake of Jesus Christ, who became poor that we might be eternally rich.
Wednesday	15	66 Being humble means recognizing that we are not on earth to see how important we can become, but to see how much difference we can make in the lives of others.
Thursday	16	When I am asked if I am pessimistic or optimistic about the future, my answer is always the same: If you look at the science about what is happening on earth and aren't pessimistic, you don't understand the data. But if you meet the people who are working to restore this earth and the lives of the poor, and you aren't optimistic, you haven't got a pulse. Paul Hawken Environmentalist, Entrepreneur, Author and Environmental Sustainability Activist
Friday	17	 Traditional Jewish prayer How wonderful, O Lord, are the works of your hands! The heavens declare your glory; the arch of sky displays your handiwork. In your love you have given us the power to behold the beauty of your world robed in all its splendour. The sun and the stars, the valleys and hills, the rivers and lakes all disclose your presence. The roaring breakers of the seas tell of your awesome might; the beasts of the field and the birds of the air speak of your wondrous will. In your goodness you have made us able to hear the music of the world. You are in our midst. A divine voice sings through all creation.

		World Pangolin Day
Saturday	18	 World Pangolin Day is observed annually on the third Saturday in February and takes place on February 18 this year. The day aims to celebrate pangolins, raise awareness and recommit international N.G.O.s to the fight against the global capturing of pangolins in Africa and Asia. Data shared by the African Pangolin Working Group shows intelligence operations have confiscated 160 live Temminck's pangolins (also known as ground or Cape pangolins) from the
		illegal trade in South Africa over the past five years. The group is mandated by the Department of Forestry Fisheries and Environment to oversee matters relating to illegal pangolin trade. Its role includes assisting in law enforcement operations, contributing expert evidence
		in court cases, rehabilitating pangolins retrieved from the illegal trade and releasing them in appropriate wild areas.
		However, the African Pangolin Working Group, fears that the number of confiscated live pangolins is just the tip of the iceberg and that only about 10% of the illegally traded pangolins are being retrieved.
		The illegal trade in South Africa has mainly involved live pangolins rather than scales which is more a feature of the trade in West and Central Africa. Pangolin scales are perceived to be a cure-all in Chinese traditional medicine. The authorities are concerned that the trade in scales will move to the south as the resource diminishes in other parts of Africa and becomes increasingly scarce. It is not known whether the trade in scales will become a significant feature of the trade in South Africa.
		Pray:
		 for a change of heart amongst poachers & that these people would find more ethical sources of income, all involved in the conservation of these incredible and unique animals.
		World Whale Day
Sunday	19	World Whale Day is dedicated to the celebration of these beloved sea mammals. This day also advocates for the conservation of whales, by promoting awareness surrounding the challenges they face in oceans across the globe, and how to help them.
		World Whale Day originated in Maui, Hawaii in 1980, to honour the humpback whales which swim off the island's coast to raise awareness surrounding the threats humpback whales face, and the threat of extinction. Since then, the day has branched out and become a global commemoration of all whales.

Even though some of South Africa's whale population has recently made a comeback, the threats posed against whales have not been eradicated, and



will continue to devastate the population until they are addressed. Have a look at some of the threats whales face.

Plastic pollution and waste is rife in every corner of the ocean, threatening marine wildlife and ecosystems, and even the seafood we eat.

Whale entanglements can fall under pollution. Trap fisheries are free-floating nets used almost universally for catching rock lobster and octopus. Nets are baited and typically designed in a way that does not allow the fish to escape. While trap fisheries are effective in their purpose, they pose a significant risk to marine life, as these free-floating ropes end up on the water surface and the ocean floor, where whales get entangled in them.

Whaling is the practice of hunting and killing whales to sell and trade their meat and its by-products. This practise has devastated whale populations around the globe. Scientists estimate that nearly three million whales were killed for commercial whaling in the 20th century.

Global warming and climate change impacts all marine life. The rise in UV radiation disrupts food chains, and has particularly devastating effects on the population of krill; a primary food source for many marine species. This has a ripple effect, impacting more and more marine life. Climate change also impacts whale migration patterns.

Harmful agal blooms – commonly known as red tide – occur when colonies of algae grow out of control and produce toxic or harmful effects on fish, shellfish, marine mammals, and birds. As the name suggests, these blooms turn the water red, and wreak havoc on marine ecosystems of both whales and their prey.

Ship strikes refers to the collision between vessels and marine animals, resulting in injuries or death. Most marine animals are underwater for the majority of the time, making them hard to spot by vessel operators. In turn, marine animals may also not be able to detect oncoming vessels, and therefore cannot move out of the way.

Action:

- Pray for all organisations involved in whale conservation
- Reduce your plastic consumption
- If you go whale watching, ensure it's with a responsible company.
- Learn more with these incredible animals there are a number of wonderful documentaries available.

The Whale's Prayer

"For all we know of the world, we know so little. Whales sing, of this we are aware, but more than that is pretty much a mystery. Scientists tell us that the blue whale's song, projecting waves of sound that touch neither the sea bottom nor the foamy surface, can extend five thousand miles through the ocean. Deep tones, like the beat of a great bass, follow one by one rhythmically, with an interval of two minutes in between. Of

		course, as we recall, the whale is holding its breath as it sings, for it is no fish. It must return to the surface to breathe after traveling underwater for nearly an hour at a time.
		St. Francis of Assisi would have taken great delight in such a miracle of God's creation. "What marvellous things it says about the Lord, that He created beings such as these!" Francis would say. Their very existence is a hymn of praise.
		Nobody knows why the blue whale sings. Perhaps only the Psalmist. "Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord. Lord, hear my prayer." Perhaps the whale's song is not in search of a mate or in defence of territory.
		Perhaps, floating in blue eternity, he sings in order to pray."
		Sue Hallett https://www.catholic365.com/article/5071/the-whales-prayer.html
		This Is My Father's World
Monday	20	This is my father's world And to my listening ears All nature sings, and round me rings The music of the spheres
		This is my father's world The birds their carols raise The morning light, the lily white Declare their maker's praise
		This is my father's world I rest me in the thought Of rocks and trees, of skies and seas His hand the wonders wrought
		This is my father's world Oh, let me never forget That though the wrong seems oft so strong God is the ruler yet
		This is my father's world Why should my heart be sad? The Lord is king, let the heavens ring God reigns, let the earth be glad
		This is my father's world He shines in all that's fair In the rustling grass, I hear him pass He speaks to me everywhere
		In the rustling grass, I hear him pass He speaks to me everywhere
		Songwriters: C. Barny Robertson / Dp / Maltbie Babcock Listen

		Reflection
Tuesday	21	The Late Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu "Genesis in the Bible declares that human beings have been created in the image of God and are bidden to have dominion over the rest of creation. Made in the <i>imago dei</i> , they are thus God's representatives, and so must hold this dominion not ruthlessly, aggressively exploitatively, but as God would hold dominion, caringly, lovingly and compassionately.
		There is a very intimate connection between us humans and the rest of creation. It is mystical and real. So when Adam and Eve muck up their lives through disobeying God, it has devastating consequences for the rest of creation – the ground which up to then had produced crops for the benefit of humans, now spews forth weeds. This is an imaginative way of saying that Creation has been damaged because human beings have been damaged. It is now red in tooth and claw."
		Ash Wednesday
Wednesday	22	Receive this cross of ash upon your brow, Brought from the burning of Palm Sunday's cross. The forests of the world are burning now And you make late repentance for the loss. But all the trees of God would clap their hands The very stones themselves would shout and sing If you could covenant to love these lands And recognise in Christ their Lord and king.
		He sees the slow destruction of those trees, He weeps to see the ancient places burn, And still you make what purchases you please, And still to dust and ashes you return. But Hope could rise from ashes even now Beginning with this sign upon your brow. <i>Malcolm Guite</i>
Thursday	23	God, creator of the universe, Fill us with your love for the creation, for the natural world around us, for the earth from which we come and to which we will return. Awake in us energy to work for your world; let us never fall into complacency, ignorance, or being overwhelmed by the task before us. Help us to restore, remake, renew. Amen
Friday	24	"I love to think of nature as an unlimited broadcasting station, through which God speaks to us every hour, if we only will tune in." George Washington Carver

		Joy in God's Creation
Saturday	25	O heavenly Father, <i>who hast</i> filled the world with beauty: Open our eyes to behold <i>thy</i> gracious hand in all <i>thy</i> works; that, rejoicing in <i>thy</i> whole creation, we may learn to serve <i>thee</i> with gladness; for the sake of him through whom all things were made, <i>thy</i> Son Jesus Christ our Lord. <i>Amen.</i>
		First Sunday in Lent
Sunday	26	God of the seasons, as the days lengthen, we look forward in hope to the bounty your love brings forth in our land. When your Son was tempted in the wilderness, he refused the spirit of domination by which we try to gain our daily bread and even to free ourselves from earthly limitations. In this season of renewal, grant us his life-sustaining Spirit, so that we may tend the earth with joy and thanksgiving, and share its bounty with all living things.
		Benediction
Monday	27	May the blessing of God, Creator of heaven and Earth, rest upon you and upon all that God has made; May the Risen Christ Jesus transform your life and your vision, so that you may live in reconciliation with all things; and May the power of God's Holy Spirit move over this whole Earth, like the breath of Spring, to renew the Earth and all its people, so that all creation may join together in praise to God's holy name! Almighty God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, bless you now and forever. <i>Amen</i> .
		Leap Day for Frogs
Tuesday	28	Frogs and toads are Amphibians belonging to the order <i>Anura</i> which is ancient Greek for "without tail". Frogs generally have moist, smooth skins while toads have warty, dry skins. Toads also have short back legs for walking rather than jumping. The warty bumps on a toad's skin helps to camouflage it
		so that it can hide from predators. Frogs have lived on Earth for over 200 million years and are found on every continent except Antarctica. South Africa is home to about 131 species and half of these
		species are endemic, i.e. found nowhere else in the world.
		Globally, amphibians remain the most threatened back-boned animals on Earth, with the latest assessments showing 41% of species in this group as being threatened with extinction. This decline of species is due to climate change, habitat loss, pollution of freshwater and a deadly fungus. Peoples' perceptions of frogs as being evil certainly doesn't help either. In the Bible, frogs are infamous for being one of the plagues sent to ancient Egypt in Exodus and in the Book of Revelation, they are associated with unclean spirits and negativity. In South Africa, frogs form part of cultural beliefs associated

with witchcraft. This negative view of frogs has endured despite the fact that the exact opposite is true.
Amphibians are essential in a healthy eco-system and biodiversity. Adult frogs eat large quantities of insects (especially mosquitoes and flies) and serve as an important food source to a diverse array of predators, including dragonflies, fish, snakes, birds, beetles, centipedes and even monkeys. The disappearance of frogs can disturb an intricate food web with cascading effects felt throughout an entire ecosystem.
Frogs need suitable land and freshwater habitats in order to survive. They also have highly permeable skin that can easily absorb bacteria, chemicals and other toxins. These traits make them susceptible to changes in the environment and great indicators of their environment's health.
Frogs also have their role to play in medicine - Epibatidine, a painkiller 200 times more potent than morphine, is made by some poison dart frogs. Unfortunately, people can't safely ingest it because it's so toxic. But because frog toxins are so diverse, they are being researched for their potential as therapeutic drugs.
<i>"If the frogs disappear, we should worry!"</i> <i>Michael Farquhar, Two Oceans Aquarium CEO</i>
Here are some ways to take action to ensure that our frogs and toads don't disappear:
 Add a pond to your garden. Frogs and toads need ponds to breed. Provide piles of rocks, logs and leaves. Create a compost heap. Avoid using pesticides and slug pellets. Supervise your pet cat. Learn all you can about these amazing little creatures.