

CLIMATE MARCH, NOVEMBER 29<sup>TH</sup> 2015,

The Octagon, Dunedin

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I will not pretend to speak for all faith groups. Our incredible diversity is both the curse and the blessing of humanity.

But I can say that at the heart of faith is the realisation that we belong to something or someone infinitely bigger than ourselves. We live in utter dependence. We are called to live with humility. We owe responsibilities to this life beyond ourselves.

That recognition is one gift we can offer in confronting the issues of climate change. That recognition is in absolute opposition to the market driven consumerism that requires there be no limits to human appetites and greed.

Within the Christian tradition, and many others, the second recognition is that we are here as *guests*. We enjoy a *divine hospitality* of unimaginable richness which we share with all other creatures in this household of the Earth. *Life is a gift to be shared.*

To welcome and share food with the other, the outsider, the vulnerable, the stranger was central to the life of Jesus. For him and his followers the meal of reconciliation is the sign of hope.

I am reminded of a family wedding where the food was laid on tables in the garden. One of my kids went around licking the tops off all the savouries, canapés and other delights and leaving the half-empty cases and scraps for the other guests. We too have been such unruly guests – refusing to honour the others (sometimes strangers to us) who have also been invited to this feast of life, abusing them and our host and trashing the house of the Earth, taking the best and fouling the rest. This calls not for ‘positivity’ but for a transformation of thinking, feeling and seeing – another gift which in our tradition we call ‘repentance.’

That we are here as guests is a reminder that we are *here for community*. Faith communities can offer communities of support for the personal changes necessary to develop alternative styles of life called for by the challenges of climate change.

We have been co-opted to find our identity as consumers. But here as guests, in fellowship with all other creatures, we are enabled instead to find our identity as *contemplatives* – enjoying the Earth without needing to dominate or possess it.

For many faith communities this recognition finds expression in another gift we have to offer – the development on our lands of community and contemplative gardens or experiments with energy efficiency and other options for sustainability.

Not only are we here as guests. In the Christian tradition, according to Jesus, we are also here as hosts who serve the other guests. *To serve the well-being of the whole household is central to Jesus' vision of how power is to be used.*

Many faith groups in Aotearoa New Zealand and throughout the world have realised we can use this power of service by divestment from fossil fuels. The even more creative step will be IN-vestment in new, carbon neutral forms of energy.

James Lovelock has suggested we need to regard ourselves as planetary physicians. This connects so well with the life of Jesus – serving the well-being of the whole household in which we live here on Earth.