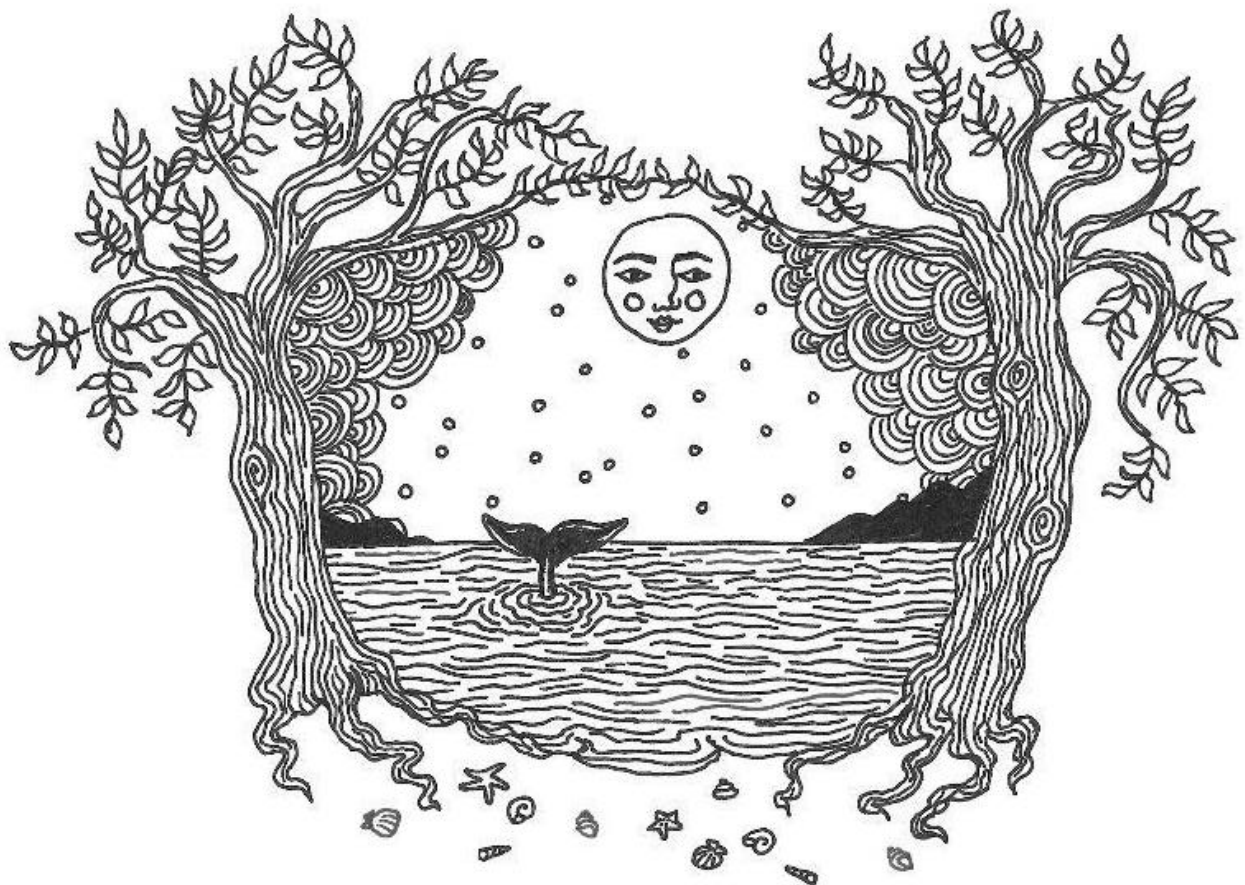


# A Way To Pray

Prayer practices inspired by He Māhuri Tōtara



**ECO CHURCH**  
**A ROCHA AOTEAROA NZ**

# Finding Ways To Pray

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Many people have times where they find it challenging to connect with God - and if that's you, you're not alone. Prayer can be beautiful, but sometimes it can also feel awkward, dry, or God might even feel distant. When this happens, exploring new ways to connect with God - especially through God's creation - is a beautiful and worthwhile journey. Thankfully, we're part of a long tradition of Jesus-followers who have discovered all sorts of ways to pray - ways that can open us up to God's presence in new and life-giving ways.

We hope that you will feel open and courageous enough to try these new (but actually really old) ways to pray! Our hope is that if one day you find one way of praying isn't working so well, you will know that you have a few ideas waiting for you, and you can try a new way to pray that will enable you to connect with God and see how God is moving in your life and in our world.

## WHAT YOU NEED BEFORE YOU BEGIN:

A Bible

A journal and pencil

A bit of uninterrupted time and space (which means you'll need to turn off your phone and leave it somewhere else!)

# A Way To Pray // Tuatahi // Walking Prayer

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## **A QUESTION TO BEGIN:** How do you worship?

Worship begins with God. We sing, we pray, we reflect and interpret, we discuss - all as a response. But first we begin with God. One of the important ways we do this is by reading The Bible and listening to what God's Spirit says to us through The Word. When we begin with listening to God, it changes how we respond in prayer and song. So with each way to pray, we will begin with a Bible reading, before we bring our thoughts, hopes and fears to God as a response.

## **BIBLE READING:** Psalm 148

Psalm 148 calls upon all of God's Creation to praise God! Praying amidst God's Creation is a wonderful thing to do. It encourages us to notice the beauty of God's Creation and the many ways God's creation is connected. God's Spirit reveals itself to us through Creation, in multiple ways, often without words. When we pray outside we are reminded that God is a creative Creator and God's Creation is magnificent!

## **A GUIDE FOR PRAYER WALKING:**

Read Psalm 148 then take an unhurried walk outside away from others. Explore an aspect of creation that draws your attention.

Start by noticing your surroundings:

- ❖ Close your eyes and breathe in – what do you smell? What do you hear?
- ❖ Open your eyes and look up, look down, look around. What do you notice?

As you walk, take time to be present in God's creation, reflect on how God's Spirit is present with you.

- ❖ Share with God in prayer what you see, what you notice, what you think and how you feel.
- ❖ After a while, notice if something captures your attention. Look at it. Notice the details. If it is small, pick it up. If it is big, gaze at the scope and the layers.
- ❖ Reflect on what you see. With words or by drawing, note down any thoughts. Reflect on what God might be saying or revealing to you.



# A Way To Pray // Tuarua // Breathing Prayer

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## **A QUESTION TO BEGIN:** Why do people go to church?

God, community, a sense of calling and purpose.... our answer to this question will likely change over time as we go through different seasons in life. But here's something to think about: Gathering to worship with others helps us de-centre ourselves. We gather to worship to recognise Jesus as Lord and leader of our lives. Worship helps us to reframe, re-orientate and re-align our lives with God's purpose for us and all of His Creation. This way to pray will encourage us to de-centre ourselves, and put God centre.

## **BIBLE READING:** Exodus 3:1-15

In Exodus 3 we see that while outside, amidst God's creation, Moses encounters God in the form of the burning bush. It's there that he has an amazing encounter with God. God speaks to him through the burning bush, and Moses says yes to what God is asking him to do. During their encounter, when Moses asks God how he should speak of Him, God replies, 'I AM WHO I AM'. In Hebrew letters it looks like this: יהוה. These symbols can be written as the English letters YHWH or Yahweh. In Hebrew this name is interchangeable with the sounds of breathing. So, what God says to Moses is that his name is *breath*. God's name is the air we breathe.

The simple act of breathing in and out deeply can become a prayer. Combined with reflecting on simple phrases, a breath prayer can help us feel calm when we are anxious and it can remind us who we are, it can give us a way to voice our trust in God.

## **A GUIDE FOR BREATHING PRAYER:**

1. Find a quiet place in creation.
2. Decide on a simple phrase to pray (see examples below).
3. Breathe in deeply while praying silently the first half of your phrase.
4. Exhale while thinking of the words of the second half of your phrase/prayer.
5. As you continue to pray, keep your mind in the present moment. Try to practice your breath prayer for 2 minutes, and build up from there.

Some phrases to pray:

- ❖ The earth is yours (inhale) and everything in it (exhale)
- ❖ You are (inhale) my peace (exhale).
- ❖ In you, oh God (inhale) I put my trust (exhale).
- ❖ You are with me (inhale). You won't leave me (exhale).
- ❖ "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner."

Record the phrase you used for your breathing prayer. Reflect on what you thought and felt through words or drawing.





# A Way To Pray // Tuatoru // TSP Prayers

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**A QUESTION TO BEGIN:** How do you normally pray?

There are many, many ways to pray. This is good news for us! Because in different seasons of our lives, we will find different ways to pray that will be meaningful in different ways. Trying a different way to pray can invite God to speak to us in a different way. It can help us to begin our prayer at times when we don't know where to start. Praying a prayer like an acronym prayer reminds us that when we want to say: "Please, God", we are also invited to say: "Thank you" and "Sorry".

**BIBLE READING:** Matthew 13:1-9

Reading a Jesus story before we pray can open us to hear and understand what God might be saying to us. Jesus often taught his followers by using parables and many of his parables used images from God's creation - soil, seeds, vines, birds in the trees - to help people understand what he was teaching. Listening to and reflecting on a Jesus story can help us better understand what we have to be grateful for, what regrets we are carrying, what we want to ask of God.

**A GUIDE TO PRAYING THE TEASPOON (TSP) PRAYER:**

Find a peaceful spot in Creation, read a Jesus parable and reflect on the following questions:

- ❖ What is the symbol from Creation that Jesus uses as he teaches? e.g. seed, water, soil etc
- ❖ What did you notice about the symbol? What enabled it to be fruitful? What happened when it was unhealthy?
- ❖ How are you like the symbol from Creation that Jesus describes?

Reflecting on your answers to these questions, pray with words or images, using the TSP framework:

THANKS:

SORRY:

PLEASE:





# A Way To Pray // Tuawhā // Kairos Prayers

**A QUESTION TO BEGIN:** Have you had a time where you have felt your prayers heard and answered?

When we come to God in prayer, we often come with hopes, dreams, fears, concerns. We seek to hear what God's Spirit might be saying to us. But there is also an invitation there for us to do something about it. This way to pray helps us to engage with: What is God saying to you, and what are you going to do about it?

**BIBLE READING:** Mark 1:14-20

This story is Mark's account of Jesus calling some fisherman to follow him and become his disciples. In verse 15 Jesus says, 'The right time has come, the kingdom of God is near. Turn away from your sins and believe the good news!' Jesus was encouraging the disciples to see that they were amidst a *kairos* moment. Kairos is a Greek word that means a moment in which they needed to turn and walk in a new direction. It is an 'aha!' moment, when something stands out to us, and we understand in a new way.

The Kairos Circle is a way to pray that helps us listen for what God might be saying to us. We reflect on our day, we think about what stands out to us the most - a niggles, an 'aha!', a moment of discomfort. Then we consider: What is God saying to me?

**There are two key questions with the Kairos Circle:**

1. What is God saying to me? We observe the event, we reflect on the event, and we discuss with others.
2. What am I going to do about it? We make a plan, we invite accountability, and finally we act!



## A GUIDE TO PRAYING WITH THE KAIROS CIRCLE:

Find a space where you can focus prayerfully. Bring your bible, your journal, and a pen/pencil. Begin with a short simple prayer to focus your heart and mind on being with God. Reflect on the following questions. Note down any thoughts with words or drawings.

### 1. What is God saying to me?

- ❖ Look back over your day or your week, identify and describe a moment that stood out to you.
- ❖ What was going on for you in that moment? How did it make you feel?
- ❖ Why do you think this moment stood out for you? How would you describe it to others?

### 2. What am I going to do about it?

- ❖ What is the next step God is inviting me to take? (Make a plan, make it specific)
- ❖ Who is going to hold me accountable? When?
- ❖ When am I going to act on this?



# He Karakia Mutunga // A Way to End With Prayer

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'Examen' is Spanish for examination, an examination of your day and how God was at work. It was created by St. Ignatius of Loyola, a Spanish priest and theologian who founded the Jesuit order in 1534. The examen prayer of review is a short reflection back over your day, recalling events and taking note of your feelings. The purpose is to become more aware of the ways in which God has been present to you, and discern the direction you now wish to face.

**Make yourself comfortable, close your eyes if you like. Follow this guided prayer:**

- ❖ Take a few moments to become aware of God's presence, to recognise that you are here with the Lord. God is with you, and God's love is for you.
- ❖ With this loving God, think about the day that has been.
- ❖ What am I thankful for?  
What are the moments that come to mind that have been received as gift, that lead me to say "Thank you" to God.
- ❖ What in this day am I sorry for?  
What are the moments of selfishness and unkindness and any other times when I did not manage to be Jesus' hands, feet, eyes, his love, his compassion for the people around me.
- ❖ I ask God now to nudge me if there was something God was trying to tell me when I wasn't paying attention! As I look towards tomorrow, these are some of the people and events that I want to pray for.
- ❖ And finally, please help me to be more attentive to you tomorrow. Amen.

Finish by praying *The Lord's Prayer* or *The Grace Prayer* from 2 Corinthians 13:14:

Kia tau ki a tātou katoa  
Te atawhai o tō tātou Ariki, a Ihu Karaiti  
Me te aroha o te Atua  
Me te whiwhingatahitanga  
Ki te Wairua Tapu  
Āke, āke, āke, āmine

May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ  
The love of God  
And the fellowship of the Holy Spirit  
Be with you all  
Forever and ever, amen

## Finding More Ways To Pray

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Visit the 'Prayer' section of the Eco Church webpage to find inspiration and lots more ways to pray, from Aotearoa and beyond: <https://www.ecochurch.org.nz/prayer>

## Ngā Mihi Nui

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*A Way To Pray* was put together by Mo Morgan and the Eco Church team from A Rocha Aotearoa. It was inspired by prayer times at **He Māhuri Tōtara**, a week-long course which encourages and empowers young Christian leaders to be active in Caring for God's Creation in Aotearoa.

We're grateful to Claire Sparrow for the beautiful drawings in this book and to all the young people whose prayers have shaped what this book has become.

Find out more about He Māhuri Tōtara here:

<https://www.ecochurch.org.nz/he-mahuri-totara-programme>