



Learning to listen to the voice of creation

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THE Season of Creation, which runs from September 1, the World Day of Prayer for the care of creation to October 4, feast of St Francis of Assisi and patron saint of the environment, is now well established on the calendar of most of the major Christian churches.

The theme for this year's event is Listen to the Voice of Creation, with a particular focus on voices which are muted – those who suffer most from the impacts of climate change while contributing least to causing them, indigenous people whose wisdom about whenua and its resources is often overlooked by more dominant cultures, and the other-than-human species which face extinction through human thoughtlessness.

The symbol for the season this year is the burning bush of Exodus 3, 1-12, a reminder of the devastating fires which rage in so many parts of the planet as forests crackle, animals flee, and people are forced to migrate. But the fire that called Moses as he tended his flock on Mt Horeb did not consume or destroy the bush. This holy fire affirmed that God promised to be with those who journeyed in faith in search of a better and more sustainable world.

Mercy ministries are not newcomers to this journey along the path of justice, as we listen to the cries of the poor and the cry of the Earth. Mercy Hospital Dunedin offers a powerful example of how this journey may go, in its pursuit of initiatives to advance sustainability and mitigate damage to the environment. Mercy Hospital's values include whakaute/respect which requires the facility and its staff to 'consider the impact of our decisions and actions on the environment.' Since early 2021, the hospital has held Enviromark Gold certification, awarded by Toitū Envirocare after a rigorous audit process.

Embedded sustainability initiatives include: extensive recycling of plastics, paper, cardboard, aluminium and steel and medical PVC; ongoing planting to maintain the hospital's park-like environment, including a small kitchen garden producing herbs and vegetables for patient and staff catering; a low-waste food service model, with all food scraps either composted or fed

to worms; energy efficiency lighting across most of the campus; smart building controls to minimise unnecessary use of power and water.

More recent projects are the reprocessing of substantial volumes of compression garments via Christchurch-based Medsalv; an upgrade of Mercy's bike parking for staff and specialists; energy monitoring and carbon reduction opportunity scoping; a dramatic reduction in the use of potent greenhouse gas, Desflurane; operating theatre waste reduction strategies; and scrutiny on sustainability criteria in purchasing and service provision decisions. In the pipeline are Sustainable Building Guidelines and a reusable sharps bins feasibility study.

'Many of Mercy Hospital's staff have a real passion for sustainability and are supporting our journey, either by membership of our Environmental Management Steering Group, or by participating in projects,' says Claire Casey, Mercy Hospital's sustainability champion. 'Continuing to reduce our impact on the environment is a real team effort'.

Going for gold with practical steps towards sustainability is a goal for every Mercy ministry to consider. Some of those steps are spelt out in the 2022 celebration guide produced

by the Laudato Si' Movement ([SOC-2022-Celebration-Guide-Final-English-pdf](#)), including the prayer from which this extract is taken:

'Give us hearts to listen for the good news of your promise to renew the face of the Earth. Enlighten us with the grace to follow the way of Christ as we learn to walk lightly upon this holy ground. Fill us with the hope to quench the fires of injustice with the light of your healing love that sustains our common home.'



The Burning Bush (Exodus 3) symbol for the Season of Creation 2022. 'I have heard their cry, I know their sufferings,' God tells Moses. 'I will send you. I will be with you.' Graphic by Laudato Si' Movement.