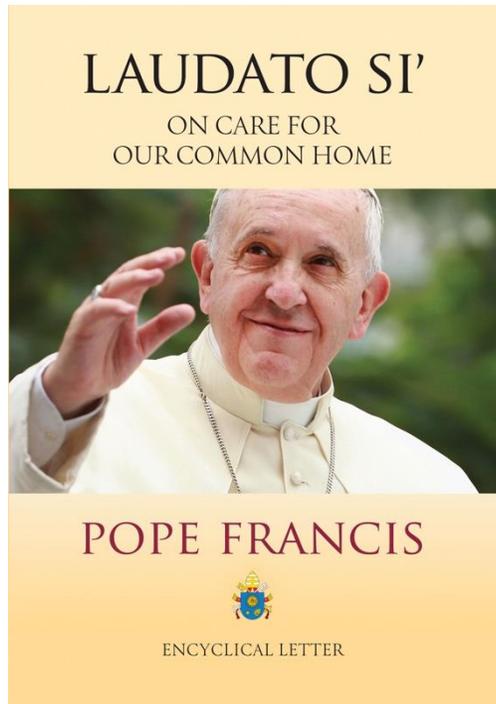


# The cry of the earth and the cry of the poor: Ecojustice and faith

Dr Hilary Marlow  
Environment Memorial Lecture,  
Ely Cathedral  
22<sup>nd</sup> September 2025

# Laudato Sí: On Care for our Common Home

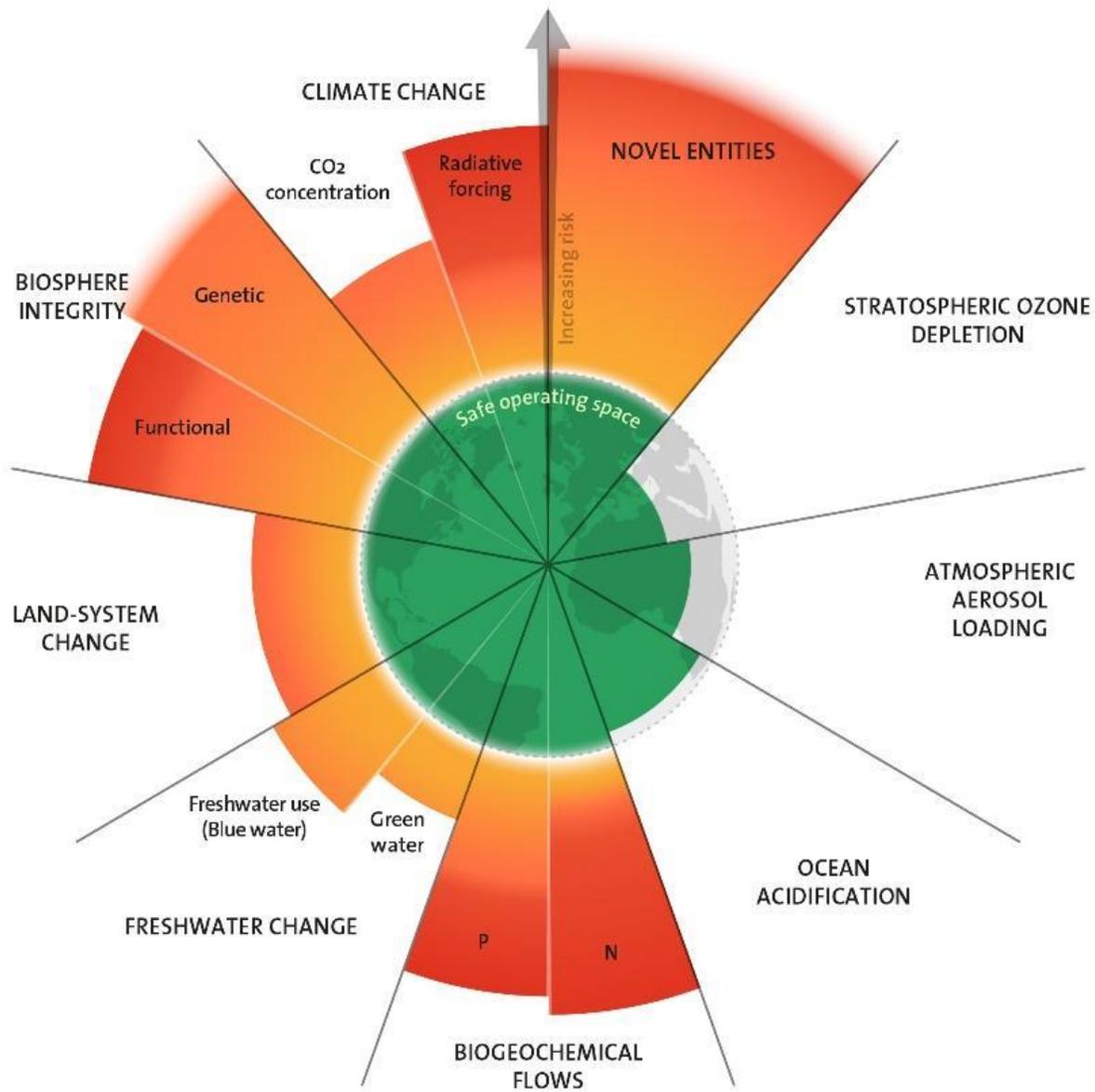


“A true ecological approach *always* becomes a social approach; it must integrate questions of justice in debates on the environment, so as to hear *both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor.*”  
(LS 49, 2015)

# Planetary boundaries

“a safe operating space for humanity with respect to the functioning of the Earth System”

Rockström, J. *et al.* A safe operating space for humanity. *Nature* 461 (2009), 472-475. <https://doi.org/10.1038/461472a>.



# Planetary boundaries 2023

CC BY-NC-ND 3.0. Credit: "Azote for Stockholm Resilience Centre, based on analysis in Richardson et al 2023".  
<https://www.stockholmresilience.org/research/planetary-boundaries.html>

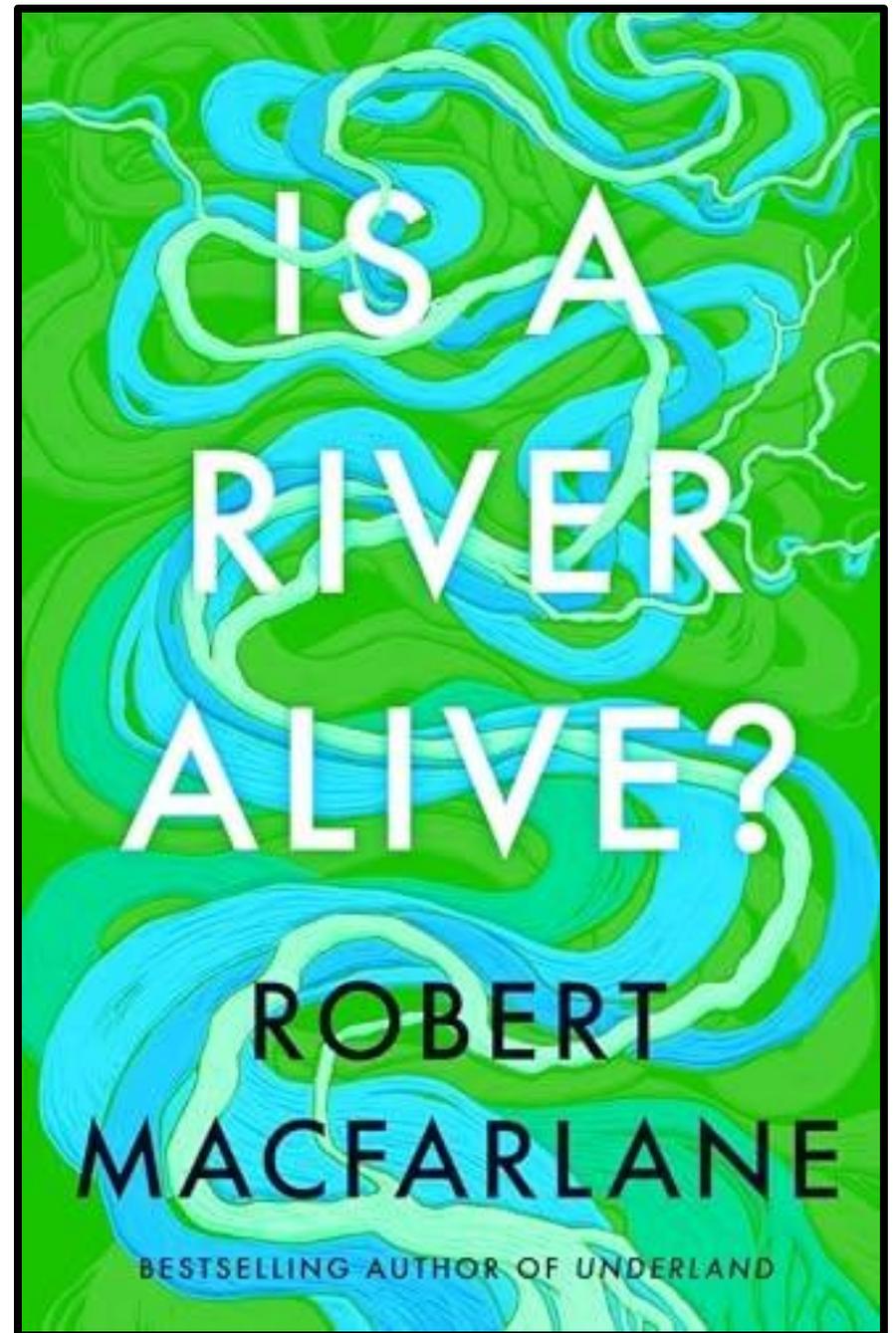
# CLIMATE INJUSTICE

WHY WE NEED  
TO FIGHT  
GLOBAL  
INEQUALITY  
TO COMBAT  
CLIMATE  
CHANGE

"Passionate,  
fantastically  
readable."  
Jeff Goodell

"A searing and  
unassailable  
indictment."  
John Vaillant

**FRIEDERIKE OTTO**



# Global injustices

The wealthiest 10% contribute over 50% of carbon emissions

The poorest 50% (3.1 billion people) are responsible for only 7% of carbon emissions

(Karthi, Sivan. 'The Carbon Inequality Era'. Stockholm Environment Institute 2020)

Extreme weather affects poor, weak and vulnerable

Economic necessity forces unsustainable land use

Dangers posed by too much water... and too little

# Otto, *Climate Injustice*

Climate change a symptom of inequality not its cause

Failure of political and social infrastructures

“Extractionist” mentality of Global North

“This book is about the weather and climate, but it’s also about poverty, sexism, racism, arrogance, ignorance and power.”

# Macfarlane *Is a River Alive?*

Does nature have rights? Could a river be a legal person?

Te Awa Tupua Act (2017, Whanganui River, New Zealand/Aotearoa)

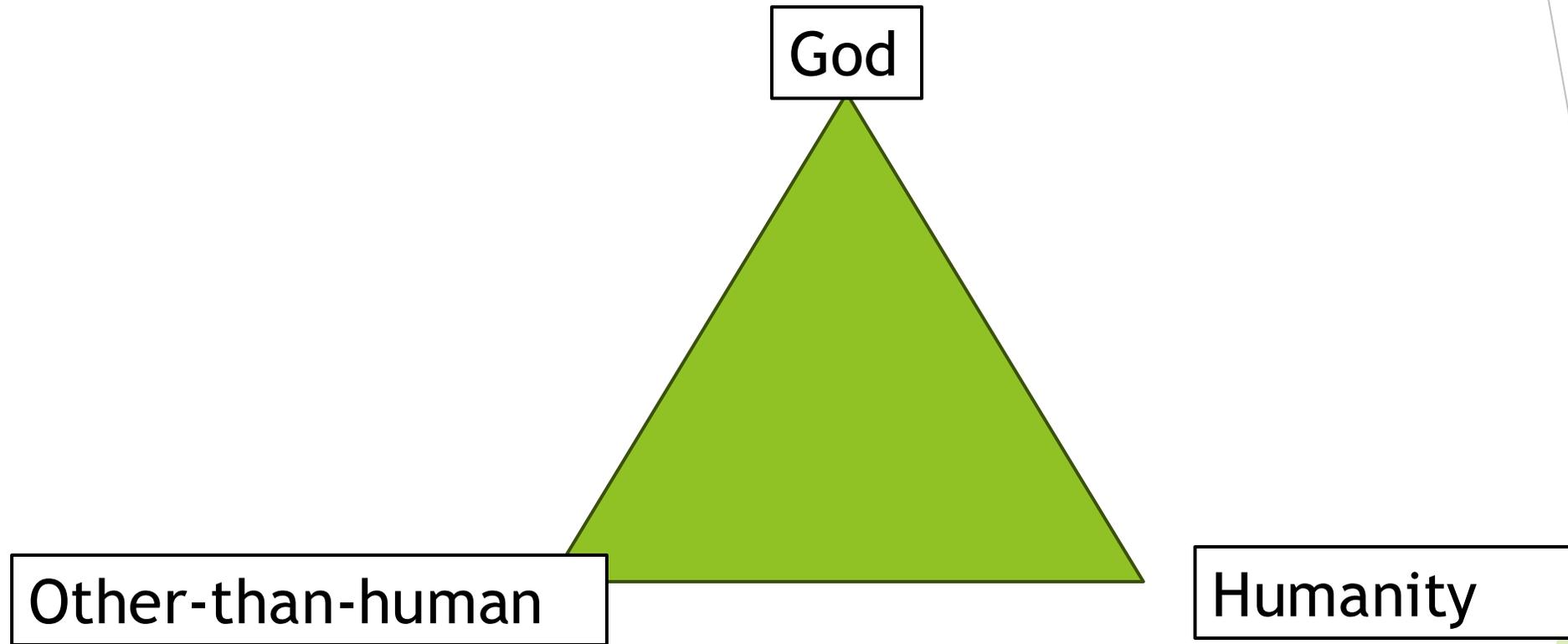
“To call a river alive is not to personify a river, but instead to further deepen and widen the category of life”

# Ecocriticism

“the study of the relationship of human and the non-human throughout human cultural history and entailing critical analysis of the term ‘human’ itself.” (Garrard, *Ecocriticism*, 2011)

”[Ecocriticism] arises from and contributes to political, social and cultural change in terms of a natural, material environment of which human beings are a part but also profoundly construct.” (Boer, *JHS*, 2007)

# Interconnection



After the flood God said to Noah:

“This is the sign of the covenant that I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you... I will remember the everlasting covenant that is between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth.” (Gen 9:12, 16)

“O LORD, how manifold are your works! In wisdom you have made them all; the earth is full of your creatures...These all look to you to give them their food in due season.” (Ps 104:24,27)

“And the Lord said, ‘what have you done? Listen, your brother’s blood is crying out to me from the ground... When you till the ground, it will no longer yield to you its strength.’” (Gen 4:10, 12)

“The earth lies polluted under its inhabitants; for they have transgressed laws, violated the statutes, broken the everlasting covenant. Therefore a curse devours the earth, and its inhabitants suffer for their guilt; therefore the inhabitants of the earth dwindled, and few people are left.” (Isa 24:5-6)

# Justice towards the marginalised

“For the LORD your God ... is not partial and takes no bribe, executes justice for the orphan and the widow, and loves the strangers, providing them food and clothing.” (Deut 10:18)

“When you gather the grapes of your vineyard, do not glean what is left; it shall be for the alien, the orphan, and the widow.” (Deut 24:21)

“Cursed be anyone who deprives the alien, the orphan, and the widow of justice.” (Deut 27:19)

# Prophets against injustice

“Cease to do evil, learn to do good, seek justice, rescue the oppressed, defend the orphan, plead for the widow” (Isa 1:16-17)

“Ah, you who join house to house, who add field to field, until there is room for no one but you, and you are left to live alone in the midst of the land!

The LORD of hosts has sworn in my hearing:

Surely many houses shall be desolate, large and beautiful houses, without inhabitant.” (Isa 5:8-9)

“Hear this, you that trample on the needy,  
and bring to ruin the poor of the land, ...  
buying the poor for silver  
and the needy for a pair of sandals,  
and selling the sweepings of the wheat...  
(Amos 8:4-5)

“[God says] can I tolerate wicked scales and a bag of  
dishonest weights? Your wealthy are full of violence, and  
your inhabitants speak lies.”  
(Mic 6:11-12).

# The land mourns

“Hear the word of the LORD, O people of Israel; for the LORD has an indictment against the inhabitants of the land. There is no faithfulness or loyalty, and no knowledge of God in the land.

<sup>2</sup> Swearing, lying, and murder, and stealing and adultery break out; bloodshed follows bloodshed.

<sup>3</sup> Therefore the land mourns, and all who live in it languish; together with the wild animals and the birds of the air, even the fish of the sea are perishing. (Hosea 4:1-3)

“Take up weeping and wailing for the mountains, and a lamentation for the pastures of the wilderness, because they are laid waste so that no one passes through, and the lowing of cattle is not heard.... Why is the land ruined and laid waste like a wilderness? And the Lord says: Because they have forsaken my law that I set before them and have not obeyed my voice.” (Jer 9: 10,12-13)

# Prophetic voices for today

The planet and all its inhabitants and life forms are suffering in large part because some members of the human community have violated their right relationship with creation, tipped the balance, and acted unjustly and unethically. When read in a contemporary socioecological context, the texts of the prophets ... offer readers a disturbing picture that calls for an ethical response that can no longer be avoided.

(Carol Dempsey, *Hope Amid the Ruins*, 88)



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## 'It's a lot of fear': the rise of ecoanxiety on the frontline of climate breakdown

As study shows 78% of UK under-12s worry about the issue, people in their 20s around world share their experiences



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# Hope for the future...

“The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad,  
the desert shall rejoice and blossom;  
like the crocus it shall blossom abundantly,  
and rejoice with joy and singing...

For waters shall break forth in the wilderness,  
and streams in the desert;” (Isa 35:1-6)

“Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth... and I heard a  
loud voice from the throne saying, ‘See the home of God is  
among mortals... death will be no more, mourning and crying  
and pain will be no more.’” (Rev 21:1,3-4)

...and in the present

“Your will be done, your kingdom come *on earth* as it is in heaven” (Matt 6:10)

“Go into all the world and proclaim the good news to the whole creation.” (Mark 16:15)

# Proximate hopes

“Proximate hopes depend partly on what humans do. God’s providence is constantly at work engaging with human evil, limiting its effects, bringing good out of it, but he does not abolish it in this world.”  
(Richard Bauckham, ‘Ecological Hope in Crisis?’ *JRI Briefing Paper 23*).

# Hope transforming the present



A Rocha is an international Christian conservation organization, inspired by God's love.



Bangalore,  
India



Human-elephant conflict



East  
Kenya

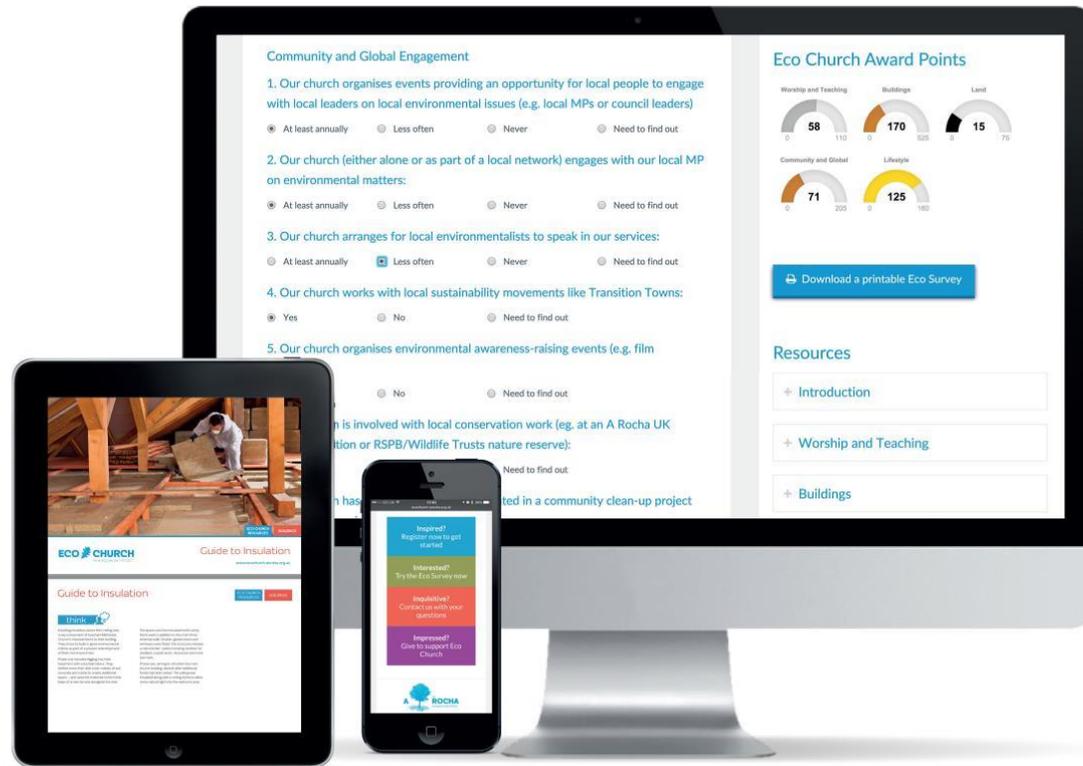


**ASSETS scheme**  
**Eco-tourism providing bursaries for secondary school**  
**fees and funding nature conservation**



# ECO CHURCH

AN A ROCHA UK PROJECT



[www.ecochurch.arocha.org.uk](http://www.ecochurch.arocha.org.uk)

# Wisdom and creation

“Ages ago I [Wisdom] was set up at the first, before the beginning of the earth... when he [God] marked out the foundations of the earth, there I was beside him.” (Prov 8:23,29-30)

“I came forth from the mouth of the Most High and covered the earth like a mist... Over waves of the sea, over all earth, and over every people and nation I have held sway.” (Sir 24:3,6)

“With you is wisdom, she who knows your works and was present when you made the world; she understands what is pleasing in your sight and what is right according to your commandments.” (Wisd 9:9)

# Principles to live by

“If anyone loves righteousness, [Wisdom’s] labours are virtues; for she teaches self-control and discernment, justice and courage: nothing in life is more profitable for mortals than these.” (Wisd 8:7-8)

## Last words

“He has told you O mortal what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness and to walk humbly with your God.” (Mic 6:8)

Do not be daunted by the enormity of the world's grief.  
Do justly, now.  
Love mercy, now.  
Walk humbly, now.  
You are not obligated to complete the work,  
But neither are you free to abandon it  
(From Talmud, *Pirke Avon*)