

## **Views from the Pews: Trees**

In Christian tradition, trees have a very special significance. The trees in the Garden of Eden played a pivotal role in the story that symbolises the perpetual dilemmas of human life. Jesus learned to handle timber in his work as a carpenter, and he ended his earthy life on a wooden cross. Timber beams support the rooves of the buildings at St Peters and countless other parishes, and important occasions are often marked with a ceremonial tree planting.

The Church has also, more recently, begun to take up its responsibilities to the rest of creation, including the individual plants and animals that share the bounties of God's life and love with us. So, we honour the memory of St Francis and his love for animals with a Pet Service, which remind us that God is concerned about all life, not only humanity.

In 1819, when the Kerikeri Mission Station was established, Rev John Butler planted 185 fruit trees and grapevines. The sole living survivor of this orchard is a lone pear tree, now into its third century of life. This venerable old tree, number 668 on the New Zealand Tree Register, is a notable Kerikeri landmark, and has survived the musket wars, the threat of fire and several major flood events over the past two centuries. It still stands opposite the Stone Store which, together with Kemp House, are Tohu Whenua and cared for by Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga.

The lawn on the hill leading up to our Cathedral's front entrance was once graced by a very special young tree, grown from a cutting taken from the ancient pear tree, complete with its own permanent plaque explaining its history. It grew well for several years, but then, alas, it contracted a fungal disease, and died. We still grieve for it.

One of the things the Anglican Church has always done well is to help a community mark the staging-posts of the individual life journeys of its members. It is important to know that the beginnings and endings of personal lives will be properly recognised and respected. We all need to be reassured that God is there at the crucial turning points that determine the courses of the lives of all forms of earthly life. And, as especially appropriate so soon after the Resurrection, we can thank God that we can look forward to planting a new graft from the old pear tree.

*Kim King*