EARTH'S CRY: PROPHETIC MINISTRY IN A MORE-TAN-HUMAN WORLD

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SUBMITTED BY
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For my grandchildren
Chris, Imran, Jasper, Jono
Lily, Luqman, Yusuf and Zahra
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Earth cries out: a cry that is global and emplaced. Ministry is a response to cry. This thesis offers a conceptual structure for a process I call ecoministry. The structure arises from three intersecting elements: the critical interdisciplinarity of the ecohumanities, the ministerial model of James and Evelyn Whitehead (1995), and the prophetic imagination as interpreted by Walter Brueggemann (2001). A thread that runs through all three is narrative, and narrative is always emplaced. The ecophilosophical critique of the nature/culture divide holds radical implications: in essence it requires resituating culture in nature. ‘Nature’ is both a construction and a reality beyond and underlying all texts. Understanding this tension in discourses about nature challenges traditional approaches to religious tradition, and leads to a recovery of place. Brueggemann’s interpretation of the prophetic imagination presents place ambiguously, and it is elided in Whiteheads’ model. In this thesis I attend to place in the narratives of Victorian Volcanic Plains grasslands, and include a stalk of kangaroo grass as a way of recognising the materiality that must now be taken into account as sacred. I conceptualise a structure for ecoministry, rooted in the prophetic tradition, that is a call to the vocation of learning what it means now to be human, by attending to Earth’s cry globally and in local places, by critiquing silences and owning the violent misuse of our power, by grieving the multiple losses entailed, by trusting emergent outcomes and by risking alternative forms of praxis.
Kangaroo grass stalk – pressed

*Themeda triandra*