

Gangan tsi Abotse. Nē tsuxub Inâts go. !Ûi da !khaes !aroma î toxoba. Nētsēs o Inâ. Sâu da re

Our heavenly parent: Today, we thank and praise You for where we are – in Africa. Despite our heavy and destructive hand on the planet You gave us, Africa still abounds with animals of all kinds. When we experience the sight of herds of cattle near the airport, or see flamingoes in the Black River, kingfishers on the Liesbeeck, or buzzards on the Rondebosch Common, we become conscious of our sense of place – we are African.

Lord, keep us conscious that this earth is not ours to possess, but yours to share.

As Africans we have long connected ourselves to Your creation through animals. In our traditions we wear symbols of animal teeth, feathers, and skins to mark our identity. We have named our clans after animals and emblazoned our family crests with animal forms. My Khoisan ancestors have left us the legacy of thousands of animal rock paintings throughout this land, reminding us of the wonder all humans continue to feel when we interact with animals great and small.

Lord, we thank You for keeping us rooted.

We thank You for Your Word which reminds us of our custodial duty to this planet. One of our first tasks was to give all the animals names in the Garden of Eden. Before the Great Flood, we see Your great compassion for the natural world when all species entered the ark for man to watch over until we were reconciled to dry land.

Lord, may we share Your compassion for all living things.

Our imaginations are set ablaze when we read in Your Word of mighty animals no eye today has seen - the mystical Behemoth and Leviathan, and the Great Fish that swallowed Jonah. We are inspired and amused when we read in the Book of Job how the ostrich laughs as it outruns the horse and rider.

Lord, we thank you for a natural world that continues to inspire human creativity.

Your Word has taught us powerful concepts through animals. **Strength**, in your Son as the conquering Lion of Judah. **Courage** and **calm**, as Daniel survives his time in a den of lions. **Conflict** and **victory** in the image of the crushed serpent. **Sacrifice** as the lamb of God. **Reconciliation**, **hope**, and profound **peace** as the dove which brings an olive branch to the ark. **Connection** and **bliss** as Your spirit descended upon Jesus as a dove at His Baptism. And **pity** in the parable of the lost sheep.

Lord, we are Your flock. Please shepherd us.

This we ask in Jesus' name.

Amen