

During the coldest time of the year the Matariki star cluster is seen rising up for the first time in the eastern sky. This is the beginning of Māori New Year.

Did you know that Maori tell stories about the seven stars of Matariki that talk of them as a family?

We know that our families are very important, God put us into families to take care of us and to teach us about him.

In the Maori story the biggest star Matariki is the whaea (mother), and she is surrounded by her 6 daughters: Tupu-ā-nuku; Tupu-ā-rangi; Waipunarangi; Waitī and Waitā; and Ururangi. Each year the family take a special journey to visit their tupuna wahine (grandmother), so that they can learn lots of wonderful things from her.

Tupu-ā-nuku

Tupu-ā-nuku is the eldest of Matariki's daughters. She spends her time with her grandmother learning about looking after the plants. She wants to care for them so they can grow big and strong so they can produce kai (food) for all the people.

The story of Tupu-ā-nuku reminds us that God asked us to care care of the earth, and look after all the plants on it. In the Bible in Genesis 2:15 it tells us that God and put Adam in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it.

Tupu-ā-rangi

Tupu-ā-rangi is the daughter who loves to sing, and has a song for every occasion! Her Grandmother takes her to sing for te wao nui (the great forests), and all the creatures that live there. Her beautiful voice rings through the forest and the manu (birds), the mokomoko (lizards) sing their waiata (song) too, which fills the world with joy.

Tupu-ā-rangi learns bird's songs too and she loves to sing along with them. In the story of Tupu-ā-rangi we learn the importance of sharing the gifts that God has given us with others, and appreciating those around us who share their gifts with us.

Waipunarangi

Waipunarangi loves to go with her grandmother to the oceans, lakes and rivers.

Her Grandmother teaches her about how the water spills down from Ranginui (the sky) and collects together in the rivers and lakes to provide drinking water for the people, animals and plants.

She also learns how the water is taken back up by the heat of Tama-nui-te-rā (the sun) into the clouds that cloak Ranginui, so that may rain fall again. God designed an amazing place for us to live, a place where nature has a cycle that works well if we look after it.

Waipunarangi knows that what you give out also comes back to you so if you give kindness to others, kindness will come back to you, and it is this lesson that we can learn from her.

Waitī and Waitā

Waitī and Waitā are Matariki's twins. Their grandmother knows that they love to watch the smallest and fastest of creatures - the insects. Waiti and Waita love insects because they are twins and know about working together, the way insects do.

When insects work together, they can do amazing things! Ngā pī (bees), for example, pollinate all the flowers so that the plants grow, and we have many delicious fruit and vegetables to eat!

Ngā pōpokoriki (ants) build huge, complicated tunnel cities underneath the ground, and work together to look after each other. God wants us to work together too, it says in Romans 12:5 We are many parts of one body, and we all belong to each other.

When we see these two stars in the sky, we can learn that we are meant to join in and work together as we serve God.

Ururangi

Last, but not least, we have Ururangi - the youngest child. She loves to race all of her sisters to get to her grandmother first! She loves to climb on her grandmother's lap and wrap herself in her arms, and hear one of her favourite stories. She brings excitement, awhi (hug) and aroha (love), helps her grandmother to feel cheerful in the cold and darkness of takurua (winter).

Ururangi reminds us that a good and loving attitude is really important, in fact in Ephesians 4:29 it says Let everything you say be good and helpful, so that your words will be an encouragement to those who hear them.

Matariki

But what about Matariki you may ask? Well, she is doing what all good mothers (and other caregivers) do - watching over and helping out her tamariki. With her support, encouragement, and supervision, she knows that they will grow to know and love God and then they will be able to do their very best.