



TENDING the garden of our HEARTS

"Our soul is a fertile field in which God sows with open hands the seeds of our future happiness; we are the owners of that field; it will produce according to the amount of labour we take the trouble to give it."



You are invited to celebrate

Te Rā Whānau o

Meri Hōhepa Suzanne Aubert

19 June 2024 | 189th Birthday

Welcome!

Meri Hōhepa Suzanne Aubert was a keen gardener both of her heart and the land. She recognised God as the Divine Gardener of our hearts. She described our souls as fertile fields that we need to tend.

She also encouraged people to tend the earth, and while doing so, to pay attention to what is going on in our hearts.

In this season of Matariki, we invite you to celebrate with us the 189th Birthday of Meri Hōhepa Suzanne Aubert.

This Resource Pack is designed to inspire teachers with fresh ideas and perspectives on what we can learn from the life of Meri Hōhepa Suzanne Aubert. The information, reflections and activities in this pack have been designed to be able to be adapted for all ages. Mix and match as you see fit. It can be adapted to be used at any time of the year.

In the spirit of Matariki, the contents are designed to help your students honour the past (by learning about Meri Hōhepa Suzanne Aubert's life), enjoy the present (through opportunities for students to reflect on their own lives), and to look forward to the future (in activities to help your students dream about what they want to grow in the garden of their hearts).

Words to inspire you from Meri Hōhepa Suzanne Aubert

"Our soul is a fertile field in which God sows with open hands the seeds of our future happiness; we are the owners of that field; it will produce according to the amount of labour we take the trouble to give it."

"Let us try well for once, to work under this Divine Gardener in the garden of our hearts, by working in our earthly garden. All that we do in this latter garden (the one here on earth) can and should, with God's help, be turned to the profit of the former (garden of our heart)."

Table of Contents

- A. PAST: Learn from the life of Meri Hōhepa Suzanne Aubert. (Page 2-5)
- B. PRESENT: Reflect on caring for the Seeds of Happiness in your own life. (Page 6-8)
- C. FUTURE: Activities making Gardens of the Heart. (Page 8-15)
 - Make a Heart of Leaves and Flowers
 - Create a Collage of the Heart
 - Plant a Heart of Seeds
 - Plant a living Garden of the Heart
 - Draw a Comic Strip of the Parable of the Sower
 - Watch a film: Gardening with Soul
 - Listen to a song: Tend
 - Colour in a picture: Birthday Cake
- D. Getting in Touch (Page 16)

A. PAST: Learn from the life of Meri Hōhepa Suzanne Aubert

In her own words:

"Our soul is a fertile field in which God sows with open hands the seeds of our future happiness; we are the owners of that field; it will produce according to the amount of labour we take the trouble to give it."

In this section below, we unpack the truth of Suzanne's words in the example of her own life. Each section tells some of her life story, then gives specific examples that illustrate the point.

The Fertile Field

The 'fertile field' or context into which Marie Henriette Suzanne Aubert was born, helped to nourish all her later mission achievements and supported the legacy which she has left behind.

Suzanne Aubert was born on 19 June 1835 in St-Symphorien-de-Lay, a town not far from Lyon, France. Her mother, Clarice, worked for church welfare organizations and her father, Louis, was a huissier (a type of bailiff or officer of the French court justice system).

From the beginning, Suzanne Aubert had a heritage based on compassion and justice for those who were oppressed. She was surrounded by a vital faith community which had endured tough times as a persecuted church.

In 1840, the family moved to Lyon. This was another 'fertile field' where young Suzanne witnessed the missionary work and hospitals which were run by female congregations. Suzanne's grandmother, Joséphine, helped pregnant girls and their babies and other women who needed help.

While Suzanne was at school in France during 1848, the nation endured social revolutions. As an observant young woman, she added this experience to her life-long quest for social justice, especially for women and children.

Examples of the fertile field of Suzanne's life:

- **The fertile field of home**, e.g, a multi-generational family life serving the parish community in a variety of ways, particularly women and children in need.
- **The fertile field of the parish**, e.g, a lively parish engaged in local and distant mission; spiritual direction sought from wise priests such as the Curé d'Ars Jean Vianney.
- **The fertile field of her education**, e.g, early years of home schooling due to disability; Benedictine nuns providing quality education in later years.
- **The fertile field of the garden of her heart**, e.g, listening, humble, compassionate, faith-filled, responsive, courageous.

The Seeds of Future Happiness

When Suzanne was about two years old, she was badly injured and temporarily crippled and blinded. Her mother suffered from cancer during Suzanne's childhood, which meant that her brother Camille spent his early years in foster care. Suzanne also experienced the grief of losing her other brother Louis when he died at a young age from a chronic health condition.

Because of Suzanne's childhood illness, her formal education was delayed. This sowed a 'seed' of desire for learning. When she eventually had access to education through the Benedictine nuns of La Rochette, Suzanne excelled in many subjects. She even taught herself Spanish to read the original writings of St Teresa of Avila.

The 'seed' for mission work in Suzanne's life was sown when her mother tried to gain support from the Curé d'Ars (the priest of Ars), Jean Vianney, for Suzanne to marry the son of a family friend. Instead, Suzanne was supported by Jean Vianney to pursue mission work. He said that 'God had other plans for her.' This was the encouragement she needed to leave France and travel to Aotearoa New Zealand when she was 25.

Examples of the seeds of future happiness that God had sown in Suzanne's heart:

- **Love of language learning:** French, Italian, Spanish.
- **Empathy for those suffering:** Her own experience of disability (sight and movement) and rehabilitation via prayer and loving care; her brother's chronic health condition and early death; her brother's time in foster care; her mother's journey with cancer.
- **Love of music:** Studying music theory, singing, piano.
- **Various work experiences:** Ministering alongside her mother and grandmother (learning how to care for people in need); nursing service .
- **Love of studying science:** Botany, chemistry, medicine, etc.
- **Contemplation and prayer:** Studying the spiritual writings of St Teresa of Avila; seeking the spiritual counsel of Jean Vianney.

The Labour

Bishop Jean Baptiste Pompallier, visited Lyon in 1859 recruiting missionaries for The Diocese of Auckland. He set the course of Suzanne's next chapter of life.

Not long after arriving in Aotearoa New Zealand, Suzanne met a Māori woman named Peata and, with her and other women, formed a new religious congregation in Auckland named 'The Holy Family' in 1862. They had responsibility for teaching Māori girls. This was the beginning of Suzanne's support of Māori people, who were struggling with the effects of war, damage to their trading economy, and the confiscation of their lands. Suzanne remained labouring in Auckland for ten years learning te reo Māori to a high level of competency.

In 1871, Suzanne left Auckland to live and work at the Marist Māori mission station at Meeanee in Hawke's Bay. This was where she discovered she could relate well to both Māori and Pākehā, Catholic and non-Catholic, through the 'labour' of walking around the district and ministering and nursing wherever she was needed.

In 1883, Suzanne travelled with a Marist priest and three Sisters of St Joseph of Nazareth to the isolated Māori village of Hiruhārama, 80 kilometres up the Whanganui River.

In 1885, when she was 50 years old, she compiled a groundbreaking Māori-English phrase book, later adapted by Sir Āpirana Ngata. In 1890, Suzanne began to market herbal remedies that she had developed while nursing Māori and studying rongoā, with Sister Peata and in the Hawke's Bay. This helped fund her mission work and service.

In 1892, Suzanne was appointed as Mother Superior of the newly established Daughters of Our Lady of Compassion. This was New Zealand's first home grown congregation, later known as the Sisters of Compassion. Between 1890 and 1901, the Sisters cared for more than 70 babies and children. Because Hiruhārama was so isolated, Suzanne set her sights on Wellington to continue her work caring for children and others in need.

Examples of the "amount of labour" that she took the trouble to give her "fertile field":

- **Learning te reo Māori** and tikanga. Living alongside and serving Māori communities.
- **Learning about native plants** and their medicinal qualities used in rongoā, harvesting, and experimenting with their use.
- **Cultivating friendships and networks** with a wide range of people, writing many letters.
- **Caring for and teaching children** (Māori and Pākehā) over many years in Auckland, Hawkes Bay, Hiruhārama and Island Bay, Wellington.
- **Starting the many works of the Daughters of Our Lady of Compassion**; reflecting and writing down her ideas to guide the Sisters ongoing work; travelling to Rome (and back) to get the Decree of Praise so that they could freely continue on their work.
- **Prayer and "contemplation on the hop"**, focussed on the life and work of Jesus.
- **Nursing**: ministering to communities in rural Hawkes Bay, Hiruhārama, Wellington, and helping earthquake victims.
- **Extensive travel** all over Aotearoa New Zealand, staying with local iwi and recent migrants, observing needs, and making plans to meet them, guided and equipped by Divine Providence.

The Crop

Suzanne Aubert's 'crop' came to maturity towards the later part of her life.

In 1899, Suzanne and three Sisters of Compassion arrived in Wellington. They established New Zealand's first home for permanently disabled people, a crèche for children of working parents, and a soup kitchen, which has endured to this day.

In 1913, aged 78, Suzanne set sail for Rome to seek a Decree of Praise which would give the Sisters Order Papal recognition and the freedom to continue their work.

In 1920 a frail but triumphant Suzanne returned home to Island Bay, where she organized nursing training for the Sisters and expanded the scope of services provided by the hospital she established in Island Bay.

On 1 October 1926, aged 91, Suzanne Aubert died in the presence of her Sisters, leaving behind a lasting legacy of compassion.

Examples of the crop that was produced in Suzanne's life (often working in partnership with others):

- **The Manual of Māori Conversation**, a comprehensive English-Māori phrase book, later adapted by Sir Āpirana Ngata.
- **Developing natural remedies** combining western scientific methods with knowledge of plants native to Aotearoa.
- The **Home of Compassion** in Island Bay, one of several sites established by the Sisters over many years, caring for children in need, and including a hospital and training for nurses.
- A **variety of social services** to meet needs of the day: St Joseph's Home for Incurables, the Crèche for children of working parents, and the **Compassion Soup Kitchen** that still operates in Wellington.
- **The Directory**, a collection of her thoughts and ideas which describe the ethos with which she envisaged work continuing within the Order.
- The **establishment of the Daughters of Our Lady of Compassion**, Aotearoa New Zealand's own religious order. The Sisters and co-workers continue the on-going work to this day in their various Christ-centred ministries to all creeds and none in Aotearoa, Australia, and Fiji.



B. THE PRESENT: Reflect on Growing the Seeds of Happiness

Meri Hōhepa Suzanne Aubert said:

"Our soul is a fertile field in which God sows with open hands the seeds of our future happiness; we are the owners of that field; it will produce according to the amount of labour we take the trouble to give it."

Meri Hōhepa Suzanne Aubert is inviting you to **imagine your heart as a field or garden that can grow beautiful and good things**, that can make you, others, and God happy. She encourages you to take care of your heart's field or garden.

Some Reflection Questions

1. What is the Fertile Field of your life?

Meri Hōhepa Suzanne Aubert says that our soul (or heart) is a fertile field, and that we are the owners of that field. **A fertile field is full of goodness and can grow good things.** Think about your own heart as a fertile field.

- What are the good things about the home or whānau that you are growing up in?
- What are the good things about the people in the parish, or faith-community or wider community that you are a part of?
- What are the good things about the whenua where you live?
- What are the good things about the schools or places where you learn things?
- What are the good qualities in the garden of your heart?

Going Deeper: Make a Living Garden of the Heart (Page 12)

2. What are your Seeds of Future Happiness?

Meri Hōhepa Suzanne Aubert says that God generously sows lots of seeds into our hearts that can make us happy in the future. **Tiny seeds can grow into great things. Seeds hold great potential.** What seeds have you noticed God has sown in your heart?

- What things do you feel excited or passionate about? What things are you interested in? What do you enjoy learning about?
- Who are the people in your life that bring you joy? Family, friends, whānau, community, parish or faith-community, clubs, teachers, special-interest groups on-line communities, etc?

- What opportunities are there where you live? To learn? To explore? To serve?
- What experiences have you already had? Good ones that make you full of joy? Hard ones that help you understand how other people sometimes feel?
- What ways do you experience or know God's love? Through Mass? Reading the Bible? In nature? Through other people caring for you? Through stories about Saints? In prayer? Singing? Music? Art?

Going Deeper: Make a Heart of Seeds (Page 11)

3. How do you care for your Fertile Field and Seeds of Happiness?

Meri Hōhepa Suzanne Aubert says that it takes work to look after the fertile field and seeds of happiness that God has given us. **If you want a good crop, fertile fields need to be watered, weeded and looked after, and seeds need care.**

How do you look after the fertile field of your life?

- How do you show care for your home or whānau?
- How do you show care towards your faith community or wider community?
- How do you look after the local whenua or environment?
- How do you show your appreciation for your school or teachers?
- How do you look after the garden of your heart?

How are you looking after the good seeds God has sown in your life?

- What things do you practice? Or study?
- Who do you spend time with, listen to, or learn things from? Who do you hang out with?
- What do you pray about?
- What jobs do you help with? At home? At school? In your community?
- What clubs or groups can you join that will teach you the things you want to learn?

Going Deeper:

Tend your **Living Garden of the Heart (Page 12)**, or your **Heart of Seeds (Page 11)**, or your school garden.

For older students: Listen to the song Tend (Page 14).

<https://youtu.be/sriGLZwLNI4?si=h2uLAfV3h9cW37yD>

4. What do you hope your life will produce in the future?

Meri Hōhepa Suzanne Aubert knew that God is the Divine Gardener of our hearts. But she encourages us to make an effort to care for our hearts as well. She says that our effort makes a difference. **Seeds and fields that are looked after have more ability to produce healthy plants, and healthy plants have a better chance to produce more good fruit.**

- What good things are you looking forward to growing in your life? What about in the life of your whānau and community?
- What can you notice is growing already?
- Who can encourage you to keep on making an effort?
- Who can you encourage you to keep on making an effort?

Going Deeper:

- Make a **Collage of the Heart** (Page 10) about what you want your heart to look like in the future.
- Using healthy plants, make a beautiful **Heart of Flowers and Leaves** (Page 9).
- Every day ask God to help you notice the fertile soil, the seeds, and the good things starting to grow in your life. Give thanks to God.
- Keep a "Garden of the Heart" gratitude journal.
- Can you draw a picture or make a construction about these ideas? Or write a prayer or reflection? Or a song? Or make a play or video?

C. THE FUTURE: Activities making Gardens of the Heart

Meri Hōhepa Suzanne Aubert said:

"Let us try well for once, to work under this Divine Gardener in the garden of our hearts, by working in our earthly garden. All that we do in this latter garden (the one here on earth) can and should, with God's help, be turned to the profit of the former (the garden of our heart)."

Let's to work in our earthly gardens while thinking about the gardens of our hearts!

1. Make a Heart of Leaves and Flowers

STEPS



- Collect leaves or flowers. Ask before you pick them. Take them from all over the plant (not just in one place).
- Arrange them in a heart shape.
- Take a photo (because they won't last long) and upload or print.
- Put the leaves and flowers back under the plant you took them from or in the compost.



2. Create a Collage of the Heart

STEP 1	STEP 2	STEP 3
		
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Collect: A4 paper, something to draw with, glue, old magazines.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Add glue to your heart shape.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Think: What would a picture of the garden of your heart look like?
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Draw a heart shape onto the A4 paper. Make sure the heart fills up most of the page.		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Find some pictures of gardens in the magazines. Rip them out.
		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Choose the pictures that make you feel happy. Look for things that interest you.
		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Tear the pictures into smaller pieces.
		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Stick these small pieces onto your heart shape.

3. Plant a Heart of Seeds

STEP 1	STEP2
	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Find: A patch of fertile field or garden you can easily look after.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Regularly water your heart seeds.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Collect: Paper, scissors, lettuce seeds, water, a label or stick.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Weed around your heart seeds.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cut a heart shape in the paper.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Protect your heart seeds.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Place the paper on the fertile field or garden.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Watch and wait until you see your heart seeds start to produce a crop.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sow the lettuce seed within the heart shape.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• If you want to, transplant your heart seeds into a wider area and get an even larger crop!
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lightly cover the seed with soil and gently water.	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Put a label or stick where you have sown your heart seeds so you can find them again.	

4. Plant a Living Garden of the Heart

STEP 1



- Collect: 1x larger container, 1x smaller container, soil, plants, stones, sticks, flowers, bark, water.

- Think of how you would like your living garden of the heart to look.

- Add soil to the larger container.

- Place the small container like a pond.

STEP 2



- Add stones and water to your pond. Add plants to create a mini garden.

- Add bark or moss.

STEP 3



- Add other leaves, flowers or twigs to the garden to decorate it.

STEP 4



- Remember to water your garden of the heart and watch it grow and change over time.

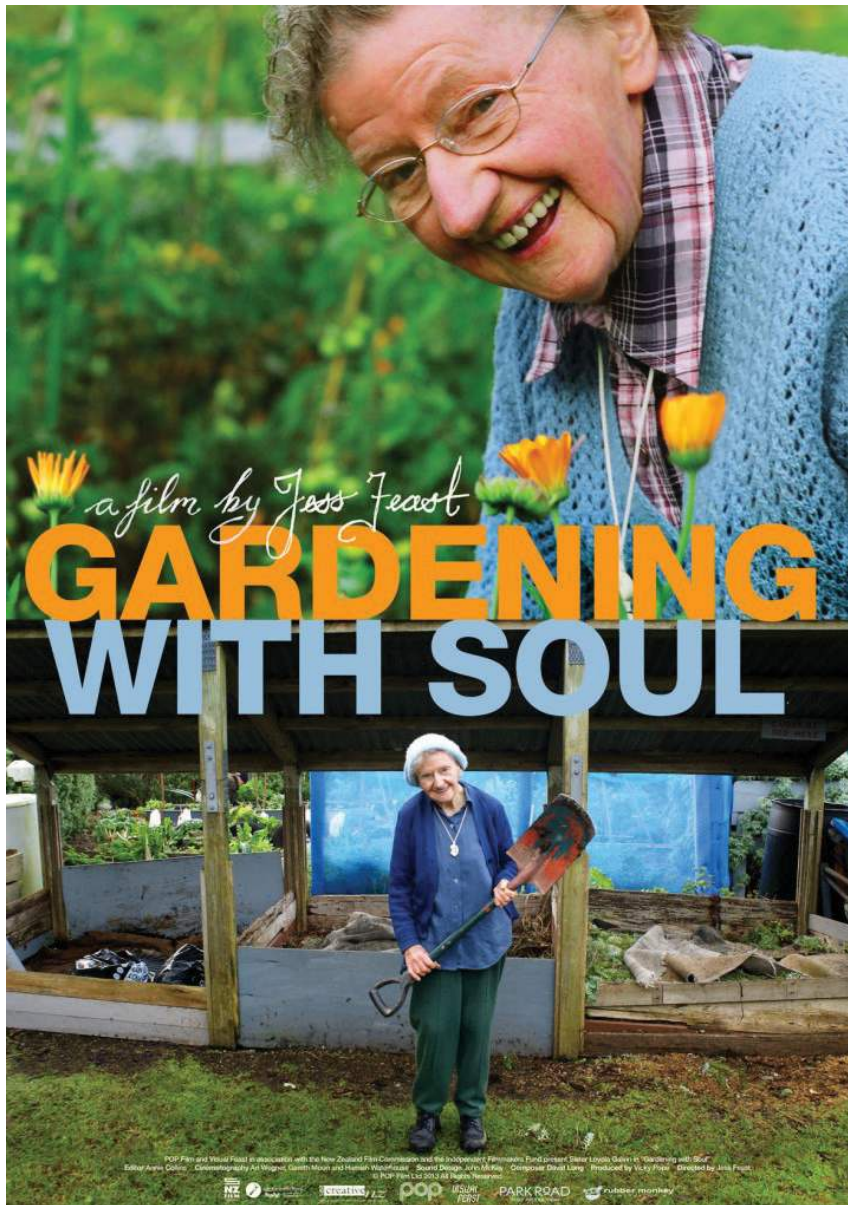
5. Draw a Comic Strip of the Parable of the Sower

1. Read the story when Jesus talked about a farmer who generously sowed seed, and how it grew. You can find it in the Bible, in Matthew in chapter 13, verses 3 – 9. What do you think this story means? The meaning of the story is told by Jesus at the end of the chapter.
2. Use your imagination to see the story in your mind.
3. Draw your own pictures in the comic strip boxes below.
4. Can you act this story out with some friends?

(V3) Then Jesus told them many things in parables, saying: "A farmer went out to sow his seed.	(V4) As he scattered the seed in the field, some seeds fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up.	(V5) Some seed fell on rocky ground where there was little soil. The plants grew up quickly because the soil wasn't deep.
(V6) But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because the roots had not grown deep enough.	(V7) Some of the seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants.	(V8&9) But some seed fell in good soil, and the plants bore grain: and some had one hundred grains, others sixty and others thirty. Listen, then, if you have ears"!

6. Watch a film

'Gardening with Soul' tells the story of Sister Loyola, one of the Sisters of Compassion. Suitable for older students: <https://compassion.org.nz/product/gardening-with-soul>



7. Listen to a song

Tend: <https://youtu.be/sriGLZwLNI4?si=h2uLAfV3h9cW37yD>

- Can you write your own song about the garden of your heart? or about the field of your future?
- Can you create a dance that expresses the song?

8. Colour in a picture: Birthday Cake

HAPPY BIRTHDAY



MERI HŌHEPA
SUZANNE AUBERT

Getting in Touch

If you will be in Wellington at the TSB Arena for the **New Zealand Catholic Education Convention (NZCEC) June 19-21, we will see you there!** Swing by and enjoy some birthday cake in honour of Meri Hōhepa Suzanne Aubert. Have a chat about this resource or other ways we might be able to encourage you.

Send us photos of your students' creations, such as your Gardens of the Heart, or any other fruit you would like to share with us. We would love to share them with the Sisters.

If you are in Wellington on **June 19th** but not at the NZCEC, you are warmly invited to join the Sisters to celebrate the birthday of Meri Hōhepa Suzanne Aubert at the **Home of Compassion, Island Bay with Mass at 9am**. Stay for the birthday cake, hot drink, and conversation to follow.

Be in touch if you would like to book in a school visit to learn more about Meri Hōhepa Suzanne Aubert, your own school retreat, or a staff retreat at the Home of Compassion.

Under development:

School Fundraising Pack- everything you need to know if you would like to support us with raising funds for the ongoing work of the Compassion Group.

New Compassion website- easier to navigate and find the up-to-date info you want!

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