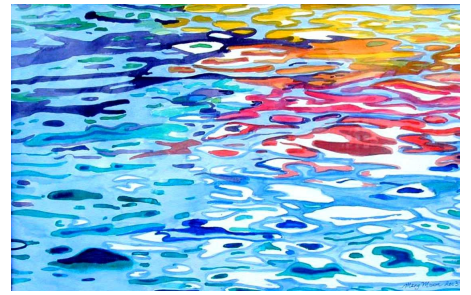




Galaxies Gathering

26 June 2011

Service by Pete Cowley &
Fergus Collinson



Welcome:

Leader: Now that we have greeted each other and shared a meal we are reminded that God the free Spirit shares itself with us, thus we can share our peace and love with one another.

All: We open our hearts to the mystery of God's love in all things. We carry in us the divine spark, the gift of love and care for others which deepens us as people, deepens us as sisters and brothers of the ever changing creation.

The Gathering

Leader Haere mai
We come to this place of kindness and welcome
We come to worship God, however you conceive
We come to think of people who have died
and who shine like stars around us.
We come to thank our lucky stars for warm homes,
for hearty food and clean water

People: We come to share the
starlight of love.

Our theme tonight:

Our gathering tonight
celebrates Matariki - the Maori
New Year.

Matariki indicates lengthening
days, a time to plant for the
spring harvest, respect for the
earth and our biosphere.

It is also a time for celebration
of culture, language, spirit and
people past and present.

In the Māori language Matariki
is both the name of the
Pleiades star cluster and also
of the season of its first rising
in late May or early June -
taken as the beginning of the
new year.



Call to contemplation

Leader: In the time of darkness, light emerges:

People: Light to guide us on.

(a candle is lit)

Leader: In the heart of a southern winter

People: We celebrate the turning of the earth.

(a candle is lit)

Leader: In the calendar's mid year

People: We celebrate the new year, Matariki.

(a candle is lit)

Leader: God, you dance in the stars promising Spring hope and light and love.

People: We join ourselves to the earth in transformation and renewal naming ourselves, our home, in this place.

(a candle is lit)

A Winter affirmation:



Stonehenge, United Kingdom

Leader: We have arrived at the Winter solstice, a few short days ago and we acknowledge friends who warm us - with coffee or a meal, letters from far away, the loan of a new or old and cherished book, a drink after work, e-mail messages, open fires ... and arms ... and hearts.

People: We thank you for friends warming us.

Leader: As the constellation of Matariki reappears during the waning of the June moon we acknowledge the foods brought by Matariki, the hospitality of others and of ourselves. We are thankful that we can choose to miss breakfast, to work through lunch, to grab a snack, knowing that in a world where many are hungry, we have plenty to eat and to share.

People: We thank our partners in occupation and recreation, we give thanks to those who help provide for our food and drink and shelter.

Leader: As the days shorten and colours fade from earth. We remember those who mourn, and celebrate the lives of those who have died. As the leaves fall and carpet the cool earth, our memories turn scarlet and brown and golden.

People We acknowledge the winter of loss and mourning; and remember those who live on through their influence in our lives.

Leader: In the season of mid winter festivities, as jester and fool we acknowledge the greening force in nature's vegetation and in us. We shout, "Your health" and think of those whose lives are touched by disease, we send thoughts and healing energy to those who are unwell, and send love to soothe and to heal.

People: We give thanks for greening life, for the promise of new life from the depths of Winter, and for our well-being.

Leader: In Winter darkness, when we doubt our doubting and question our lack of faith. We celebrate questioning and uncertainty. For those who are too sure, we wish the gift of unknowing; For those who know they are right, we wish the adventure of uncertainty. For those who are afraid to disbelieve, we wish the risk of asking questions, For those who vacillate, we wish the heart's ease of choosing what not to believe.

People: When Winter chills us and we think with nostalgia of certainty and assurance, We celebrate the fire of our questioning, the passion of our searching, the integrity of our quest.
(Bronwyn White. 1997. Wellington)

During Matariki we celebrate our unique place in the world.

*We give respect to the whenua on which we live,
and admiration to our mother earth Papat nuku.*

Throughout Matariki we learn about those who came before us.

Our history. Our family. Our bones.

Matariki signals growth.

It's a time of change.

It's a time to prepare, and a time of action.

*During Matariki we acknowledge what we have
and what we have to give.*

Matariki celebrates the diversity of life.

It's a celebration of culture, language, spirit and people.

Matariki is our

Aotearoa Pacific New Year.

Matariki – Heralding the Māori New Year

The heavens

Matariki is the Māori name for the small cluster of stars also known as the Pleiades or the Seven Sisters, in the Taurus constellation. In New Zealand it comes into view low on the north-eastern horizon, appearing in the tail of the Milky Way in the last days of May or in early June, just before dawn. This heralds the Māori New Year.

Various Māori tribes celebrated Matariki at different times. Some held festivities when Matariki was first seen in the dawn sky; others celebrated after the full moon rose or at the beginning of the next new moon.

For all tribes, the importance of Matariki has been captured in proverbs and songs, which link it with the bright star Whānui (Vega)

Ka puta Matariki ka rere Whānui.
Ko te tohu tēnā o te tau e!

Matariki re-appears, Whānui starts its flight.
Being the sign of the [new] year!

Matariki is also associated with the winter solstice. It appears when the sun, drifting north on the shortest day in winter, reaches the north-eastern end of the horizon. The sun then turns around and begins its journey south.

Legends

Matariki literally means the 'eyes of god' (mata ariki) or 'little eyes' (mata riki). Some say that when Ranginui, the sky father, and Papatūānuku, the earth mother were separated by their offspring, the god of the winds, Tāwhirimātea, became angry, tearing out his eyes and hurling them into the heavens. Others say Matariki is the mother surrounded by her six daughters, Tupu-ā-nuku, Tupu-ā-rangi, Waitī, Waitā, Waipuna-ā-rangi and Ururangi. One account explains that Matariki and her daughters appear to assist the sun, Te Rā, whose winter journey from the north has left him weakened.

Matariki and Puanga

Some Māori tribes believed that it was the rising of the star Puanga (Rigel in Orion) which heralded the new year, not Matariki. Hence the saying: 'Puanga kai rau' (Puanga of abundant food). This divergence was explained to the scholar Elsdon Best by a Māori elder: 'The task of Puanga is to strive with Matariki (the Pleiades) that he may gain possession of the year.'

Cycles of life and death

Traditionally, Māori were keen observers of the night sky, determining from the stars the time and seasons, and using them to navigate the oceans. Lookouts would watch for the rise of Matariki just before dawn. For Māori, this time signified remembrance, fertility and celebration.

Remembrance

Haere atu rā e koro ki te paepae o Matariki, o Rehua. Haere atu rā.
Farewell old man, go to the threshold of Matariki, of Rehua. Farewell.

In times of old, the sighting of Matariki was greeted with expressions of grief for those who had died since its last appearance. Some said the stars housed the souls of those departed. Rangihuna Pire, in his 70s, remembered how as a child he was taken by his grandparents to watch for Matariki in mid-winter at Kaūpokonui, South Taranaki:

The old people might wait up several nights before the stars rose. They would make a small hāngī. When they saw the stars, they would weep and tell Matariki the names of those who had gone since the stars set, then the oven would be uncovered so the scent of the food would rise and strengthen the stars, for they were weak and cold. 1

Planting crops

Matariki atua ka eke mai i te rangi e roa,
E whāngainga iho ki te mata o te tau e roa e.
Divine Matariki come forth from the far-off heaven,
Bestow the first fruits of the year upon us.

The coming season's crops were planted according to the portents read in the Matariki star cluster. If the stars were clear and bright, it was a sign that a favourable and productive season lay ahead, and planting would begin in September. If the stars appeared hazy and closely bunched together, a cold winter was in store and planting was put off until October.

Harvest

Ngā kai a Matariki, nāna i ao ake ki runga.

The foods of Matariki, by her scooped up.

Matariki happened at the end of harvesting, when food stores were plentiful. The variety of food which had been gathered and preserved ensured an abundant supply for feasting - Matariki was an important time for festivity. Women rejoiced, sang and danced to celebrate the change of season and new beginnings. Often kites (pākau) were flown - they were thought to get close to the stars.

Revival

Matariki celebrations were popular before the arrival of Europeans in New Zealand, and they continued into the 1900s. Gradually they dwindled, with one of the last traditional festivals recorded in the 1940s. At the beginning of the 21st century Matariki celebrations were revived. Their increasing popularity has led to some to suggest that Matariki should replace the Queen's birthday as a national holiday.



When Te Rangi Huata organised his first Matariki celebrations in Hastings in 2000, about 500 people joined him. In 2003, 15,000 people came. Te Rangi Huata believes that Matariki is becoming more popular because it celebrates Māori culture and in doing so brings together all New Zealanders: 'It's becoming a little like Thanksgiving or Halloween, except it's a celebration of the Maori culture here in (Aotearoa) New Zealand. It's New Zealand's Thanksgiving.' 1

Māori kites

The revival of Matariki has also played a part in the increasing popularity of the traditional Māori kite (pākau). Hekenukumai Busby, an expert in traditional Māori navigation, has said that the ancestors of Māori, including the Polynesians of ancient history, welcomed Matariki by flying kites.

Accordingly, Te Taura Whiri i te reo Māori (Māori Language Commission), in their 2001 booklet on Matariki, suggested that kites could be flown on the first day of the new year. A number of modern Matariki celebrations have involved making and flying kites. In a modern twist, the Hastings festival featured fireworks and hot air balloons, symbolising kites flown from the hilltops by the ancestors.



oH i uTTERLY LOVE tHIS pHOTO -(Fergus Collinson)

its got the black starkness
that is the copper box
with McGregor inside
that I grab in the middle
of Matariki, and take on a
wee voyage to
the beach, the sea, ice
clear colours, and I'm
always surprised by
something lovely
happening



This years Matariki is
bigger. Two journeys to
Christchurch and the
heart warming team that is my Cochlear Ear Clinic family, and whiskey in my
coffee
ciggies in the near outside of Helen and Dave and Joshua, and Saskia's
Simeon St Spreydon home.

Hot walnut fruit cake,
and the gypsy jazz that is my paintings of Helen
and Gerard and Abraham nearly 3 decades ago

I'm just back here, shocked and
astounded at the further thrashing
the great people of Christchurch
endure. But
fun
playfulness
gaiety are
contagious!



The blessing by Fionnaigh McKenzie

Leader: As we reach the shortest day of the year
we teeter on the brink of a promise
of hope and light.
The cold winds of Winter
whisper of Spring.
May the beauty of the earth
Fill you with wonder.
May the love of your ancestors
wrap around you like a cloak.
May this new year be bursting with possibilities
unfurling like fern fronds.
May your life be filled with blessings
as numerous as the stars.

People: Amen

The Thanksgiving - Gloria by Joy Cowley

Leader: Glorious are you, Mystery of Life
essence of all creation
You are the symphony of stars and planets.
You are the music of the atoms within us.
You are the dawn on mountain peaks,
the moonlight on evening seas.
Forest and farm, the rush of the city,
everything is embraced in your love.

People: **We rejoice as we speak our gratitude.**

Leader: Glorious are you, O Jesus Christ,
Cosmic love in human flesh.
You graced the smallness of time and place

to teach us to dance to the music.
You walk on our seas and heal in our streets.
You make your home in our lives,
revealing that cross and resurrection
are one on the road to freedom.

People: **We rejoice as we speak our gratitude.**
Glorious are you, O spirit of Truth,
wisdom and breath of our being.
You are the wind that sweeps our senses.
You are the fire that burns in our hearts.
You are the needle of our inner compass,
always pointing to true North,
guiding us on the sacred dance
into the Mystery of Life.
We rejoice as we speak our gratitude.

Departure

Leader: God of winter, we praise you. God of soaking rains, of hail and snow, wind and storm

People: Of torrents surging down creek beds, streams filling reservoirs, and tanks full and running over.

Leader: God of brisk winter mornings, of frosted paddocks under moonlight of warm socks, coats, and gloves, heaters, radiators, and glowing fires.

People: God of little children splashing in puddles, sailing make-believe boats in flooded gutters, of raincoats, and umbrellas, and gum-boots, and the scent of hot soup from the kitchen.

Leader: God of winter, glorious winter, the unpopular, slandered season yet one filled with renewed hope for farms, town and city.

People: God of life- sustaining winter, author of recreation and providence renewing the roots of life. God of glorious winter, blessed is your name in all the earth. (Abridged. Bruce D. Prewer, Australia.)

