



# Galaxies Evening Service 24 May 2015

Service by Fergus Collinson  
& Peter Cowley



## Welcome:

**Welcome to our service tonight**

*Tonight we celebrating turning 23years old. We'll do what we do best, share each other's company, be creative, and support one another.*



## Call to togetherness and sharing:

**Leader:** God, we are all part of you, your creation, your life and your love.

As we gather together to look back on previous years to see where we have been and to look forward to where we might be in the future

**All:** **May the love of God lead is in surprising twists and turns, self discovery and help us to care for all of creation**

## WE ARE CREATIVELY 23 - and the years fly by!

It is amazing that we have reached the age of 23. We have shrunk in numbers as our fellows have found welcoming places or have moved on with their spiritual journey. Those of us that remain as the core group of tenacious, creative loving folk will celebrate another year.

Possibly we will lament the passing of Summer too.



**FIERCE MONGOLIAN PEASANT WORDS**, my lost lava six big paintings Clare Athfield commission for Wellington Central Library emerges pristinely undamaged from a decade in a broom cupboard to spew again. Vigorously at Potocki Gallery Dixon Street on Thursday.

Yes I'm one of those we are everywhere baby boomers who had everything good! I arrived in the world in Owaka's brick Queen Anne style local hospital. Quite probably after dark.

Dad said to Dr Morrison

"A dry sherry for you?"

and he said

"No thank you. I'm a Christian. I don't drink"

Dad resumed his roving nomadic life as soon as possible, and nothing much happened in one of Owaka's biggest homes until I was three, and my cousin John, who disapproved of Dad re-marrying, lured me into his room, and started smashing me up. When I was eight, and still

couldn't hear what the teacher was saying from the social outcasts back seat of the classroom, Mum and Dad decided to be daringly different and do the job themselves. Correspondence School worked superbly for me. When the sun shone I ran off to the hills. I did double time when it rained.

I'd have loved to have been an architect, but maths baffled me, and still does.Â

Artistic inspiration? My granma's mostly copied off chromolithograph paintings over all our walls, and the Correspondence School librarians sending me every art book they had. Yes that big bush hill behind us is the Hokusai mountain near sundown. Our place was on the edge of darkly dramatic southerlies. The minute I saw a tiny Kokoschka photo of the Charles Bridge Prague, I recognised it, loved it

That damn maths thing - I could have stayed teenager stuck for ever and ever, but I loved making things at woodwork night class. Yes - the ones Anne Tolley shut down as fast as she could. Community stuff like this is a total waste! Not so. When me and John Roberts-Thomson, our Baptist minister said

'Lets job hunt in Dunedin, mate" I ended up doing a cabinet making apprenticeship, because foreman, Les Jackson, Â had a brother who was deaf too. I kept painting -

"Why is there never any green in your paintings? "

"I hate green!"

"Theres no sheep, no cows"

"They're boring"

So was Dunedin, as I realised when I arrived for a magical summer in a big Wellington community outfit. If they liked me they said hey, and these are still the people I like to attract, mesh with. My nurse buddy, love, Robyn Caseley said

"Fergus. Get yourself into Victoria. It'll open your mind up. You'll meet gays and lesbians." I picked people subjects. I was gambling on ear gear being good enough when I graduated to be in a people job. In this day and era of further education running up stupendous \$20,000 debts awfully fast there were student vacation jobs. A buddy patiently worked thru about 27. The last one was in the Alexander Turnbull Library's art room. Dame Janet Paul was my boss, and relaxedly added me into her family, and I met brave key people like Douglas Lilburn, Eve and Freddy Page, Dennis Glover, Hone Tuwhare who had started to push the boundaries of being Kiwi, of no longer being an apologetic part of the British Empire. ATL had my paintings over every available wall. I won NZ Academy of Fine Arts Awards, was very nearly in line for a two year art grant, but - what a difference that would have made!

Jenny Nelligan of Bowen Gallery noticed, and sleuthed me out for my first show, and then Kay Roberts, and Jane Bellhouse promoted me vigorously. All was well until publisher Roger Steele was looking for a launch venue for Bouncing with Billie, and her Auckland boss made her fire me.

I discovered theatre, that it was mostly ok for me to have a torch and flip thru the script. I loved the play Children of a Lesser God, where Miranda Harcourt was an angry deaf woman, and I fell in love with my first out gay man.

By then I'd had to quit my job because I got knocked out by, three decades on, its still poorly understood, Chronic Fatigue Syndrome. Some of this would have been related to working in a sick building. The air conditioning intake was in the dock for the vans, so all of us ingested mega amounts of toxic fumes. People got migraines. I don't remember ever feeling ok.

I loved working with the Athfields on the upgrade of a disgusting 70's sardine tin building next the ATL. Personalising meeting rooms with double sided painted lintels.

Clare said

"Yours are the best!" Clutching her cheque book she says

"Fergus, this is only \$25,000 for 6 great big paintings that will welcome and involve people coming into Central Library. You work out what you want to do."

I hadn't the heart to tell her nobody has ever given me that much, and total trust. I raced off to buy the best acrylics available. What is it I've found to be of value? I noticed the lack of brown black and yellow people in libraries in 1990, and I was - away.

Heres the front entrance painting I borrowed a love song from the library. Here's a Maori mama clutching her baby as she sings in a smoky wee Sunday night Willis Street joint, that is also Ernestine Anderson in the smashing book Fifty Women of Colour. I have to include the dramatic pall of ciggy smoke above her head. My friend Lizzie walks in with William, and he knows exactly how to dance to Charlie Parker. Nailed! Done.

The slit thru Discovery Places pyramid constantly surprises me. The wintry clunk, the ancientness of the harbour. Wilsons whiskey 2 page Listener colour spread has Beyond Time, Rowers sing cheerful bash.

In Newtown Library I look at a Polynesian man in a boiler suit dancing with walkman music. Its also Steve in Homestead Health back from the bush, dark challenging, but when he says

"what records are in your bag? Oh I listen to this stuff too" we were friends. Un-intentionally I walked into the barrage of white librarians totally hating what I do. "Is this a transvestite?"

No it isn't, its my mate Carmellita dressed up for a night on the town. She's Billie Holiday in 3d - and I love a wee photo of a sax player in a book. They listen to each other, giving each other the intent space that delights me in great job.

## Franciscan Blessing (Departure)

May God bless you with discomfort ... at easy answers, half truths, and superficial relationships so that you may live deep within your heart

May God bless you with anger ... at injustice, oppression and exploitation of people so that you may work for justice, freedom and peace

May God bless you with tears ... to shed for those who suffer pain, rejection, hunger and war so that you may reach out your hand to comfort them and to turn their pain into joy

May God bless you with enough foolishness ... to believe that you can make a difference in the world so that you can do what others claim cannot be done to bring justice and kindness to all

**AMEN**

