



## Galaxies Evening Service 18 November 2007

Service by Pete Cowley



### Welcome:

Tonight we enter Advent - preparing for the good news of Jesus and celebrating his birth with Christmas - but not a winter birthday, rather a down-under mid-summer birthday.

### Galaxies candle Lighting

In honour of our community - those present and those not present  
In recognition of the gifts each of us bring to the table

we light our candle, and give thanks  
and we offer our love and support to each other.

Amen

### Introduction:

Following the Star Matthew 2: 1-12

Up from restful beds

Three wise heads rise with the moon

Peering beyond covered tents

They ask of the night sky

"What is your story?"

Moving like a secret that holds deep truth

Darkness relaxes itself

As a rising star begins to speak

In a faint whisper they hear

"Emmanuel! They will call him the Prince of Peace."

Having heard

Sturdy feet dance a circle of celebration

Wrinkled hands

Prepare gold, frankincense and myrrh

Now ready...

They ride the East winds West...

To the Light of the World

Whom they find...

In the arms of a determined mother

In the care of a loving father

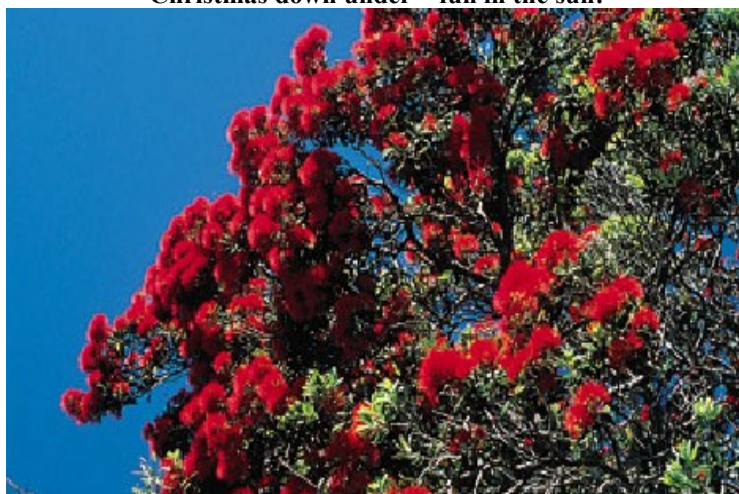
Cradled...

Beneath the sky

Of a Still Speaking God



Christmas down under – fun in the sun!



New Zealand Christmas tree – the pohoutakawa tree.



Sun, surf and kids – a typical Christmas Scene

### Affirmation of faith (said all together):

The bounty of God the Creator surrounds us with grace,  
spread in generous measures of loving creativity,  
poured forth for generation after generation in hopeful abundance,  
in an endless invitation to hospitality.

The feasting Christ walks in our scarce life  
as though all of us might be part of the celebration,  
as though each of us might be a guest at the banquet,  
as though we might all be together at the table,  
holding each other as precious,  
dying before we will give up love  
or life which is lived to the full.  
The laughing Spirit moves in endless freedom  
stirring, surprising, bestowing gifts as she moves  
as though wisdom is foolishly faithful to hope,  
eternal living for truth and will not settle for less,  
as though we are worth the struggle  
and we could really be the emerging children of God



This we believe. This is the wonder of our God.

### Passing the Peace:

**Leader:** Now that we are reminded that God the free Spirit shares itself with us, we can share our peace and love with one another.

Let us feel the power of the earth that holds us together.

Let us celebrate our gifts in song and dance.

Let us all rejoice in our power and our beauty.

**All:** We open our hearts to the miracle of birth and the mystery of God's love in all Creation. We carry in us the divine light, which shone so brightly the night of Christ's birth. The gift of love, which we share tonight, deepens us as people, deepens us as sisters and brothers.



Each person shares hugs or whatever those around them.



### Notices:

If you have any notices to bring to our attention please speak up.



## Contemporary reflections on Christmas down under:

**dON'T gET fRANK** by Fergus Collinson

"All worked up"  
is my Mum's  
definitive comment about my  
Dad  
I don't remember much about  
Christmas Days  
I'm sure it was  
very English  
He'd planted  
holly  
and Mum makes a mean  
steamed pudding  
Church before we eat.  
Our disapproving invisible  
relatives  
boycott.  
I want Christmas Day  
to be over  
so I can  
get on with life

After Dad died  
There's  
just the two of us  
Mum  
trying to find out  
cross examining me  
about Aunt Dot  
Telling me  
Robyn is a wicked wicked girl  
for not wanting to  
marry me  
Her visitors telling me off too  
for  
not staying at home  
to look after her  
But - I'm loving Christmas Eve  
in a freezing wee 50's  
Lawrence Camping Ground  
caravan  
surrounded by marcrocarpas

Then  
one wise man, exhilarated by stillness  
sunburnt and relaxed  
I'm driving home  
for one of the better ones.

"Don't tell anybody -  
she's not supposed to do this  
Glady's told me  
I want Fergus to have Christmas dinner too"

"Everything  
Everything  
just keeps getting better and better"  
(Queer Eye For The Straight Guy credits)  
Christmas now  
with my (thanks Kristelle for the label)  
Urban Tribe  
Josh reaching in to kiss me  
round and around  
our cigars  
He's our  
unwanted stranger



... Petrus new bus shelter  
realistic  
stable shed wall  
tent  
not quite  
keeping us warm  
If we don't stay focussed on our right hand arse cheeks  
we'll all slide downhill iceplants  
out into the rain  
I'm so glad we were  
heroically brave  
grey sullen Balclutha freezing swim  
before we eat  
dire stupendously salty  
yellow Thai curry  
roast chicken



It even makes our baked corn taste off  
(not to mention I'm missing Anchor butter melting down our fingers)

My prior New Year resolution -  
is definitely  
not to **blam** a new recipe  
on my unsuspecting guests  
and avoid cold corn

This year again  
our Christmas Day  
is about  
laughter  
adventure  
and love  
one of the better ones

The embracing  
stillness of Jesus  
as a very very new  
baby, like Amelie Rose  
The generousness  
of God  
we glimpse  
in ourselves  
our mates  
and others

### Hymn: Christmas in the picture book

Christmas in the picture book  
all gold and white with snow;  
winter in the desert,  
where the three Kings go.  
Ice on the camel rein,  
rime on the crown;  
snow around the stable doors  
snow around the stable doors  
snow around the stable doors  
of Beth'lem town.

I carol baby Jesus  
on a nor-west day;  
a summer wind is blowing  
across the beach and bay.  
Seagulls are wheeling,  
where the children run to swim;  
laughter in the breakers  
laughter in the breakers  
laughter in the breakers  
is their Christmas Hymn



## Advent ritual

**Leader:** "The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness -- on them light has shined... For a child has been born for us, a son given to us; authority rests upon his shoulders; and he is named Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace." (Isaiah 9:2, 6)

**Leader:** Today we remember the prophets of old, who demanded to be heard, who dared to speak of a child to come, unexpected liberator of the people, vulnerable incarnation of the Holiest of Holies, a new name for God.

**All:** Today we give thanks for the prophets among us, who bring to us surprising new visions of hope, who challenge us to think outside the box, who show us a future we never anticipated.

**Leader:** On this first Sunday of Advent, we light this Advent candle: **(Light the Advent candle.)**

- as a symbol of the prophets who renew our faith and remind us of what may be.
- as a symbol of the shepherds, agents of the gospel and redeemers of the world.
- as a symbol of Mary, mother of Jesus, bearer of the Way.
- as a symbol of Joseph, who knocks at the door, ready to take his place among royalty.
- for the child-King, the infant-Redeemer, the lowly-Lord. And now we know . . . He is born and nothing will ever be the same!

And we ask ourselves the questions

- What does this light remind me of?
- What does Christmas mean for me?
- What is the purpose of Advent?
- What room can I make in my heart for yearning and longing for a better world?
- What can I prepare for Christmas so that I am awake to the presence of God within me and others?

*Quiet time for reflections*

## Hymn: "Light of lights beholden"

Light of lights beholden  
we from days den  
sang this song  
for to understand  
that peace upon this planet  
was pledged to come.

Each to other, sister, brother, born for life and song.

Darkness all around us  
light has always found us,  
light will come  
where the dark is deepest,  
greater lights will keep us  
safe from harm.

Troubled times will always find  
a voice of troubled doom,

Look towards the light and carry on:  
let the simple heart and hope among us  
keep our family strong,  
let the simple heart and hope among us  
keep our family strong,

### Great Spirit Prayer: (all together)

"Oh, Great Spirit, whose voice I hear in the wind,  
Whose breath gives life to all the world.  
Hear me; I need your strength and wisdom.  
Let me walk in beauty, and make my eyes ever behold the red and purple sunset.  
Make my hands respect the things you have made and my ears sharp to hear your voice  
Make me wise so that I may understand the things you have taught my people.  
Help me to remain calm and strong in the face of all that comes towards me.  
Let me learn the lessons you have hidden in every leaf and rock.  
Help me seek pure thoughts and act with the intention of helping others.  
Help me find compassion without empathy overwhelming me.  
I seek strength, not to be greater than my brother, but to fight my greatest enemy  
Myself.  
Make me always ready to come to you with clean hands and straight eyes.  
So when life fades, as the fading sunset, my spirit may come to you without shame.

### Departure:

Leader: As we depart from this place  
of light,  
love,  
and warm hearts

may we be a light to others  
may we treat all we meet with loving-kindness  
may we warm others hearts with our care and commitment  
to compassion, truth and justice  
in all our dealings.

Have a safe, happy Christmas and remember "the reason for the season"!

