



Galaxies Evening Service 27 December 2009

Service by Pete Cowley
Web: galaxies.org.nz



Welcome:

Tonight's service is : Christmas down under.



Call to togetherness and sharing:

Leader: God, we are all part of you; your creation, your life, and your loving. We gather together to celebrate the birth of Jesus the radical Jewish carpenter who saw through the power and the privilege and was on the side of the weak and powerless. Jesus tried to explain that the Kingdom of heaven was compassionate care for others and for everything in this world. Alas, not many (even the disciples) seemed to get it!

All: **May we honour, nurture and protect all people and animals and fauna of our planet.**

Passing the Peace:

Leader: Now that we are reminded that we are to honour and care for all creation, let us start by honouring each other by sharing our peace and love with one another.

All: We open our hearts to the mystery of God's love in all creation. We carry in us the divine spark, the gift of love and care, which we share tonight, deepens us as people of God

Each person shares hugs, or whatever you are comfortable with, with those around them.



Notices

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

Christmas down under

Are you tired of all the snow, holly, tinsel and midwinter Christmas stuff? Isn't it amazing how Christmas has been so twisted into a retail experience and food fest. So very different from the birth story of Jesus although even that has what appears to be a Hollywood makeover even in biblical times.

So what do we make of Christmas here, down under, in the middle of summer. What spiritual spark is there beneath all the dross and dressing that we can find.

A Christmas prayer for reading between the lines - by John Howell

All who heard then pondered them and said , "What then will this child become?" Luke 1:66

All: When the silly season comes to a pause, and the shops and restaurants close, the holy day of Christmas begins.

My mind can rush to the next event, or be still and drink in the silence of joy.

Birth is an event of creation - perhaps God is a midwife? - which has both pain and delight. Emperors, CEOs and Generals downplay it as woman's work, scared to let a nurturing spirit weaken their power.

O God within, open my eyes to read between the lines, to seek the hidden gift of love, and to let the story rewrite my life. Amen.

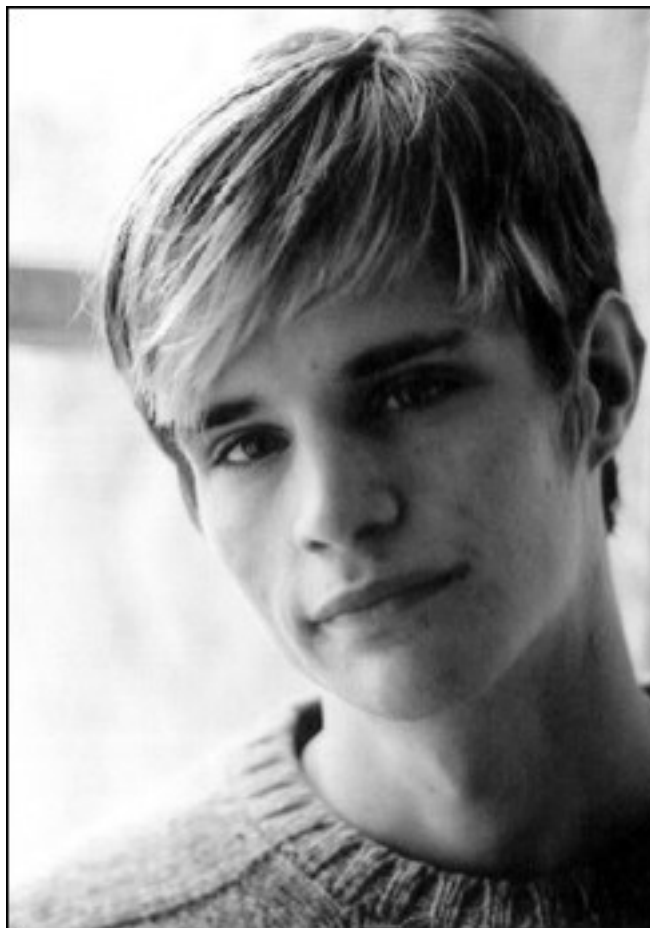
A prayer reads the human condition. Do not confuse prayer with magic or father Christmas. Prayer is a cry from the heart. It expresses the ecstatic shout of joy; it has empathy with the anguish of the sad and empty. To pray is to keep reading, to tease out the vision, to hear what is really being said. We can respond to the gift of God like Herod's massacre of the infants, or we can delight with the wonder of the shepherds.

Too pray is to seek the spirit by reading between the lines. It is to ponder what we might become. Otherwise our prayer mirrors our fears and prejudices, a reflection of ourselves, not an engagement with the story of the Holy Other.

Sighs too deep for words, Prayers and Images from Taupo

Behold the Christ by Joy Cowley

It was easy to see You
in holy faces, holy places,
God made flesh in a mother's voice
or in gentle hands of a nurse,
or the smile of a grandfather
or the laughter of small children.
Every presence of love and beauty
proclaimed your advent.
I needed eyes sharpened by suffering
before I was able to see You
in the pain of human poverty.
The man who stared at a prison ceiling,
the alcoholic mother, the hungry children,
the old woman who died alone in her flat,
the young victims who grew up
to become abusers themselves,
the people who were in despair
at their inability to make changes,
when I could look at them
through the experience of my own crucifixions,
I realised they all looked back at me
with your eyes.
It took much longer to see You
in places of affluence and power,
in parliament or at the stock exchange,
at the helm of a luxury yacht
or residing in a summer palace
surrounded by material wealth.
But now I discover that in these places
You have the same eyes as the poor,
the disabled, the imprisoned,
the same eyes as the grandfather,
the children, the hospital nurse,
the same eyes that I see
each morning in the mirror.
And I begin to understand a little,
just a little, of the truth of who You are.
Psalms for the Road



Matthew Sheppard

Little Lights by Joy Cowley

Jesus spoke of little lights,
candles, lamps,
not great bonfires,
just small steady flames
to brighten some dark corner of the
house.



Come to think of it, Jesus always preached little -
children,
flowers,
sparrows,
the widow's mite,
mustard seeds,
loaves and fishes.

He didn't expect people to make great gestures.
I guess he knew that little is the currency of everyday living.
So let's thank God for little lights,
the warm smile,
the hug,
the phone call,
a wave from a passing car,
a cup of tea,
an open door,
a talent freely shared.

How often, when my own candle has gone out, has someone relit it from their lamp of kindness.
That can't happen with a big light.
I mean, how close can you get to a supernova?

"Psalms for the Road"

Other contributions and thoughts.

Blessing

In the face of all our realities:
We are the people who heal each other,
who grow strong together,
who name the truth,
who know what it means to live in community,
moving towards a common dream for a new heaven and a new
earth
in the power of the love of god, the company of Jesus Christ
and the leading of the holy spirit.

Dorothy McRae-McMahon

