



*B*rothers and Sisters

Welcome to this Winter 2010 edition of our Christ Church newsletter.

Much has happened, and is happening.

Following the recent three-year calling we have a new and expanded ministry team. Congratulations to those called, in particular, new members Paula Franklin and Evelyn Heke-Dene. In Christ Church we are fortunate to have such talent and dedication in this most important function of our church.

We also have a new council working to support the team, and to look after the buildings, grounds and amenities. Much has been achieved so far, with our new sign, new blinds, new mat, and the clearing of the heap of rubbish. More is to come, including the heating of the church and hall, and the revamp of the hall.

We have had new appointments and retirements.

We welcome Anne van Gend, our new Enabler, who has already shown her merit, mettle and support to our congregation.

Sadly, we farewell Jacqui Knight, our outgoing secretary and staunch member of our community. We shall miss you Jacqui. I know all will agree when I say we would love to see you back some day. All God's blessings be upon you on your new path in Auckland.

John Russell, Chair, Christ Church Council

*A regular part of our services:  
sharing a sign of peace  
Peace... love... aroha...*

*Photographs: Jules Simons*

# *Christ Church Newsletter*

## *Winter 2010*

PO Box 150, Russell, Bay of Islands

## OUR SPECIAL SERVICES

*United we come as one... together we stand: all races, religions and genders.*

*We enter this place of worship, coming forth to God's name,  
to try to become the people...we have always hoped to be.*

*Now we stand, gathered.... to spread hope, truth and light in a time of darkness.*

*In all times and places we come to rejoice and give thanks.*



That was the Call to Worship at a service celebrating Matariki in June, one of the many special services that we are blessed to hold in Christ Church. Earlier in the month we had an evening service of Night Prayer incorporating the lovely Taizé music and before that it was Te Pouhere/Constitution Sunday.

The Worship Team meets regularly to plan the services, and their work is much appreciated not only by our own congregation but also by people who are just visiting for a day or two.

There is always something to learn from the special services: the back page of the pew sheet for Te Pouhere gave an outline of the Constitution

– its history and its present status with its three Tikanga leadership.

The Matariki Service was notable for the amount of Te Reo used. Many members of our congregation are enjoying taking lessons. There were visitors from Kerikeri, and others, who were very impressed with that.

Matariki: a chance of a new beginning. Chris Swannell had much to share about this ancient celebration and its present renewal. Members of the congregation were invited to write the names of people who had been inspirational stars in their lives and leave them around the candle on the table at the front of the church. A collection of dried and canned foods was taken up for the Russell Baptist Church Foodbank. *Jean McBurney*



## MATARIKI SERVICE

*Ka puta a Matariki, ka rere a Whanui, ko te tohu o te tau*

“Matariki reappears, Vega (Whanui) starts its flight... These are the signs of the times of the Māori New Year.”

Once a year, twinkling in the winter sky just before dawn, a small cluster of stars signals the Māori New Year. Traditionally, it was a time for remembering the dead, and celebrating new life. In the 21st Century, observation of Māori New Year has become popular again. Throughout this month, celebrations have been held around the country to mark this significant time in the Māori calendar.

Matariki, is the Māori name for the cluster of stars otherwise known as the Pleiades or the Seven Sisters, in the Taurus constellation. It rises just once a year; in NZ 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. 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 of our tribes, the importance of Matariki has been captured in proverbs and songs, which link it with the bright star Whānui (also known as Vega). 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

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. 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.

According to Greek mythology the Pleiades are the seven daughters of Pleione and Atlas. While wandering through the woods one day they were seen by Orion who gave chase. To save them from Orion's dishonorable intentions Zeus transformed them into stars and placed them in the sky. A number of ancient temples on the Acropolis in Athens face the direction where the Pleiades rise.

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

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

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.

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.

The importance of the stars and the sky warrants a whole paragraph from the great story read to us from Genesis this morning.

*And God said "let there be lights in the dome of the sky to separate the day from the night, and let them be for signs and for seasons and for days and years."*

Matariki reminds us to acknowledge creation and its creator in whom we live and move and have our being.

Every culture has its traditions about how the world was created. Māori have many of them, but the most important stories are those that tell of how darkness became light, nothing became something, earth and sky were separated, and nature evolved. Through the spoken repetition of these stories, the world is constantly being recreated.

The story of creation and the study of the universe and its stars also draws us to reflect on the awesomeness of the creator, God.

When we consider the development of the universe and our place in it, our sense of wonder cannot fail to be awakened. When we consider the size of the universe, we should give our sense of wonder full reign, because it moves us in to the realm of an awesome reality, totally beyond our imagination.

At the very least our contemplation of the vastness and the wonder, the sheer awesomeness of our universe might challenge us to be a little more 'expansive' with our image of God. At the same time we might be more wary of the ways we have 'boxed' God, localised God, and limited God within the confines of our images.

If we are to believe Genesis 1:27, we are to believe something totally outrageous... "God created humans, in his own image." When we want to see God, what do we do? Do we look up at the stars? Yes. Many believe you will see God there. But also look in to a mirror. There also, you will see God. You want to see God? Look in the mirror because you are made in God's image. Both views equally valid when pondering the wonder of creation.

Our gospel reading is a story of protection and guidance. The disciples totally awed to see the control and power, Jesus had over nature. The story of Jesus calming the storm also speaks to us of faith and a reliance beyond ourselves as we journey from one point to another. It's so easy to be swamped by the negativity, doom and gloom that surrounds us. Faith in our creator and knowledge of the depth of love shown to us in Christ has the potential

to raise us above that waves that lap at our waka.

Matariki and other constellations continue to lead and guide. Even today despite all of our technology.

But as we celebrate Matariki, let us also remember another star.

A star that rose in the east. The star that shone one cold night over a stable in Bethlehem. The star that led the wise men and the shepherds to this sacred place. This was the star that led the world to a place of love, peace and hope. For those of us who dare to journey along this path today, we too have the opportunity of knowing the love that flowed from that stable and re-discover the creator, of this incredible universe, humble enough to enter our world as a vulnerable babe, putting on human clothes ...that he might also journey with us through the quiet times and the stormy times.

Finally, we cannot ignore this morning, Paul's encouragement to the Philippian community to 'shine in the world like bright stars, offering the word of life'. His message was clear. God works in us, we are God's hands to do the work of the gospel, God's feet to take the gospel out from this place and God's mouthpiece to speak the love and hope of Christ to our hurting world.

Matariki, is a great time to reflect on our own faith journey no matter where on that journey we are at. May we also be reminded of our own individual callings to 'shine in the world like stars, offering the word of life'. And may we be challenged to keep following the star of Bethlehem, the star that leads us to hope in the resurrection and the world beyond.

*Chris Swannell*

## OUR HALL



The parish hall stands modestly next to Christ Church. Although at 57 years old it is much younger than its neighbour, it is an example of community effort and achievement.

In March 1946 a group of mothers of the Sunday School children met in the church: the purpose was to raise funds to build a small hall with provision for a Sunday School. A committee of eight was elected and a Post Office Savings account opened.

The committee planned a fancy dress ball for the children in the town hall and a dance after for the adults. Food and prizes would be donated. The charges were children one shilling, ladies two shillings and gentlemen two shillings and sixpence, profits to go to the hall fund.

Some months later they held a jumble sale with produce, second-hand goods and mystery parcels. On Christmas Eve they had a street stall, and on New Year's Eve a dance with the Whangaruru Orchestra. Card afternoons were also popular.

Gradually funds came in. By 1951 the committee could begin to discuss the size of the hall, with kitchen and toilets at one end. Mr Brooker drew up plans and they were taken to the Archdeacon and Diocese for approval. It was hoped a loan could be made to complete the project.

In 1952 the fund stood at £810. With Mrs Stirling's bequest of £800, and a Diocesan loan of £600 – together they made the dream possible. (Mrs Rebecca Stirling, a former parishioner who died in 1947 was honoured by a cross on the south end of the church and a plaque in the hall, see photograph.) Materials were obtained at cost and two local carpenters at £15 a week as well as volunteers tackled the project.

The Archdeacon opened the hall on 6 February 1953. The committee continued to fundraise for insurance, chairs, tables, crockery, a piano, a concrete path and to repay the loan. Rules were drawn up and the hall hired out to the community. Meetings were charged at two shillings and sixpence an hour, the Women's Institute paid ten shillings monthly, birthdays were fifteen shillings during the day or thirty shillings at night, and local clubs paid ten shillings a day.

In 1966 the committee handed over the hall and their funds to the Christ Church committee. The members could look back over twenty years to a job well done and a dream achieved.

Since then French doors and a verandah have been added. The hall continues to be used not only for church functions and meetings but also those of the wider community.

One use in particular would be heartily approved of by those mothers in 1946: the hall is provided free of charge for Cub and Scout activities each Wednesday afternoon.

*Heather Lindauer*

## SERMON SNIPPET

When communities become fractionated, they begin to fall apart. When families become fractionated, they begin to fall apart and break up. Usually the cause of fractions is a small thing, a bit like a stone chip on a car window. Unless it's attended to quickly, that small chip can cause a great deal of damage.

And you have to answer the question 'at what cost?'

The price we pay for a fractionated community does not carry a dollar value. It's the price of broken relationships within that community, of hurt feelings, bewilderment and confusion. It's a place where healing and reconciliation need to happen.

The analogy we draw from Paul's story (Acts 27) carries with it a warning to our church community here in Russell and also to the wider church community.

Be very careful not to allow the ministry of the community be distracted by matters of insignificant importance. Be very careful not to allow the ministry of the community to break into fractions. By doing so, instead of 'staying together', the potential to break up and head off in different directions becomes very real indeed.

Unless we stay together in the same boat, (differences and all), the message of the gospel of Christ and the way we convey that message will be compromised.

Comedian George Carlin, reminds us of the world that we are called to take that gospel to. The world which you and I are a part of, not separate from, but a part of.

It's a world full of paradox. Paradoxical situations that cloud our vision, and confuse our direction.

It's good to be reminded from time to time of this. It's easy for Christians to become cocooned in their own little world with very little outward focus.

Here's what he has to say:

*“The paradox of our time in history is that we have taller buildings but shorter tempers,  
Wider freeways, but narrower viewpoints.  
We buy more but enjoy less  
We have bigger houses and smaller families  
We have more academic degrees but less sense  
More knowledge but less judgment  
More experts yet more problems  
More medicine but less wellness  
We have multiplied our possessions but reduced our values  
We talk too much, love too seldom and hate too often  
We've learned how to make a living but not a life  
We've added years to life, not life to years  
We've been all the way to the moon and back but have trouble crossing the street to meet a new neighbor  
We conquered outer space but not inner space  
We've cleaned up the air but polluted the soul  
We've conquered the atom but not our prejudice  
We've learned to rush but not to wait  
We build more computers to hold more information to produce more copies than ever but we communicate less and less  
These are times of steep profits and shallow relationships  
Of two incomes but more divorce  
Fancier houses but broken homes  
It is a time when there is much in the showroom window and nothing in the stockroom.*

In order to successfully minister to this world full of paradox (and every Christian is a minister), it is vital that we sail together in the same direction with a common purpose and with support for one another.

To do anything less will cause our mission to flounder.

*Chris Swannell*

## CHRIST CHURCH PEOPLE



Meet the Ministry Support Team: Chris Swannell (Deacon); Paula Franklin (Sacramental Minister in Training); Mary Wyatt (Liturgist); Lay Canon Roger Wyatt (Administrator); Evelyn Heke-Dane (Pastoral Carer); Heather Lindauer (Sacramental Minister) and Judith Nye (Educator)



Meet the Christ Church Council: John Russell (chair); Joan Pasche (secretary - ex officio); Bob Magnusson, Libby Magnusson, Jules Simons and Necia Shortland. Also (pictured above) are Judith Nye (treasurer and Synod representative); Roger Wyatt (administrator), Evelyn Heke-Dane and Heather Lindauer (Synod representative).

## GOD BLESS YOU, MIKE BAILES

*Mike loved this photograph of himself.*



We lost a long-time and valued member of our church community in June. Mike Bailes, the self-described 'honorary bellringer' died aged 87 in his hut on the shores of the Waikare Inlet.

Mike first came to the area on his yacht 25 years ago, and would row his dinghy to Opuia and hitch a ride to Russell for the Sunday service. With his ginger beard and hair, seafarer's face and crumpled clothes, he was a distinctive figure. Many locals would have given him a lift over the years.

It was fitting that a flotilla of boats with friends from around the Bay and beyond cruised up the Waikare for his service. Mike's boats *Jellicle* and *Ming Po* were dressed in flags and anchored off the Point. His ashes were interred on a hillside above and marked by a post with a ship's bell and lantern. It was a fitting farewell for a man of a deep but simple faith.

Tributes were posted on our website, including this one from his niece:

*"We were lucky enough to come and visit Mike and have happy memories of Sunday morning at church in Russell. He was so happy in the Bay and his letters*

*home to us all in the UK reflected this."*

Go well Mike. The world is a far richer place for your wise participation.

## SHARING A SERMON : ANNE VAN GEND



Much to my delight, both my sons have carried on a family tradition and are keen Asterix fans. The youngest one, in particular, appears to work through a regular circuit of all thirty or so from the library (my original ones having gradually fallen apart around the house). There's a scene in my favourite Asterix in Britain, where Asterix's British cousin is introduced to magically-super-strong Obelix, Asterix's best friend. The cousin says cheerfully, "I'd like you to shake me by the hand" and, bemused, Obelix obliges, thereby just about dislodging every tooth from the cousin's head and bone from his body.

Sometimes the things we do and the customs we take for granted can seem a little puzzling to outsiders – and when we come to try to explain why we do them ourselves, we frequently find ourselves equally at a loss. That's one of the reasons I said I'd do this monthly series exploring some of the reasons behind why we do some of the things we do in our times of worship.

Yet I hate to ignore such a glorious set of readings. I just can't do it. I mean, one of the things we 'do' our worship is use a lectionary! And today, after Pentecost and Trinity Sunday, we have readings that bubble over – overflow – with life; life before which even death cannot stay dead. And so I thought I'd tell you about two of the ways we reflect that life in our worship – one small way and one huge, deep, mysterious, unfathomable way.

One is simple, and possibly, the symbol best understood and almost instinctively understood outside the church as well – the candle. What happens when there's a tragedy like 9/11, or a bombing? Everyone lights candles on the spot. Instinctively we want to burn a light in darkness; plot our little bit of hope in defiance of the big despair. For us, though, there's even more to it than that. One of the earliest Christian liturgies we know of was the Lighting of the New Fire Service on Easter Morn at dawn – the service where we now traditionally light our Paschal Candle. In the darkness of Easter morning, as the sun rises, the Light of Christ is lit and carried into the darkness of the church – and from it all the members of Christ's body light their own candles, spreading that light of life until the whole room is alight in the darkness. And then even the world follows and the sun rises. The light of the candle isn't just a vague light of hope for us – it is the conviction and celebration of life that conquers death, of ultimate defiance against any who teach the ways of death. And so we burn candles in the church to remind us of that living, burning life of Christ. And when we baptise anyone, we light their candle from the Paschal candle, for it is the eternal life of Christ into which we are baptising them; the life before which death cannot stand.

That was just a warm-up. It's a huge jump to go from that to something like the Eucharist – yet I can't ignore it when it is the single most important thing we do to remember life conquering death. All I can say is that this is on a completely different level. It is a mystery, and I could talk about it from a completely different angle every week for the rest of our lives and never reach the end of it – so please understand that I'm not 'explaining' it in a neat package here. I just want to give some ideas on a part of it that no-one ever explained to me.

Jesus could not have said anything more shocking to his disciples than 'This is my blood – drink it. This is my flesh – eat it.' It's shocking enough to us – infinitely more so to them. He was asking them to perform the deepest sin of the people of Israel. All the way through the Pentateuch the strictest rules were about how you dealt with blood, and you simply must NOT consume it, or you were going to be cut off from the earth, you and all your descendants. You weren't even allowed to be seen with blood on your clothing, and if you spilled any you had to bury it immediately. Better to drink poison, as that only affected yourself – blood affected your whole family! Blood was the single most dangerous substance on earth. And here Jesus tells his disciples to drink it.

So what on earth is going on? No-one drank blood in the original covenant: no-one drank blood in a sacrifice. You know, we don't really understand to the full what was going on – we can only guess at it. So here's an educated guess.

The reason blood was so 'dangerous' was that it was the way God chose to symbolise life itself to his people. Each creature is like a little capsule of life, incredibly fragile. Damage that capsule and the life flows out like blood – so, to the Hebrews, the life was the blood. To take someone's blood upon yourself is to take their life – to claim ownership of them – to take power over them – to begin, in fact, the cycle of violence which even in its abstract form is the root of all strife on earth.

But then came Jesus – one whose life was still contained within this capsule of a body, yet was strangely different. He spoke and life came back to the dead Lazarus. He spoke and life came back to the widow's son. He was human, utterly human – he fed, he slept, he grew, he cried, he bled, and he died. Yet his life flowed over beyond

his blood – beyond the capsule – beyond death – and just as he'd conquered death in life, so he did beyond life – making a way for us to follow.

How can we follow? Who knows, in reality? But symbolically, we do know. Symbolically we follow by taking his life blood and his flesh into our own. What people were forbidden to do forcibly through all the Old Testament we're invited to do freely – 'take that abundant, overflowing life of Christ and make it ours, for that is a life that will never run out. "It's no longer I that live but Christ who lives in me". Not just for some time in the future when we are facing death ourselves. But now. "I came that you might have life, and have it to the full – have it abundantly – have it overflowing".

I haven't suddenly turned into a Catholic, in case you're worried! They are symbols and sacraments – outward, physical signs of an inward, spiritual truth. But it is that inward spiritual truth that is the key.

We are in a world that thinks that death is the ultimate weapon. Death defeats all! Believe in your heart of hearts that death rules and you will be part of Brueggemann calls the culture of deathliness: The world believes that we are finally in the grip of death. We spend our frightened energy trying to stay young and be healthy. We use our money to secure our existence. We work frantically to establish our worth. We are propelled by fearfulness that evokes violence and produces policies of aggression and militarism. And this is played out on mini as well as world scales.

What we proclaim in defiance of this – and why we stand defiantly through the great thanksgiving, rather than sit or kneel – is that death is not the winner. Against all the odds, life has won. Christ's life in us will continue to conquer all the deathliness that rises against it, and if we let it, that fire of life can spread throughout this faith community like the light from the candles until it forces the sun in the community to rise with it.

*Anne Van Gend*

More photographs from Jules Simons of our church in action: the congregation, John Russell and Emil Nye erecting the sign and the magnolia tree heralding spring at our church.

