



St Matthew-in-the-City
First Sunday of Christmas
Sunday 31 December 2023

*At any time in the service when we invite you to stand
you are welcome to remain seated if you need to.*

WELCOME

Come people of God,
turn your hearts and minds to the light of Christ
even as we turn to the warmth of our summer sun.
Let us be ready to welcome the events and the people
who may become turning points in our lives.

**We welcome with eyes and hearts open,
ready to see God present in our summer world;
in the people we meet and in the things we do.**

Liturgist: This is what God asks of you:
to act justly, to love tenderly,
and to walk humbly upon our earth.

God of grace,
in whom we live and move and dance for joy,
guide our steps through the complexities of life;
widen our vision that our sight be not limited
by what we see,
nor our wisdom by what we know,
nor our love by what we can accept.
Amen.

THE GLORIA

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.

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.

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 the inner compass,
always pointing to true North,
guiding us on the sacred dance
into the Mystery of Life.¹

Please be seated.

¹ Joy Cowley

RECONCILIATION

In this time of quiet
we invite you to reflect on life this holiday season.
Bring into the presence of God, in this place,
the joys and and burdens you carry with you this morning.
If you need forgiveness, seek it in the renewing love of God.
If you need healing, or courage, or wisdom,
seek it in the peace of God.

Jesus says,

“Ask, and it will be given to you;
search, and you will find;
knock, and the door will be opened for you”

Luke 11:9

Silence.

Gracious God,
give us the wisdom to hold to what we need,
grace to let go of those things
that we can do without,
and a vision of your breadth, height, and depth
that will challenge our smallness of heart,
and bring us humbly together.

Priest:

Spirit of God hold us,
Spirit of God move us, Spirit of God burn within us,
so that we may light up the world with your love.

SENTENCE AND PRAYER FOR THE DAY

The child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom;
and the favour of God was upon him.

Luke 2:40

God of promise,
you renew your gift to those
whose faces are lined and hearts are filled
by the passage of years:
give us grace, with Simeon and Anna,
to see beyond the surface
to where the Spirit shows the face and heart of God.
Amen.²

THE FIRST READING

A reading from the Letter to the Galatians.

Galatians 4:4-7

May we hear angel voices.
May we see the star.

THE GOSPEL

Hear the Gospel of Christ according to Luke,
chapter two, beginning at verse twenty-two.

Shine on our pathways.

Luke 2:22-40

This is the Gospel of Christ.

May we hear wisdom.

A REFLECTION

SILENCE

² *Steven Shakespeare, adapted*

Please stand.

THE AFFIRMATION OF FAITH

You, O God, are supreme and holy.
You create our world and give us life.
Your purpose overarches everything we do.
You have always been with us. You are God.

You, O God, are infinitely generous,
good beyond all measure.
You came to us before we came to you.
You have revealed and proved
your love for us in Jesus Christ,
who lived and died and rose again.
You are with us now. You are God.

You, O God, are Holy Spirit.
You empower us to be your gospel in the world.
You reconcile and heal; you overcome death.
You are our God. We worship you. ³

Please be seated.

THE PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

Let us be still and mindful of the world, the Church,
this nation, our communities, and ourselves.

THE PEACE

Please stand for the Greeting of Peace.

Blessed be Christ the Prince of Peace
who breaks down the walls that divide.

The peace of God be always with you
and also with you.

Please turn and greet those around you with peace.

³ NZ Prayer Book, p. 481

THE PREPARATION OF THE GIFTS

Glory be to God who flows through all creation,
blessing us with gifts to share.

Blessed be God forever.

THE GREAT THANKSGIVING

Hope is among us.

We are God's light.

Shine then with freedom
into all the corners of the world.

Lest fear overcome the brilliance
of life and light and liberty.

All life is holy, sacred; worthy of respect and dignity.
Let us give thanks for the power of the heart
to sense the holy in the midst of the simple.

Power and possibility of Love,
we praise you and give you thanks,
for in this season Jesus was born among us,
a baby needy and naked, born into poverty and oppression,
in order to proclaim the gift of your transforming grace and justice.

Therefore with all the faithful, living and dead,
with Mary, Joseph, the shepherds, Magi, and angels,
we proclaim your great and glorious name,
forever praising you and saying:

**Holy, Holy, Holy One, God of power and might.
Heaven and Earth are full of Your Glory.
Hosanna in the highest.
Bless the One who comes in the power of love.
Hosanna, Hosanna, Hosanna in the highest!**

On the night before he died Jesus took bread;
when he had given you thanks, he broke it,
gave it to his disciples, and said:

Take, eat, this is my body which is given for you;
do this to remember me.

After supper he took the cup; when he had given you thanks,
he gave it to them and said:

Drink this, all of you,
for this is my blood which brings new life;
do this as often as you drink it, to remember me.

With this bread and wine we answer the call of God.

We offer bread to eat with eyes and hands held open.

We pass this cup to share.

We take, break,

bless and give kindling hope everywhere.

Empower our celebration, Spirit of promise,
feed us with your life, fire us with your love,
confront us with your justice,
and make us one with all who share your gifts of love.

Amen.

Please be seated.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

As Christ teaches us we pray

Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial
and deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours
now and for ever. Amen.

THE BREAKING OF THE BREAD

We break this bread to share in the life of Christ.

We who are many are one body,
for we all share the one bread.

TE POWHIRI

THE INVITATION

Haere mai e te kahui a te Atua,
Tangohia enei kai rangatira a te Karaiti.

Come bringing your varied faiths and backgrounds,
for all are welcome to share in this act of communion.

*All are welcome to come and receive the bread and wine;
there are gluten free wafers, just ask the serving priest.*

*There is a chalice for dipping -
simply hold the bread in front of you to signify your choice.*

If you do not wish to take communion you may come forward for a blessing.

*If the stairs are a barrier please sit in the front pews
and communion will be brought to you.*

Te Taro o te Ora. *The Bread of Life.*

Te Kapu o te Ora. *The Cup of Salvation.*

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Priest:

Welcome, welcome, Jesus Christ our infant Saviour,
baby who makes every birth holy.

**May we, who like the shepherds
have witnessed in the stable a new kind of love
return to our work with joy.**

**May we, for whom the heavens have opened
to proclaim that God is with us,
we who have fed on living bread
and drunk the wine of heaven,
go out to be instruments of your peace,
day by day. Amen.**

THE BLESSING

NOTICES

Deacon from the rear of the church:

Go now to live the Gospel. Go in peace.

Amen. We go in the power of Love.

*You are invited to keep this copy of the liturgy and take it home with you
to share with another member of your family, or with a friend.*

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