

Church News December 2015

Danish Christmas in New Zealand



Is it possible at all, as a Dane in New Zealand to feel the Christmas spirit? This question I asked myself the first year I was in New Zealand. Almost everything that happens in NZ in December month is diametrically opposite to a Danish Christmas month. In New Zealand the countdown to Christmas and the following Christmas day means: sizzling barbecue, salads, new potatoes, Sauvignon Blanc, freshly picked strawberries and blueberries, bathing in small streams and lakes, and long lazy days in a bach or caravan where they celebrate Christmas and holidays with their families and friends. Christmas is being celebrated in sandals, shorts and T-shirt, while the red flowers of the Pohutukawa - New Zealand's native Christmas tree - pops out this month, and reminds all New Zealanders that now it is summer and Christmas.

My first Christmas in New Zealand was totally different to what I was used to from Denmark, and I was somewhat worried that Christmas would go over my head while my family and I ate fresh

berries, enjoyed the sea lions and penguins on the beach and the albatrosses hovering in the blue sky.

But happily, where there are Danes, there is also a desire for a Danish Christmas service, and that was lucky for me. At the Christmas service, we had to sing the familiar Danish carols of course. There had to be an advent wreath with candles that would try to outshine the sun, and I would have to wear my black cassock made of



100 % pure wool, despite the 30°C heat outside.

I was looking forward to the first Christmas service and hoped that the spirit of Christmas, which had not yet arrived, would come to me at this point.

And it happened. Everyone was welcome, and the guests arrived, the service started, we sang "Det kimer nu til julefest" and "Et barn er født i Bethlehem" while a gentle summer breeze reached us through the wide open windows, and the memory of childhood Christmases in Denmark wrapped itself around us like a warm quilt on this summer day.

And right there, in the middle of the entire strangeness of it all, the miracle occurred: the moment the Bible was opened and read out from the Christmas story (Luke, 2, 1-20): "*Og, det skete i de dage, at der udgik en befaling fra kejser Augustus om at holde folketælling i hele verden*". ("And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Cæsar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed".)

Then it dawned on me that only when we and the shepherds in the field, had been told about the child in the manger - only then did the message of Christmas arrive.

So my experience is now: Whether I'm sitting in a medieval church in Denmark wearing winter boots, surrounded by my immediate family, or wearing sandals in a country where people celebrate Christmas on December 25, on their way to their summer holidays,



is not what matters. Because the moment the Bible is opened, and we hear the familiar words: "*Og det skete i dage at der udgik en befaling til Kejser Augustus..*" - our present situation becomes secondary and the Christmas message of peace will dwell in our hearts, no matter where in our lives and the world we are. No matter how often we read and



hear the same joyful report.

This year the Danish Lutheran Church in New Zealand in association with local societies and representatives in NZ offers Christmas services in **Wellington** (28/11 at 6pm), **Hamilton** (5/12 at 11am), **Auckland** (6/12 at 4pm), **Dunedin** (13/12 at 2pm), and **Christchurch** (21/12 at 7.30pm).

By Pastor Anja G. Mathiassen

We Welcome Your Support

Did you know that you can **support the Danish Church NZ** as a yearly contributor and become a member? Only \$25 pr. person or \$50 for a family. Funds can be donated via online banking (Westpac NZ: 03 0502 0445253-000) or sent by cheque to Treasurer Majbrit Lyngby Christiansen. Alternatively you can go to www.danishchurchnz.org or contact Majbrit on dkchurchsubs@gmail.com for more information.





Christmas Services 2015:

Wellington: Saturday 28th
November 2015 at 6pm - Brooklyn Hall

Hamilton: Saturday 5th December 2015 at 11am - St. Matthews
Lutheran Church, Abbotsford Street, Hamilton - After the Service
there will be a shared lunch, everyone is welcome to bring a plate.

Auckland: Sunday 6th December 2015 at 4pm - Danish House,
Penrose, Auckland

Dunedin: Sunday 13th December 2015 at 2pm, St Marks
Presbyterian Church, 304 Pine Hill Road, Dunedin. After Service
there will be a shared afternoon tea, everyone is welcome to bring
a plate to share.

Christchurch: Monday 21st December 2015 at 7.30pm, All Saints
Anglican Church, Burwood, 305 New
Brighton Rd, Burwood. After the Service we
have supper and chat, everyone is welcome
to bring a small plate to share.

www.danishchurchnz.org

