

COMMUNITY CAROLS

This service is held in 5 centres, ranging from a local park to a wool shed.

Welcome

During the community carols please feel free to stand, or sit. It is really great to see so many children here, as a parent of two active boys I know how anxious we parents can get about the noise our children can make, I want to assure you that I have a loud voice and I can get over most noises. As a church family we are very used to children so relax and join in the celebration of Christmas the season when we remember the birth of the saviour Jesus Christ.

Lets pray as we begin this celebration of Jesus birth.

Living God come and join us as we turn our voices and thoughts to the meaning of Christmas. Bless us we pray . Amen.

Lets begin our celebration by singing a well known carol

O come all ye faithful.

Christmas is a very special time of year. To each of us it means different things. People down through the centuries cherished and re-told the events of nativity in many different ways. Miriam and I visited the local schools recently and asked the school children to write a story about the way the inn keeper would have seen that first Christmas.

Between the first couple of carols we will read you some of what they wrote. This is one excerpt

A long time ago lived Mary and Joseph. They lived in Israel. They were riding on a donkey named wella. They were on their way to Bethlehem. When they got there they decided to stay at an inn. They went inside and asked the owner if he had any rooms to let. But there were none.

The owner keen to make a dollar offered them the only thing he had a stable for \$20. So they stayed in the stable. Mary was going to have a baby. The next day their baby was born, they called him Jesus. They put Jesus in a manger with some hay in it .to sleep in for a while.

While Jesus was sleeping Joseph went to milk a cow for something to drink and he collected fruit and Berrys to eat. He wished they could live forever in the stable.

Lets sing a song about the town in which the story took place Once in royal Davids city.

Another excerpt went like this;

One day there was a visitor that arrived, she asked if she could stay the night here. I said that there was no room in the homestay. I said that I could get a blanket and set up a bed of hay in the barn and she could stay the night there. The woman said okay.

I didn't see that there was another person there he was with a donkey. I pictured that the women had come on the donkey. I went out to the barn and set up 2 beds and gave the donkey a slab of hay and put it in the yard. Mary the women said I didn't realise that it was in a stable but it would be okay. I'd forgotten how much of a pig sty it was

The 2 people went into the stable and lay on the bed of hay. I told them not to worry about the animals they where friendly. I then went and lay down for a few minutes, I was so tired I went to sleep. A few hours latter something strange woke me. I got up and checked the Inn rooms, then I remembered the barn. I noticed a bright light and immediately thought they were burning hay to keep warm, Don't they know there is a fire ban on. I grabbed a bucket of water and ran outside.

I went into the stable to see what was going on. Joseph said Mary had a baby. In the stable there were lots of people some dressed like kings, even some stinky shepherds. They said they would pay half price for the baby because he had only been there half the night. The babies name was Jesus he was born to be king. Jesus was never king they all thought he would be because he got nailed to a cross.

So if this writer is right the night was not as quiet as our next carol. Lets sing

Silent night.

Another student wrote what Christmas meant to them Christmas has 2 sides. Christmas eve, wrapping and placing the presents under the tree. The bringing together of family and friends. The suspense and the surprises next morning as the presents are opened. Watching peoples joy of receiving and giving. Eating of large meals of rich food that makes you feel as if you will burst. It's also sad because it can be a dangerous time of year. People drive like idiots and there's always a lot of accidents. There can also be empty places at the table because someone's died during the year and this makes people feel lonely.

Then there is side 2. We have to remember that Christmas isn't just all of the above it is also about Jesus the Son of God who was born some other month but some people way back in history decided to celebrate it on Dec 25. That is also the meaning of Christmas, the celebration of the arrival of Jesus. Christmas is all of the above put into one big fun filled exciting day about family, friends, presents, and the Son of God.

Most of the carols we sing are very foreign to us because they are written in countries that are far away. Our next carol is from NZ and it talks about the reality of an upside down Christmas in NZ. Lets sing

Carol our Christmas an upside down Christmas.

SECTION 2

We have come together to celebrate a very special Christmas. As the children's writings have shown us most of us are familiar with the Christmas story.

We want to change gear now and present the Christmas story in a new and different way. Our hope is that, at the end of our celebration, you will leave with a renewed sense of the meaning of Christmas.

As you know, when Jesus was born, it was not in a fine hospital (the government had closed down all the country ones) nor was he born in a nice, warm house, because his parents were in between places and there was no where to stay it was like Christchurch during a test weekend. Instead it all happened in a lowly manger, I suppose the equivalent would be the back of Shearing shed.

A writer of a prayer captured the scene in a prayer entitled The Woolshed Christ

The shearers are sleeping, the night-pens arc filled. Wrapped and lying on a bed of newly shorn wool lies the Saviour. Mary and Joseph relax with tea from the thermos flask. Soon dogs bark, the song thrush and tui sing,

and the station shepherds, rising for m early muster, come to adore the new-born child. God of hope, the cries of Jesus blend with the bleatings of the sheep into an anthem of praise to your glory and love. Amen

-by (Bill Bennett)

Of course this did not happen in a shearing shed in But instead in Bethlehem where a very bright and special star burned. While we are setting the scene, join us in singing

"O Little Town of Bethlehem. "

During the singing, two clowns bring in a manger and find a tall person in the congregation to hold the star They stand the person with the star behind the manger Then the clowns sit on the edge of the area to listen as the narrator continues the story.

NARRATOR:

What follows is an adaption of some material from an unknown source.

Now the emperor, that was the boss of the country, a bit like Mrs Shipley, had decreed that everyone must be enrolled in their home town and must see how much they owed in taxes (So typical of a government). So, even though Jesus was about to be born, Mary and Joseph had to travel to Bethlehem. When they arrived, there was no room at the inn, so Mary and Joseph had to spend the night in a smelly stable.

To remember Mary and Joseph's stay in that humble stable, join in singing

"Long time ago. " Marys boy child

During the singing, clowns find a young woman from the congregation and drape a length of blue material over her head. Next they hand a staff to an older man in the congregation. Clowns face Mary and Joseph on either side of manger Then clowns sit on the edge of area to hear more of the story.

NARRATOR:

That very same night, when Jesus was born, it was as if someone had turned on the flood lights at Eden Park as a whole multitude of angels filled the skies singing, "Glory be to God in the Highest and on earth Peace." But this was no rugby crowd, they sang in beautiful harmony.

To remember the angels that appeared that very first Christmas, will you join us in singing

"It Came Upon a Midnight Clear "

During the singing, clowns find four angels and place tinsel halos on their heads. Clowns group angels behind the manger Then clowns sit on the edge of the chancel.

NARRATOR:

On that same night there were shepherds in nearby fields keeping watch over their sheep. The angels appeared to the shepherds and told them that a Saviour for all the world had been born in a shearing shed close by. So the shepherds thinking the Nor wester was getting them down decided to go and check it out. For the shepherds that came to see Jesus, please join us in singing

"The First Noel. "

During the singing, clowns choose three shepherds, male and female, and place head coverings on their heads. Clowns stand shepherds to left of manger scene, and then sit on sidelines.

NARRATOR:

Now, three kings from far away lands who thought they knew a thing or two and were interested in Astronomy saw an unusual star in the sky and followed it all the way to Bethlehem.

Their counsellors and advisors told them it could be a sign of something majorly important happening. Being astute they came prepared with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. For the three kings at that first Christmas, please join us in singing "We Three Kings. "

Break into parts Men / Women

During the singing the clowns crown three men from the congregation and hand them their gifts. Then they line up the men and lead them to stand on the right side of the manger scene opposite the shepherds.

Clowns resume seats on edge of scene.

NARRATOR:

So, on that night, in a building not too much unlike the shearing shed there came to be a large crowd gathered around a new born baby. Each knowing that there was something special; about this small baby. But none knowing to what extent. Certainly none that gathered realised this was a turning point in history.

They knew that this baby was special that he was Gods gift of love. But what it meant well

Hindsight is a wonderful thing we have a greater understanding of what was going on because we have read the book. To help us remember remember Jesus. God's gift of love on that very first Christmas, let us all sing

"Away in the Manger. "

Even after the singing ends, the clowns search in vain for a baby. When they are unable to find one, they sit on the stage in total dejection. There is a moment while everyone in the congregation becomes aware that there can be no Christmas without the baby Jesus. What will happen next?

As the suspense deepens, one clown notices a large, wrapped Christmas gift off to one side. He nudges the other clown and points to the gift. Together they curiously unwrap the box and peek inside. Before taking the lid completely off the box, one clown indicates, with obvious joy, the nature of the gift. He does this by gesturing first to the box, then to the cross, and finally, in a sweeping gesture, to the entire congregation. Then he reverently takes the baby doll out of the box. He places it in the manger and kneels beside it.

As he does so, the musician plays the introduction to "Happy Birthday to You. "

NARRATOR:

Please stand and join in singing

"Happy Birthday" to Jesus.

During the singing, clowns enter from all possible directions banging helium balloons. They hand balloons to each person in the nativity scene and even tie one onto the manger itself (Or balloons may be unleashed from where they have been concealed in the front pews.) Some clowns may carry in a birthday cake .All activity ceases at the end of "Happy Birthday."Every clown faces the manger scene to hear the narrator and the benediction.

NARRATOR: And now, on Christmas morning, when you are opening all your brightly wrapped gifts, we hope you will remember that the very first Christmas gift was the baby, Jesus, whom God gave to us all. And your special gift to Jesus will be remembering that Christmas is His birthday.

Let's sing a carol wishing each other a SUPER DUPER CHRISTMAS WITH JESUS this year.

How about turning to those that are around you and wish them a Christ filled merry Christmas. (((Possible re-sing a super duper Christmas)

The Gospel of John described Christmas in this way The Word became flesh and dwelt among us full of grace and truth, we have seen his glory, glory as of the only son from the Father, John 1:14

Lets join together and sing our last carol Joy to the world in which a collection will be taken up. The collection will be divided with some going to the.....and some to providing material for Bible in Schools locally.

Joy to the world

We the Awatere Christian Joint venture wish you a very blessed Christmas and invite you to join in our celebrations at

Supper will be served in

Clowns then hand out balloons among the congregation and cake may be served.

Things needed 2 or more clowns, a Manger, a star, Tinsel Hallows x 4, Length of blue material, Head coverings for 3 shepherds, 3 gifts gold/ frankincense / Myrrh Wrapped, present, cross, balloons, Baby Doll.