



## Christmas Reflections:

“Silent Night, Holy Night” is a simple but beautiful Christmas carol, heard for the first time about 180 years ago in a small wooden church in the mountains of Austria. The carol has been translated into many languages across the world from Russian to Zulu. Its message of peace has been felt in the hearts of the rich and famous, the poor and lowly, by young children, the elderly and the impaired.

During this 2009 Advent, the world is poised on a knife edge. As the wealthy countries and the developing countries gather at the UNFCCC (UN Framework Convention on Climate Change) in Copenhagen, can the nations of the world agree to a new treaty on Climate Change? What choices will they make? This is the last chance! Will the leaders and negotiators put aside all fears and selfishness to save the earth and all life that God created from further exploitation, food shortages, destruction of homelands and livelihoods, climate extremes and water wars? Let us pray for goodwill and moral courage and the passion to bring about global

change. No one thought the Berlin Wall would come down. No one thought slavery would be outlawed. No one thought man could land on the moon in just eight years and two months after starting the programme! With hearts of compassion and peace, together with barrels of hope and determination, change can happen.

Amidst all the turmoil of the world, we look again to the ‘all is calm’ of the carol, “Silent Night” and are reminded of the peace of God that came down to earth at Christmas and shared our humanity. In Bethlehem, Jesus the Light of the world came into the darkness and dinginess of a stable. Today, Christ’s light continues to shine into our darkness removing our fears, forgiving our sins and empowering us to bring hope, grace and love to all.

(Inspired by “Inspirational Thoughts on Favourite Hymns”, and an extract from “Our Choice” by Al Gore)

May you have a blessed Christmas and Happy New Year from the National Co-ordinating Group. (NCG)

- Heather Tate

## The Presence of Mystery

Look at your life: see how it is full of mystery and awe. Everyday experiences and the hum-drum world around you are charged with a mysterious depth and presence.

Look at your life: see how it is full of mystery and awe. Unexpected happenings, puzzling occurrences, old things seen in a new way: mystery lies at the heart of your life. It beckons you closer, yet you draw back afraid. What is this experience of depth and presence?

Look at your life: listen to the sounds and music that fill your life. Consider the wonder of music: its power to create new worlds and new visions, to bring happiness and pain. Think of your own response to music: what does it say to you? What does it bring to you?

Look at your life: listen to the music of the whole creation around you, the music of earth, sea and air; the music of animals, birds and human beings.

Look at your life: listen to the whole creation responding in songs of praise to the Creator God.

*A Feast of Words*, ed Leslie J Francis  
& Nicola M Slee, pp.54 & 75

## Christmas Comes ....

Christmas comes every time we see God in other persons.

The human and the holy meet in Bethlehem ...

For Christmas comes like a golden storm on its way to Jerusalem-  
Determinedly, inevitably...

Even now it comes

In the face of hatred and warring –  
No atrocity too terrible to stop it,  
No Herod strong enough,  
No hurt deep enough,

No curse shocking enough,  
No disaster shattering enough –  
For someone on earth will see the star,

Someone will hear the angel voices,

Someone will run to Bethlehem,  
Someone will know peace and goodwill.

The Christ will be born!

Ann Weems,  
*Reaching for Rainbows*, p67



## God of the Unexpected

O God,  
guidance is my friend,  
and will always be so,  
but may my mind  
never become closed by belief.  
May it always be open  
to the surprise of You,  
to the newness of You  
to the rush of wonder that comes  
with the discovery of You  
in unexpected places.  
Amen. Amen.

Joy Cowley, *Psalms for the Road* p.55



**APW Study Grant** (omitted last  
Gleanings—apologies from NCG)

**Kerry Jones** - The Global Mission  
Office - Studying for Graduate Dip in  
Human Resources Management.

**Please remember to pray and  
consider APW'S need for new  
personnel for NCG and an editor  
for Gleanings.**

**Next issue of Gleanings will be  
March.**

May your Christmas be one of joy  
and surprise. Greetings from the  
Gleanings Committee.

## The Crazy Quilt of Life

In the pattern of God's purpose  
we are stitched together in caring and  
communion:  
scraps of the lingering past,  
fragments broken from future's dearest  
hopes;  
textures of disappointment and reams,  
prints of pain and promise:  
calico and corduroy,  
stripes, silks, and satins -  
all the colours of emotion and  
experience  
are sewn into a crazy quilt of life;  
patched together and transformed  
into a blanket of love  
and our compassion comforts  
a cold and hurting world.

- Barbara Battin, *Womenpsalms*,

Saint Mary's Press p.106



## A new resource:

Have you seen a copy of the recently published *Hope is our Song*? The publisher is the New Zealand Hymnbook Trust, and within the volume there are treasures to be enjoyed and pondered. *Always there's a carol* is a good example:

1. Always there's a carol  
waiting for a voice,  
always there's a candle  
waiting for a flame,  
always there's an angel,  
telling us "Rejoice!"

*So, sing the carol  
light the candle,  
join the angel praise:  
Christmas is the day of all days.*

2. Always when we seek it,  
shines the Christmas star,  
always God is present  
could we only see,  
always God enfolds us,  
holds us where we are.
3. Always out of darkness  
countering the strife,  
always comes the Christ child  
leading us to peace:  
always there's a baby  
crying for a life.

- Shirley Erena Murray

## More Good News .....

Over the past year, APW nationally has raised \$46,528 through the Special Project with MWF- \$32,054 to the Hearing Association and \$14,474 for the underprivileged women of Lauru Island - \$29,413 through Mission Birthday Gift, \$9,240 through stamp sales, and over \$40,000 for Turakina boarding scholarships. A full account of money raised and allocated will be in the Annual Report.

