

# MODERATOR'S MESSAGE 2023

# Matariki

How are you celebrating Matariki, which falls this year on 14 July?

Matariki opens up so many possibilities for reflection and celebration. In its literal meaning there is the idea of divine encounter. And this divine encounter is linked to harvest time, giving thanks for that which has been, and hopes for that which is to come. The harvest element leads naturally into enjoying together good food, the fruits of the harvest, a feast!

I engaged in a conversation with a Matariki skeptic this week. It turns out he knew nothing about the meaning behind Matariki. As I explained the themes of New Year, harvest, and of remembering, celebrating, and visioning to him, he was converted! He agreed that these are ideas that are accessible to all people of all cultures and beliefs. That is certainly true of we Presbyterians with our Christian culture and heritage. Remembrance, thankfulness for what we have right now, and a hopeful attitude towards the future are core values of us. A text that resonates with me around these things is Isaiah 51:

*Look to the rock from which you were cut  
and to the quarry from which you were hewn;*

*2. look to Abraham, your father,  
and to Sarah, who gave you birth ...*

*3. The Lord will surely comfort Zion  
and will look with compassion on all her ruins;  
he will make her deserts like Eden,  
her wastelands like the garden of the Lord.  
Joy and gladness will be found in her,  
thanksgiving and the sound of singing.*

One of the lovely things about Matariki is the variations of meaning of its observance that exist within Māoridom that seems to give permission for a wide range of ways to observe this time of year. And that is exactly what I am seeing rise-up around the churches in our country. Christian communities are asking great questions about how Matariki connects with our scriptural heritage, our own traditions, and our own celebrations. As a result, in churches up and down the country, creative plans are afoot. A few examples that I will have the privilege to participate in are:

On 9 July I am preaching in the Timaru parish as part of a series called *People of this Place* that links into Matariki themes.

And then the following week, I will join really interesting Matariki celebrations on the West Coast.

On the Friday evening there will be a Puanga-Matariki celebration at Moana, open to the whole community around a shared meal and some star gazing. On the Saturday in Greymouth, there will be a combined parish planning day around the Matariki themes of remembering where we have come from, celebrating where we are at, and visioning for the future. On the Sunday, the various congregations will worship God with thankfulness for this past, present and future.

May God be with you and your community as you do Matariki together this year.

*Matariki worship and other resources can be found on the PCANZ website [here](#).*

*Nga mihi nui  
Hamish*

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