



**The Archbishops and Primates
of Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia**

15 December 2025

Christ Turns Us from Despair to Hope

Every year we are gifted the blessing of returning to the Christmas season and to the lessons that the story of the birth of Jesus holds for us. Every year we are reminded just how relevant the story of the Christ-child remains.

Jesus was born at a time of great despair. His people had suffered under brutal conquest and colonisation, most recently by Greek and then Roman invaders. Herodian Kings, set up as puppet masters by the Romans, ruled through corruption and violence. The High Priesthood, once the bastion of faith and hope for the people, had itself been corrupted by greed and selfishness. Very little, if anything, was being done by the ruling powers to make life better for the people. The people were suffering and needed help.

Our own present time may not look so different. Our world has lurched again towards endless wars. We've seen conflicts so rabidly politicised that even our own governments try to justify the killing of innocent women and children. We watch our global political leaders act cynically, doing very little it seems to help the poor and the marginalised. In Aotearoa New Zealand we've seen endless and absurd attacks on the Treaty, and on our sense of racial unity and social cohesion. We appear to have forgotten that climate change is real, that islands and nations in Polynesia are threatened by frequent storms and rising seas, and that we urgently need to care for our environment and each other. Add to that a persistent and growing cost-of-living crisis where so many of our neighbours are struggling, and we too might think this is a time of great and continuing despair.

When times are hard and uncertain, we can sometimes lose hope, and struggle to imagine a better future. That's why the story of the birth of Jesus is such an important and relevant sign for us.

The story of the birth of Jesus is a reminder that, even in times of great despair, hope can be made real. In the Gospel of Luke, we see a surprising and almost shocking reaction to the pending birth of this Christ-child. Despite the despair of the times, the response of Jesus' mother Mary, and his Uncle Zechariah, and the Shepherds of Bethlehem, and even, as Luke's Gospel tells us, that of the very angels of heaven, was to burst into song. That is to say, their



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hearts turned from songs of despair to songs of hope.

To those who believed, the birth of Jesus was a powerful sign and a reminder that hope need not be lost. With a different song, those who felt hopeless could hope again. With a new song, those who felt exhausted by life could be renewed and could imagine a new future.

The song we speak of is a song of the heart. The kind of song that hearts sing when they are cared for and loved. It takes only small acts of care and kindness to change the tune of someone's heart. Imagine then what it must have felt like for those of Jesus' time when they realised that his birth was more than a symbol. It was God's way of saying "Don't be afraid. Don't give up hope. You are deeply loved."

It is no wonder that their hearts burst into song.

We too, in our own way, can be that same symbol to the world. With a small act of kindness, of compassion, of manaakitanga and care, we can help change the tune of someone's heart. And in a world riven by conflict and war, cynicism and harm, acts of kindness and compassion are no small thing. They become radical, subversive, and powerful acts.

May you find a way this Christmas season to fill your own heart with a new song and reach out to those who need it most. May you find a way to be a little more like the Christ-child and turn despair into hope. May you become radical, subversive, powerful, and relentless in your love, kindness, and compassion for others.

May you be Christ-like in the world.

Archbishop Don Tamihere

Primate & Archbishop

Archbishop Sione Ulu'ilakepa

Primate & Archbishop

Archbishop Justin Duckworth

Primate & Archbishop



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