

Ideas for Matariki Celebration in the Body of Christ

Written by Wini and Roger Lewis, June 2026

Matariki offers a meaningful opportunity for churches in Aotearoa New Zealand to engage with values that closely reflect the heart of the Christian faith. As the rising of the Matariki marks a season of remembrance, gratitude, renewal, care for creation, and community, it resonates strongly with biblical teachings and the life of Jesus Christ.

For church leaders, embracing Matariki does not require compromising theology—it can instead deepen it. Honouring those who have passed aligns with Christian remembrance and hope. Giving thanks for provision reflects a posture of gratitude to God. Looking ahead with intention echoes the Christian call to renewal and transformation. Care for the environment reflects stewardship of God’s creation, and gathering together strengthens fellowship within the body of Christ.

Recognising Matariki within church life also affirms the cultural identity of Aotearoa and creates space for Māori perspectives within worship and community rhythms. When approached with respect and understanding, it becomes a powerful way to embody the Gospel in this land—grounded in both faith and place.

Church leaders in Aotearoa New Zealand are encouraged to begin by engaging in wānanga or workshop spaces specifically for themselves, led by Māori/Pākehā Christian leaders who can speak from both te ao Māori and a Gospel-centred perspective.

As the rising of the Matariki marks a season of remembrance, gratitude, and renewal, these learning environments allow leaders to ask questions, explore understanding, and work through uncertainties together.

Having honest conversations in a workshop setting can help dispel fears, correct misconceptions, and build a clear biblical foundation rooted in the teachings of Jesus Christ. This intentional first step equips leaders with confidence and clarity before discerning how Matariki might be appropriately expressed within their congregations.

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Here are some practical, church-friendly ways congregations in Aotearoa New Zealand can celebrate Matariki in a way that aligns with Christian faith:

1. Remembrance

- Hold a remembrance service to honour those who have passed in the past year
 - Create a quiet space for prayer, lighting candles, or sharing names and stories
 - Include a moment of reflection alongside the hope found in Jesus Christ
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2. Thanksgiving

- Organise a thanksgiving service focused on gratitude for God's provision
 - Invite people to share testimonies of what they're thankful for
 - Include harvest-style prayers or offerings of food for those in need
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3. Reflection & Renewal

- Encourage personal or group reflection on the past year
 - Offer a prayer night or retreat focused on renewal and spiritual growth
 - Invite people to set faith-based intentions or goals for the year ahead
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4. Creation Care

- Preach or teach on stewardship of creation
 - Organise a community garden project or tree planting day
 - Hold an outdoor service that acknowledges God's creation and the season marked by Matariki
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5. Community & Fellowship

- Share a communal meal (hākari) to bring people together
 - Host a multicultural or whānau-focused gathering
 - Partner with local Māori leaders or groups to learn and celebrate respectfully
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6. Worship & Cultural Expression

- Incorporate te reo Māori in prayers, songs, or Scripture readings
 - Sing waiata or hymns that reflect themes of creation, hope, and unity
 - Include storytelling that connects faith with the season of Matariki
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7. Teaching & Awareness

- Teach about Matariki and its significance in Aotearoa
 - Explore connections between biblical themes and Matariki values
 - Encourage understanding of te ao Māori within a Christian framework
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These practices can help churches honour both the Gospel and the cultural context of Aotearoa, making Matariki a rich and meaningful part of church life.

For more:

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If any reader desires to connect with Wini Lewis for further discussion on this topic, please freely do so via wini.lewis@gmail.com