

----- Through The Years -----

It's the Christmas season and it's always interesting to look at some of the holiday traditions that are observed around the world. This year we are taking a trip "downunder".

In Australia, while celebrating many of the activities we do, they also have their own unique slant on Christmas. A popular dessert at this time is Pavlova, named for the Russian ballerina, Anna Pavlova. It is basically a meringue shell with a marshmallow center covered with sweet cream, and fruit toppings. It sounds delicious! Another Aussie Christmas tradition is "Carols by Candlelight". These are large gatherings of people who sing Christmas carols with candle illumination. They draw thousands of people to large parks. The event now includes celebrities and symphony orchestras. The tradition began in Melbourne in 1938 when Norman Banks, an Aussie radio announcer, was walking home from his nighttime radio program on Christmas Eve, 1937. He passed a window and saw an elderly woman sitting up in bed listening to "Away in a Manger" on the radio and singing along with her face lit by candlelight. Banks wondered how many others spent Christmas alone so he organized the first concert in 1938. Approximately 10,000 showed up for that first event. It is now a staple of the holiday season every year. Other cities began their own concerts and now Sydney, Brisbane, Perth, Adelaide, Hobart, Canberra, and many others have "Carols by Candlelight", too.

Over in New Zealand, the Poutakawa tree is called the Christmas tree. This is because it produces large crimson flowers in December and is used as a holiday symbol. While both Christmas and Boxing Day (Dec. 26) are legal holidays in New Zealand, it is interesting to note that no advertising is allowed on television or radio on Christmas day. This rule also applies to Good Friday and Easter Sunday. Auckland, New Zealand's largest city, has a popular Santa Parade down Queen Street. The parade features floats and marching bands and is held in late November. (Sounds like their version of the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade.)

One difference with the Australian and New Zealand celebrations is that Christmas occurs in the middle of summer. Quite often a "barbie on the beach" takes the place of our traditional meals. Nevertheless, most homes still have trees with decorations. Church attendance skyrockets (sound familiar?).

No matter how Christmas is observed, the important thing is that people around the world celebrate the birth of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. He shall reign forever!

Do you have any MUMC history you would like to share with the congregation? Please send it to:

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