

Observing our Faith - OoF†

Christmas Eve 24 December



*Oh little town of Bethlehem,
How still we see thee lie,
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep
The silent stars go by;
Yet in thy dark streets shineth
The everlasting Light.
The hopes and fears of all the years
Are met in thee tonight*
(Phillips Brooks, 1868)

Peace on Earth, Bethlehem wall, Banksy

A Word from Scripture

"I am about to do a new thing;
now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?
I will make a way in the wilderness
and rivers in the desert.
The wild animals will honour me,
the jackals and the ostriches;
for I give water in the wilderness,
rivers in the desert,
to give drink to my chosen people,
the people whom I formed for myself
so that they might declare my praise." *Isaiah 43.19-21*

About this festival

Christmas Eve is a time of anticipation as we wait for the birth of the Saviour of the world. This is symbolised by the light of the central Advent candle, lit to chase away the darkness. In some countries it is the time of gift-giving. As we wait for the renewal of God's creation, we reflect on the gift of our amazing earth, we ask for healing for our fragile, damaged planet and our hurting world and we look forward in hope to the redeeming love of God breaking into our world in Jesus.

An example to inspire

Earthrise is a photograph of Earth and some of the Moon's surface that was taken from lunar orbit by astronaut William Anders (NASA) on December 24, 1968, during the Apollo 8 mission. Nature photographer Galen Rowell declared it "the most influential environmental photograph ever taken".



On Christmas Eve, December 24, 1968, in the most watched television broadcast at the time, the crew of Apollo 8, astronauts Bill Anders, Jim Lovell, and Frank Borman, the first people to travel to the Moon, read aloud the story of creation from the book of Genesis, verses 1-10, as they orbited the moon.

An activity to try

"Twas the night before Christmas"

It is a well-established tradition for children to leave some food for Rudolph and the other reindeers – a carrot, maybe a mince pie and even a glass of sherry for Santa himself!



We can expect a great gift tomorrow, the gift of the renewal of the whole creation in Jesus. We know our world is hurting and that the earth has been despoiled

by humanity's lack of care. What gifts of the earth can we lay out for the Christ child? Find something of nature's beauty for him to bless and, if you like, an image of part of our world that badly needs his healing. Offer them in hope before you go to bed.



Tell us what you have chosen and/or put a picture on our Facebook page, email it, or Whatsapp it and we'll add it to the OoF webpage.

The SEC Collect Prayer for Midnight Mass

O God, you have made this most holy night
grow radiant with the brilliance of the true Light; grant
that, as we have known the mystery of that light on
earth, so we may delight in him in heaven;
through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord,
who lives and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, world without end. Amen.

A prayer to offer

God of our deepest longing,
All our hopes are met in you.
You hear our heart's cry,
you know our deepest need.
Meet us in this place,
Speak to us through the silence,
Touch us with your healing love,
That we may share your hopes for the whole creation,
In and through Jesus, the child who is to come. Amen.



Next leaflet: Christmas Day

Rector: Rev'd Reuben Preston 07971 895897
Rector@SECStJohnStMargaret.org.uk

www.SECStJohnStMargaret.org.uk



The Scottish Episcopal Church at prayer
in church together and at home

Growing in faith and holiness
United Diocese of Glasgow and Galloway

