

Welcome to Canongate Kirk, the Kirk of Holyroodhouse and Edinburgh Castle.  
And Happy Christmas!

It was with great regret that we decided not to hold our usual Family Service for Christmas Morning this year. It has become a real highlight in our annual programme of services, and all being well next year the children will bring their toys again and together we will sing all the familiar carols. But for now the familiar story still speaks across the centuries, not least in St Luke's account:

And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us. <sup>16</sup> And they came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger. <sup>17</sup> And when they had seen *it*, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child. <sup>18</sup> And all they that heard *it* wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds. <sup>19</sup> But Mary kept all these things, and pondered *them* in her heart.

This year that's what we must do too, keep all these things and ponder them in our hearts and in our homes. The hymn-writer John Byrom was born in 1691, the very year this church was opened, and his hymn for Christmas Day "Christians, awake, salute the happy morn" still leaves us with much to ponder:

O may we keep and ponder in our mind  
God's wondrous love in saving lost mankind;  
Trace we the Babe, who hath retrieved our loss,  
From his poor manger to his bitter cross;  
Saved by his love, incessant we shall sing  
Eternal praise to heaven's almighty King.

Let us pray: God our Father, your Word has come among us in the Holy Child of Bethlehem. Grant that the light of faith may illumine our hearts and shine in our words and deeds; through him who is Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

And now may Christ, who by his incarnation gathered into one things earthly and heavenly, fill you with joy and peace; and the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, be upon you and remain with you this Christmas Day and always. Amen.