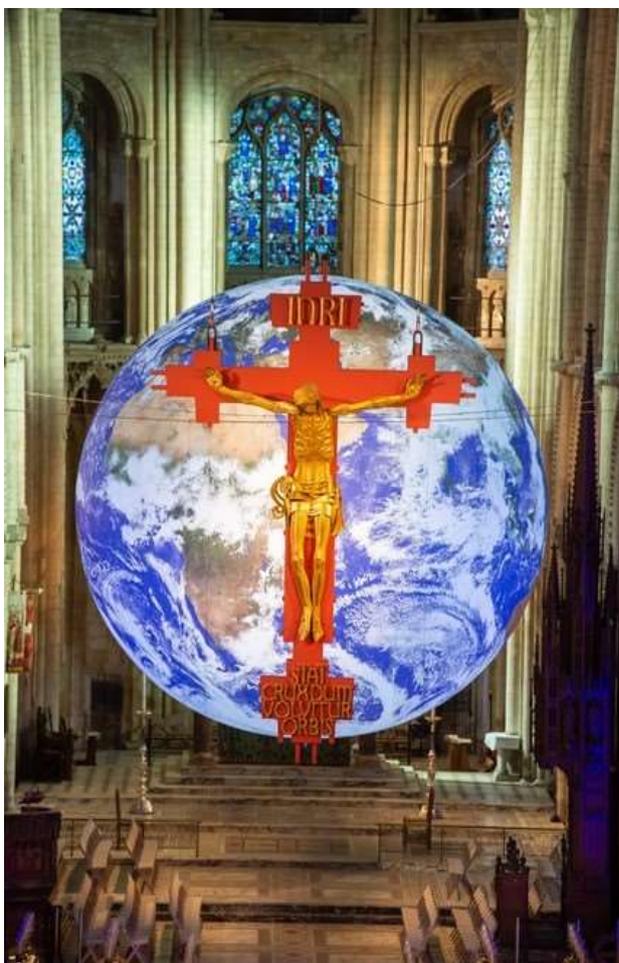


God is in our midst....

For the last couple of years, I have been starting to explore iconography and so am very much a beginner in every sense. What I have learned thus far is that there is so very much to learn! At the moment I am working on painting the face of Christ and to be waiting upon the emerging face of Christ seems to be an appropriate project for Advent.



Last year, the Gaia exhibition visited Peterborough Cathedral. The exhibition consisted of a vast illuminated installation of the earth, conveying the urgently needed message about conservation and the need to stop climate change in order to prevent further unconsidered damage to our beautiful planet.

But those of us who saw the installation in the fullness of the context in which it was hung in Peterborough, could not but help see another dimension, unintended by the artist.

Looking up from the nave, the nave cross appeared at the centre of the earth and the sight was breathtaking. The words under the cross are '*Stat crux dum*

volvitur orbis'.... The cross stands whilst the world turns. A real reminder that Christ is in our midst and is a still point in the chaos of our world.

This is something that we may know - at least in our heads - but when faced with the disruption that we have all experienced this year, God can seem remote from us.

The created world has always been shot through with the self- gift of God, but the coming of God amongst us in the birth of Christ, changes everything.

*'Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son,
and they shall name him Emmanuel',
which means, 'God is with us.'*

Mat 1:22-23

Now, human beings can look upon the face of God in Christ and the intimacy of the divine – human relationship is evident.

The vocation of the iconographer might be termed one of enabling others to look upon the face of God in Christ and so seems very much a vocation to do with Christmas, for as we spend time allowing ourselves to look upon God, we gradually become aware that God is also gazing back at us.

Herein lies hope... not that tomorrow will necessarily *feel* any better than today, for reality tends to have a cruciform shape, but rather that God truly is in our midst.

Sr Rachel Overton



Underpainting of the Mandylion icon on my easel in the living room!

Photograph of Peterborough Cathedral used with permission.