

# Christmas is all about sharing the 'good news'

Since the Apollo 8 days of 1968, astronauts have spent many Christmases in space whether it's on the ISS or on a mission.

The crew of the first mission Frank Borman, Jim Lovell and Bill Anders decided to be unique in their message. Knowing they had the largest audience in the world that December 24th evening, they decided on reading the first 10 verses of *Genesis 1*.

When asked several years later why they chose this, Lovell explained, "The first 10 verses of *Genesis* are the foundation of many of the world's religions, not just the Christian religion. There are more people in other religions than Christianity around the world so this would be appropriate to that, and so that's how it came to pass."

Amazingly, this is true not just for believers, but even atheists of those days. Fifty years later, we resonate with



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these passages of creation because of their supernatural origins. Christmas itself has origins in the supernatural and while many debate on what the Star of Bethlehem may have been, no one doubts the birth of Christ almost 2,000 years ago in this city.

Whatever your faith is, the Greek meaning for Gospel is "Good News" which is where the Christmas story comes from and something everybody can use today.

The men of 1968 and 2,000 years ago all wanted to share "good news" as this is not only welcomed, but what our spirit naturally craves since creation.

#### **Sky watch for the next month:**

- Crescent moon, Venus and comet Catalina morning meeting — Monday, Dec. 7 before sunrise look East to see these three. Catalina will be visible all month before dawn.

- Christmas overnight full moon — If your celebrating Christmas Eve, the full moon will be up all night before setting



Photos by Neel Roberts

**Above left, Will Smith of Vulcan chooses the relaxed approach to stargaze. Top right, Jessica Lepp, of Vulcan, and Hannah Pooley, of Champion, stand in line to look through the scope during a Chinook warm night. At right, Roland Dechesne, Neel Roberts and Karl Ivarson Jr. have run the monthly presentations and more since 2010 and celebrate another successful year with some Christmas cake.**

at sunrise.

- Geminid and Ursid meteor shower — We actually have two mild meteor showers this month of which Geminid peaks Sunday, Dec. 13 just after midnight on a moonless night and Ursid shower Tuesday, Dec. 22 after sundown when earth moves through the centre of the dust trail left behind by the comet until the moon comes out before sunset. For more on all meteor showers check out the International Meteor Organization at: [www.imo.net/calendar/2015](http://www.imo.net/calendar/2015).

- Winter Solstice arrives — Monday, Dec. 21 is officially the shortest day of the year at 9:48 p.m. This occurs when the sun reaches its most southerly declination of -23.5 degrees and likewise the North Pole is tilted 23.5 degrees away from the sun. Depending on the Gregorian calendar, the December solstice occurs annually on a day between Dec. 20 and Dec. 23. On this date, all places above a latitude of 66.5 degrees north are now in darkness, while locations below a latitude of 66.5 degrees south receive 24 hours of daylight.

#### **Public Events for the next month:**

Monthly Public Stargazing at the Trek Center Friday, Dec. 11 starting at 7:30 p.m. Last stargazing for the year, so



check us out if you haven't and celebrate our fifth anniversary of the RASC Calgary at the Trek Center with cake and refreshments. Short indoor presentation on "Christmas in the sky" followed by stargazing through the 11-inch Celestron Telescope. Treats and refreshments provided free of charge and all welcome. For further information, contact the Trek Center at 403-485-2994.

The website [www.vulcantourism.com](http://www.vulcantourism.com) will be updated regularly.

Merry Christmas and thanks for tuning in all year.

*Neel Roberts is a member of the Calgary chapter of the Royal Astronomical Society of Canada — the nation's leading astronomy club founded in 1849 with more than 5,000 members and 28 centres across Canada. He welcomes questions and comments at 403-560-6574 or email [Neel\\_Roberts@ptccanada.com](mailto:Neel_Roberts@ptccanada.com). The members meet the second Friday at the Trek Center in Vulcan monthly. Check them out at: <http://calgary.rasc.ca/vulcan2016.htm>.*

