



Blessing of a Christmas Crèche (Nativity)

Dear Friends,

Come one, come all to the first Sunday of Advent, November 28th, and bring your Nativity Sets to High Church for a blessing during the after worship coffee hour!

That's right, stay after worship for coffee and cookies the first Sunday in Advent, and view the many beautiful and unique nativity scenes owned by our church families as we bless them in preparation for the holiday season.

Did you know that St. Francis of Assisi made the **Christmas crèche**, or manger, for Christmas Eve of 1223? He wanted to remind everyone why we celebrate Christmas, the Nativity of the Lord. St. Francis made the nativity scene in the style of a typical Italian manger, familiar to people in the village, in order to make the scene more real to everyone. He wanted everyone know that Jesus was born to be with them, and he wanted all people to recognize themselves in the Nativity scene.

The nativity scene's popularity took off from there. Within a couple of centuries, nativity scenes had spread throughout Europe. We don't know if people actually played Mary and Joseph during Francis' time, or whether they just imagined those figures' presence. We do know that later scenes began incorporating dioramas and life actors, and the cast of characters gradually expanded beyond Mary, Joseph and sweet baby Jesus, to sometimes include an entire village.

Nativity buffs will know, however, that the familiar cast of characters relied upon today—the three wise men and the shepherds—is not biblically accurate. Of the New Testament's four gospels, only Matthew and Luke describe Jesus' birth. Matthew mentions wise men, while Luke comments on shepherds. But nowhere in the Bible do shepherds and wise men appear together. Also, no one mentions donkeys, oxen, cattle or other farmyard friends in conjunction with Jesus' birth. But what would a nativity scene be without those staples?

We look forward to seeing your family's "crèche" and blessing it for the holiday season. If you don't own one, this may be the season to start a new family tradition making the baby Jesus the heart of your family celebration!

Blessings,
Pastor Gaye