

Nativity Scene



There are many beautiful images from this past Christmas which I will enjoy for a long time, in my heart as well as my memory, but one of the highlights for me has been the Christmas Eve Nativity.

It was a rather nerve-racking enterprise (like God's). We weren't sure how well it would work, and whether people would cooperate. Would they find it too difficult? (We are not all keen crafters and skilled with 'chenille wires' - otherwise known as pipecleaners!) - or embarrassing? (We are not all children nor all comfortable with a degree of muddle.) Some people would be expecting a well-rehearsed performance, and certainly lines well learned, costumes well fitted, parts assigned, scenery predictable.

Instead we had a simple cardboard set, and we largely depended on our 'audience' to create the narrative. Yes, there was a great deal of hard work behind the scenes (by a small number of people) in the preparation of materials, thinking through the logistics, painting the set black, finding the right place for it, the overall stage management...There was the careful, intricate and accurate work of building the stable in cardboard. There was the joyful practice of the music, and the choice of the carols and readings to intersperse the narrative.

But above all there was the growing enthusiasm of the families as they began to engage with the events of the Nativity through helping each other to make shepherds (two coloured wires); sheep (three wires and a cotton wool ball); stars (silver foil). There was real excitement as children, and adults, made their way together to the stable with their variously coloured and sometimes extraordinarily shaped creations to add to the scene. Some shepherds were propped up on each other or had several legs, some sheep had multi-coloured legs and were lying down, some stars were huge while others were tiny crumples of silver - and there was even a chocolate coin star! And there in the middle were the Holy Family. It is a lovely reminder that God might not 'do waste' (to quote Archbishop Rowan Williams) - although this was all recycling material - but He does love our humble efforts to worship Him. And that is the whole point of this Nativity service. He welcomes us all, whatever shape, age or ability.

The Nativity event is all about what God did - and does - for us, and about our response to Him. Thank you to all those who were involved - in any way - with Nativity 2011.

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