



The Rev. Dr. Arlene K. Nehring
Pastoral Message
December 2010

A Live Nativity

It's Advent. Christmas is coming. We can hardly wait. Like expectant children waiting to open gifts or expectant parents preparing to birth a child, we watch and wait with great anticipation for the rising of a star and the fulfillment of ancient prophecies in our time.

Born in a barn and swaddled in a manger, he comes. Christ comes—not in a bright, shiny package or holiday clothing—but in the heaven-sent earthiness of a stable where the sights and sounds of humans and animals comele in an earthly delight that is celebrated most deeply by those who have eyes to see and hearts to receive Emmanuel, God-with-us.

In celebration of this most anticipated barn birth and the earthiness of Christ's coming, our Eden Church plaza will be transformed into a Bethlehem barnyard on Sunday morning, Dec. 19, as we (with a great deal of help from the Palomares 4-H club) will host a live nativity for our congregation and community.

Invite your friends and neighbors. Bring your family. Come and experience the sights and sounds of Advent and Christmas in a new, but very old fashioned way.

The animals and their shepherds will arrive in the plaza by 9:30 a.m. Worship will begin at 10 a.m. The children in grades K–5 will meet and greet the shepherds, and pet and feed their flock, during the sermon. (Note to parents: this might not be the ideal day to wear our "Christmas best.")

Following worship, the teens and adults will get our turn. Hot mulled cider and Christmas cookies will be served on the plaza in lieu of our traditional coffee hour in Oliver Hall. Seating will be available in the narthex and Community Room for those who prefer an indoor venue.

When you arrive on Sunday morning, Dec. 19, expect to be greeted by a host of farm animals, their 4-H shepherds, and several Eden families taking turns serving as the Holy Family. Expect all the sights and sounds, and noises and smells of a stable. Expect to find yourself in the midst of a grand nativity scene where, no matter how unholy you may feel, the Christmas Child will greet you in peasant clothing and deliver an earthy blessing.

Arlene