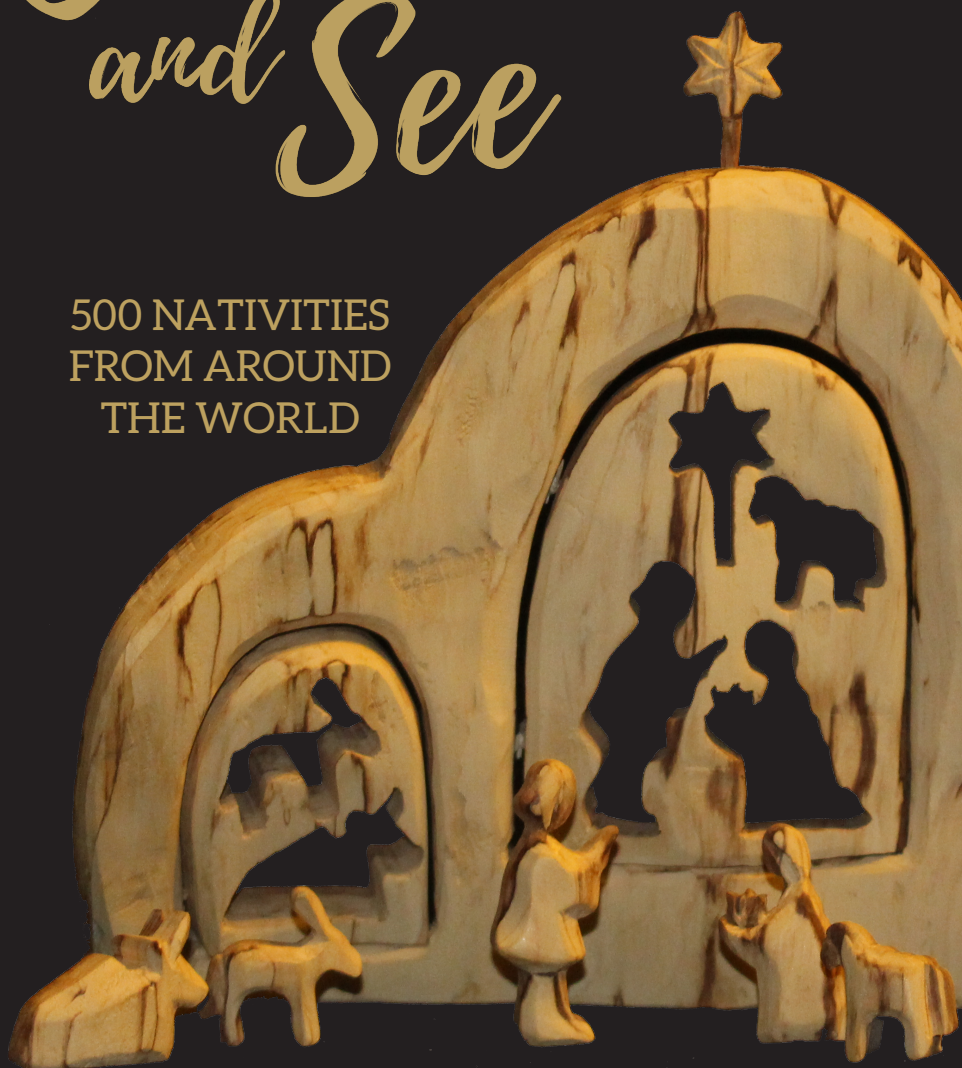


# *Come and See*

500 NATIVITIES  
FROM AROUND  
THE WORLD



FAYETTEVILLE FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH  
FAYETTEVILLE, GEORGIA

# Nativities

FROM AROUND THE WORLD

Friday | December 2 | 1 - 7 PM

Saturday | December 3 | 11 AM - 4 PM

Sanctuary, Fayetteville First UMC

## About the Collection

The manger scene is a global symbol of the Christian belief that God entered history as a human being, bringing divine presence and power that continues in our midst. Fayetteville First United Methodist Church is pleased to present "Nativities from Around the World," a collection of nativity scenes assembled by mother and daughter Sharon Bowen and Wendy Haymans. They created it as an act of witness to share the story of Jesus' birth and start conversations about the reason for this history-changing event. Our congregation is grateful to Sharon and Wendy for sharing their beautiful, moving nativities with our community.

The collection features more than 500 nativities, many one-of-a-kind, which provide glimpses into the faith and artistic ingenuity of different cultures and communities. The scenes represent a wide range of styles and materials. Some are made from items that are typically discarded: snack bags, bottle caps, bullet casings, rolled magazine and newspaper pages. Every continent except Antarctica is represented in the exhibit, along with many U.S. states.

We are glad that you, like the Bethlehem shepherds, have chosen to "Come and See." May you experience the collection as a fresh expression of Emmanuel, God With Us, during the 2022 Season of the Nativity.

*Your Friends at Fayetteville First United Methodist Church*

## History of the Nativity Scene

The earliest known visual depiction of Jesus' birth dates to the 2nd century A.D. in the catacombs of St. Priscilla in Rome. Nativity scenes drawn from the gospels of Luke and Matthew were painted in catacombs until Christianity was no longer an "underground" faith. By the 4th and 5th centuries, bas-relief depictions of the holy family at the manger, the shepherds and wise men became common in church ornamentation.

St. Francis of Assisi is credited with popularizing the nativity scene with common folk and making it an icon of the Christmas season. According to a biography of Francis by St. Bonaventure, for his Christmas sermon in 1223 in the Italian village of Greccio, Francis filled a manger with hay, tied an ox and donkey nearby, and preached to a crowd from the surrounding area. The scene was bathed in light and the night air rang with recitations from the Psalms. Francis was



*From Honduras, made of snack wrappers*



*From the Andes Mountains of Peru*



*From Nepal, made of corn husks*



*From Ghana, handsewn by teenage girls*

so moved with emotion that he could not speak the name of Jesus, calling him “the Babe of Bethlehem.” Legend held that the power of that night lingered on, with the very hay from the manger able to cure illness.

Over the next few centuries the nativity scene became a staple of artwork in churches in Europe, first in live depictions and eventually in artistic renderings of painted and gilded wood. Wealthy families displayed their own versions of the nativity in Venetian glass and porcelain. With the industrial revolution, mechanized versions appeared including the Christ Child’s feet kicking in the manger.

When creches were banned during the French Revolution, the nativity scene in France returned to its underground roots. Christians secretly made them from household items like bread and cloth. In Provence, the artist Jean-Louis Lagnel began making small clay nativities. The figures were called “santons” or little saints and led to the modern-day popularity of nativity scenes on table tops, mantles, and bookshelves in Christian homes throughout the world.



*From Georgia coast, made of driftwood*



*From Vietnam, made of rolled magazine pages*



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