



NEIGHBORHOOD NATIVITY PLAY HANDBOOK

Connect your neighbors with God by inviting them to join your family for a short and meaningful celebration of how God came to us, born as the baby Jesus. They will enjoy coming together to watch the story of Christmas acted out by their own children.

How to Host a Live Nativity

Introducing Your Nativity

Concluding Your Live Nativity

Optional Script

Invitation Sample

Follow-Up Letter Sample



How To

Host a Live Nativity

1. Choose your Date and Time

Request the set and costumes by emailing Andrew Axsom (andrew@nonachurch.com) or put together your own simple set and costumes.

2. Prepare Program

Introduction: 1 to 3 minutes (see samples).

Live Nativity: Narrate the nativity in person by reading from Bible (best) or from the script below. You can do this with or without lines for actors.

Conclusion: You may want to sing a Christmas song together or watch a brief video about the meaning of Christmas (optional). You could offer free Bibles or invitations to our Christmas Eve service. Consider offering refreshments afterwards so that people can mingle and chat. You might want to wrap it all up with someone sharing their testimony. Whatever you do, we encourage you to close in prayer (see helpful hints below).

3. Invite People.

Let your neighbors know about the Live Nativity and invite the neighborhood kids to rehearse and perform.

4. Set up early on event day to build excitement.

5. Rehearse.

Read the story from the Bible. Assign parts. Costume up. Run through it. Don't worry!

6. Do the play.

There may be lots of mistakes, but parents will still love it. Think "grass-roots." Take photos!

7. Close with thanks, prayer & snacks.

8. Pack up the set & costumes for the next family.

Q & A

When and how to invite

people? What would work best in your neighborhood? A paper invite stands out and gives a reason to knock on doors and meet people, but if your neighbors know you well, email or Facebook works too. Use pictures or words that make it clear this play is about Christ so no one feels tricked. (See samples below)

It seems kind of short?

Resist the temptation to stretch this out. People appreciate short and sweet events with time to visit afterward. They will do their duty if it is longer and their kids are in it, but they will love you more if it is shorter.

What about singing?

Be sensitive to people who find singing together uncomfortable. The actors could sing a verse or two of carols here and there. People may join in. Some hosts project a Christmas music video. People seem to enjoy that, but it does take extra work and is not necessary.

Need Anything?

If you have questions or want to pray together or talk things through, contact andrew@nonachurch.com



Introducing your Nativity (Option 1)

Love people well by thinking about how they think before you talk to them. You want to reach people's hearts, not check "made spiritual speech" off your list. If people have come to see their child perform, they will be expecting you to say a little something. Trust God to build both relational and spiritual bridges. Be sincere and be short. 1 to 3 minutes.

Use these questions to help you form your introduction

1. What do you have in common with them?
2. Why are you glad to do this play?
3. How does this relate to Christmas?

You can personalize your answers or use this example. Do you see how this answers the 3 questions above? Jot down your key words and practice a few times so that you can just glance at it and not read the whole thing.

Welcome! We are so glad you could join us for the Brandy Harbor Christmas Story Play. My name is Ronnie Peirce. My daughter Krista and I saw a nativity play in Waterford Lakes. We knew right away that the creative kids in our neighborhood would have fun and be great at this type of thing, so we decided to go for it and borrowed all the props.

Thank you for coming! I'm glad we can be together this crazy time of year. The holiday season is promoted as a beautiful celebration of family and friendship. But I have noticed that none of us actually have perfect families in real life. And relationships are great, but they can be messy too.

That's what I love about the Christmas story. Jesus left heaven to come live as a human being in an imperfect family with real difficulties- like not having a good place to be born. He perfectly loved and lived with imperfect people like us. And He celebrated family by giving up his perfect life so that we could be invited into God's forever family in spite of all our imperfections. That's worth having a holiday about! And So. . . We are excited to act out for you a true story from 2,000 years ago. . . The story of the very first Christmas!

Introducing your Nativity (Option 2)

Love people by thinking about how they think before you talk to them. You want to reach people's hearts, not check "made spiritual speech" off your list. If people have come to see their child perform, they will be expecting you to say a little something. Trust God to build both relational and spiritual bridges. Be sincere and be short. 3 to 5 minutes.

GOALS:

Connect the Christmas story with God's story of redemption.
Be interactive and engaging with the kids and adults.

(Bring all the kids into the audience with their parents)

Welcome! We are so glad you could join us for the (name of your neighborhood) Live Nativity. In just a few short minutes, we are going to see the story of the first Christmas acted out by some of the best local actors we could find! During Christmastime, we hear and tell all types of stories...stories about red-nosed reindeer, a snowman named Frosty, and Ebenezer Scrooge. My favorite Christmas story – the one that we'll be acting out tonight – began a loooooooooooooong time ago.

In order to go back to the beginning of the story, we're going to need to rewind. Can you help me do that? Let's all put our arms right in front of each other and rewind! (make rewinding sound) Great! We went all the way back to the beginning of time. The Bible tells us in Genesis 1 that in the beginning God created EVERYTHING. He made the earth, all the plants, all the animals, and He even made humans by giving them the breath of life. Let's all take a deep breath together and say "ahhhh I'm alive"! (take a deep breath and say "ahhh I'm alive") In the beginning, everything was PERFECT. Does anybody here get scared sometimes? Well, no one was ever scared in the beginning. Does anybody here ever get hurt? Well, in the beginning, no one ever got hurt. Sound pretty great, right? Do you know why everything was perfect? Everything was perfect because GOD created it.

Everything doesn't seem so perfect now, does it? What types of things let you know that life isn't perfect now? (take 2 to 3 answers from kids) All those things that you said show us that things aren't perfect anymore. Do you know why? Things aren't perfect anymore because the first humans wanted things their way instead of God's way, and that's called sin. Sin messed things up and messed up God's perfect creation. But do you know what God did? He did something great! He promised to send a Savior – someone who would save us from the sin that messes up us and everything around us. God promised to send a Savior, and throughout all of history, He kept saying to His people "I am sending you a Savior".

And does God keep His promises? (let kids respond with a big "YES") Well, let's fast-forward to when God sent a Savior to save us from sin. (put arms in front of you and make fast-forward sound). And here we are! At the first Christmas! Let's hear how God sent a Savior, Jesus, as a little baby to save us from our sin.

Ending Your Live Nativity



Since this is the best and most appropriate time of the year to be spiritually intentional with your friends and neighbors, be sure to ask God how to end your time.

Ask yourself, "Am I offering an opportunity for them to meet Jesus, (which is great) or am I doing something spiritual to them to feel good about myself?" (not so great.) Then trust God's leading about whether and how to pray with your group. However you end your time, be sure to thank people for coming!

Here's an example wrap up.

Let's have another round of applause for our local actors and actresses! Before you go, I would like to pray for anyone who wants to join me. Let's bow our heads.

"God, thank you for these beautiful children, and that we could be together tonight as neighbors and remember how Christmas began, when you were born. You know the needs of each person here. Thank you that you love each one.

Please help us love each other as neighbors and give us your peace and guidance during the holidays. Thank you that we could celebrate how you started Christmas, by being born as a baby and living among us. Amen"

God bless you this Christmas. I know there is a lot of diversity in what this means to people, so thank you for your support tonight. It means a lot. You are welcome to stick around for cookies and hot cocoa. Thank you so much for coming!

You could also have someone briefly share their testimony (2 to 3 minutes) within the framework of Jesus being the greatest gift they have ever received. The person sharing should close with prayer and an invitation to stick around to enjoy refreshments and chat.

Optional Script

You can change speaking parts based on number and age of kids. It's fine to read actors' lines and have actors repeat them to the audience. The narrator needs to have a loud voice (or a microphone) and be able to adjust and coach while narrating. Consider reading most of it directly from Luke and Matthew in the Bible.

Narrator: Long ago, in a city of Galilee called Nazareth, there lived a young woman named Mary. The Lord sent an angel to her.

Angel: Walks over to Mary. "Do Not Be Afraid!"

Narrator: You have found favor with God! You will give birth to a son. The Holy Spirit will come upon you and the baby will be called the Son of God.

Mary: I will do what God asks me to do.

Could include Mary's magnificat from NIRV Luke 1:46-55 right here, or not.

Narrator: Now Mary was engaged to a man named Joseph. The angel appeared to him in a dream and said. . .

Angel: Walks over to Joseph, who is sleeping. Do Not Be Afraid!

Narrator: Mary has been chosen to be the mother of God's Son. Do not be afraid to take her as your wife. She will have a son and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins. (pause) So Joseph believed the angel and took Mary to be his wife.

Angel goes behind screen. Joseph wakes up, walks over to Mary and takes her hand and they walk around on a journey while the Narrator begins reading from Luke 2:1-20. Pause at verse 6.

Narrator: 1 At that time, Augustus Caesar sent an order to all people in the countries that were under Roman rule. The order said that they must list their names in a register. 2 This was the first registration taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. 3 And everyone went to their own towns to be registered.

4 So Joseph left Nazareth, a town in Galilee. He went to the town of Bethlehem in Judea. This town was known as the town of David. Joseph went there because he was from the family of David. 5 Joseph registered with Mary because she was

engaged to marry him. (Mary was now pregnant.) 6 While Joseph and Mary were in Bethlehem, the time came for her to have the baby."

Mary: Joseph, it's time to have the baby.

Joseph: Okay, I'll find a place for us to stay. Looks around. There is no room for us anywhere. We'll have to stay in this stable. (You can add an innkeeper if you want- but that part isn't actually in the Bible.) Mary and Joseph stand behind the manger. The angel can bring the baby or Mary can pick it up from some hiding place.

Narrator: 7 She gave birth to her first son. There were no rooms left in the inn. So she wrapped the baby with cloths and laid him in a box where animals are fed.

Shepherds and sheep come sit in front of the cloud screen. The angel climbs a ladder behind the screen and sticks his or her head up over the top of it.

8 That night, some shepherds were in the fields nearby watching their sheep. 9 An angel of the Lord stood before them. The glory of the Lord was shining around them, and suddenly they became very frightened. 10 The angel said to them. . .

Angel: "Do not be afraid!"

Narrator: . . .I am bringing you some good news. It will be a joy to all the people. 11 Today your Savior was born in David's town. He is Christ the Lord. 12 This is how you will know him: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a feeding box.

Any other angels come out from behind the screen and stand in front of it.

Narrator: 13 Then a very large group of angels from heaven joined the first angel. All the angels were praising God, saying: 14 "Give glory to God in heaven, and on earth let there be peace to the people who please God."

Other Angels: Give Glory to God! Let there be Peace!

If you have a lot of **angels**, they could come out and sing Hark the Herald Angels Sing, or just shout "Glory to God in the Highest" after verse 14. We only had one angel so we skipped the song.

Hark the Herald angels sing, glory to the Newborn King.
Peace on earth and mercy mild, God and sinners reconciled.
Joyful all ye nations rise. Join the triumph of the skies.
With angelic hosts proclaim, Christ is born in Bethlehem.
Hark the herald angels sing, glory to the newborn king.

Narrator: 15 "Then the angels left the shepherds and went back to heaven. The shepherds said to each other, "Let us go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened. We will see this thing the Lord told us about."

Angels go back behind their screen.

Shepherds: "Let's go to Bethlehem and see this amazing thing."

Narrator continues as the shepherds and sheep troop over to the manger to look. They can just stay there, or they can run around pretending to tell people and then go back to their fields.

No kings version: By the end of verse 20, the entire cast should be gathered around the stable, but facing the audience.

Narrator: 16 So the shepherds went quickly and found Mary and Joseph. 17 And the shepherds saw the baby lying in a feeding box. Then they told what the angels had said about this child. 18 Everyone was amazed when they heard what the shepherds said to them. 19 Mary hid these things in her heart; she continued to think about them. 20 Then the shepherds went back to their sheep, praising God and thanking him for everything that they had seen and heard. It was just as the angel had told them.

Ending (no kings version):

You could sing the first verse of Joy to the World to indicate the play is over. Consider introducing each cast member and letting him or her take a bow.

Ending (with kings version):

If you have enough actors, have the shepherds return to their fields around verse 20 and have the kings come out from behind their screen and pose in front of it.

Narrator: During this time, Herod was king. 1bAfter Jesus was born, some wise men from the east came to Jerusalem. They asked, "Where is the baby who was born to be the king of the Jews? We saw his star in the east. We came to worship him."

3When King Herod heard about this new king of the Jews, he was troubled. And all the people in Jerusalem were worried too. Herod called a meeting of all the leading priest and teachers of the law. He asked them where the Christ would be born. 5 The answered, "In the town of Bethlehem in Judea. The prophets wrote about this in the Scriptures."

7 Then Herod had a secret meeting with the wise men from the east. He learned from them the exact time they first saw the star. 8 Then Herod sent the wise men to Bethlehem. He said to them, "Go and look carefully to find the child. When you find him, come tell me. Then I can go worship him too."

Wise men leave and go over to the stable. They can point at the star on the way. Then bow and offer gifts. Kings stay now until the end.

9 The wise men heard the king and then left. They saw the same star they had seen in the east. It went before them until it stopped above the place where the child was. 10 When the wise men saw the star, they were filled with joy. 11 They went to the house where the child was and saw him with his mother, Mary. They bowed down and worshiped the child. They opened the gifts they brought for him. They gave him treasures of gold, frankincense and myrrh. 12 But God warned the wise men in a dream not to go back to Herod.

Narrator: This is the story of how Christ was born, long ago, in Bethlehem. . .

Now all the shepherds, sheep, kings, and angels gather around the manger, facing forward. Could sing the first verse to Joy to the World to indicate the play is over.

Joy to the World, the Lord is come.
Let earth receive her king.
Let every heart prepare Him room.
And heaven and nature sing.
And heaven and nature sing.
And heaven (and heaven) and nature sing.

Consider introducing each cast member and letting him or her take a bow. Thank everyone for coming, invite to Christmas Eve service, make any other closing comments or prayer, and invite everyone to snacks.



Brandy Harbor presents:
"The Christmas Story"

A brief outdoor play with very local actors!

Sunday, December 20
Rehearsal 6 p.m.
Performance 7 p.m.
[Address]



All children are invited to be in this short performance complete with lights, set, and costumes! Come to practice at 6 p.m. and be ready to play a part by 7. Be sure to bring your cameras! Contact Ronnie with questions at [phone number] or [email].



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Merry Christmas!

We hope you had fun at our kid-friendly Christmas play. In the hustle and bustle of the season, it is good to celebrate the beginning of all this gift giving, God Himself giving us the wonderful gift of Jesus Christ!



If you want to learn more about Christ, strengthen your Christian faith, or help your children learn more about God, we invite you to the church we call home, Vista Community Church. It is informal, friendly, and all are welcome. Many of us here at Vista have had the remarkable experience of coming to understand how much God loves us and wants to know us personally. We realized our need to receive the gift God offers, His free gift of eternal life through the forgiveness that Jesus made possible.

Children age K-5 can attend fun, interactive classes during any service. Nursery is also available. Our services are Sundays at 8:45, 10:15, and 11:45 at 4200 S. Chickasaw Trail. Middle School classes are also offered. We think you will be encouraged by both the love of God and the love of the people.

Of course you are invited to our family friendly Christmas Eve service on December 24. See Vistachurch.com for details. You don't need to dress up and a room is available for infants and toddlers.

Blessings,