

Christmas 2023

Greetings,

We tend to image the Nativity as a tableau. Jesus and his parents, the admiring visitors, and various farm animals, stock still in the borrowed barn. (*"The little Lord Jesus, no crying he makes!"*) Each character is frozen in time, place, and endeavour.

But, in fact, the story of Jesus' birth is full of movement. It's more travelogue than triptych. Mary journeyed to Elizabeth so that they could support one another during their problem pregnancies. Joseph and Mary wanted to stand up and be counted; a civic choice that involved a difficult trip to Bethlehem. When she went into labour (lots of movement there!), a property owner, the local midwives (not mentioned by physician Luke!), and some meat suppliers went out of their way to secure a safe delivery and healthy post-partum for mother and child.

Wise and wealthy foreigners made the long journey to see what they could do to help out. Rather than simply send a donation, they provided in-person assistance.

Later, political oppression necessitated an emergency flight to Egypt for Joseph and his family. Fortunately, the Egyptian immigration authorities welcomed them. When mad, bad Herod the Great died, the family returned to Nazareth.

Such a lot of travel! So much action and adventure! Terribly tough for the young parents and their child. But what joy it must have given those who came to their aid.

Christmas is still a call to help: to support, to share, to stand in solidarity with.

The smallest assistance is a precious gift to Jesus. Far more appreciated than luxury gifts like gold or glitzy perfume!

*May your Christmas be blessed with joys received and hope given.*

*May love and peace fill your hearts and your homes.*

*Brenda*