

Bethlehem Connection

In a sense, I live in a Nativity Scene. During Advent, a bright Bethlehem star hangs over our barn, and should you follow it into the barn, you will find a quiet stall area with fresh hay, and cows, and goats, and at night, sleepy chickens roosting here and there. Up at the house, the Christmas lights proclaim the season and a welcome to visitors and passers-by. If those should ever include a couple seeking shelter for the night, we would surely offer more than a corner stall and manger, but during my evening visits to the barn, the thought of a young couple welcomed, safe, and in peace, resting quietly with our cows and goats while a Star shines overhead is - compelling, connective, and rich with the echoes of Christmases past.



It is a long way from our NC farm to the Bethlehem of the baby Jesus - half a world away, and more than 2 millennia ago. The location of that original stable is uncertain, and modern pilgrims to Bethlehem find nothing like a stable - no cattle lowing, no shepherds, no glorious star overhead, no mother, no Christ child. In Bethlehem, the remnants of that long-ago night are obscured by an ornate and ancient church erected over a grotto recalling nothing of the account in Luke's Gospel. But tonight, here at our farm, I see the Star, and smell the hay, and lean against my gentle cows - a shepherd myself, rejoicing in this Mystery. The Angels don't seem so distant, and the Christ child is born anew in my heart.

- Allan, 2018