

British Baptist Nativity effort invites public to “Get in the Picture”

December 11, 2009

DIDCOT, England (ABP)—Thousands of people around the United Kingdom are set to be involved in an ecumenical initiative that invites people to take part in an “instant Nativity” this Christmas.

The effort, co-sponsored by the [Baptist Union of Great Britain](#) and called “Get in the Picture,” seeks to include all kinds of people in the Christmas story by encouraging them to have their photograph taken in a Nativity tableau. The photographs are then available to view and download for free on the Get in the Picture website, which also has information about carol services at local churches, a reading of the Christmas story from the Bible and stories of what Christmas means to people today.

More than 40 towns across the United Kingdom have now signed up to host Get in the Picture events.

Participants at a holiday street fair in Didcot, England, get their photos taken in a Nativity scene sponsored by the Baptist Union of Great Britain.
(PHOTO/Baptist Times/Alex Baker)

The project originated in the English city of Chester last year, where Baptist-affiliated evangelistic group the Light Project first gave it a trial run.

In 2009, it has been rolled out nationally by the Baptist Union of Great

Britain and endorsed by a number of British Christian denominations and organizations, including the Church of England, the Methodist Church of Great Britain and the ecumenical group Churches Together in England.

The Baptist Union's mission department organized a Get in the Picture event Nov. 26 for the Didcot Christmas Street Fair in Didcot, Oxfordshire—the town west of London where the union is headquartered. The photographers took more than 100 photos.

"It was a great success," said the Baptist Union's missions head, Ian Bunce. "You could see people were having fun engaging with the Christmas story in a new, non-threatening way.

"From stories I have heard across the country, Get in the Picture is really capturing people's imagination."

The event featured the Nativity scene in the middle of the fair, with robes, shepherds' crooks and other clothing available for the participants to use for their photos.

Park Road Baptist Church and a coalition of other congregations in the city of Peterborough, England, have also embraced the initiative in an imaginative way. The group has rented a shop in the city's downtown area until Dec. 20. Called Love Came Down At Christmas after the familiar British carol, the shop features a variety of other attractions—including free mincemeat pies and gingerbread cookies and an exhibition of children's drawings of the Nativity. It opened Nov. 26, and people taking part posed with a live donkey.

Project Coordinator Jo Vernon hopes the initiative will provide an antidote to some of the more commercial aspects of the festive season.

"It's a really, really exciting project," she said. "Christmas is so commercial these days, and Get in the Picture is an uncomplicated way of putting

across to the public what Christmas is all about. We've had a tremendous response. It's inspired a lot of people to become involved."

Elsewhere, the Anglican cathedral in Rochester, England, hosted a Get in the Picture event outside the building during the town's Dickensian Christmas weekend Dec. 4-6. Instead of the participants dressing up in outfits, they were photographed with their faces through holes in a Nativity scene painted on a large board.

Inside the cathedral, actors gave three-minute monologues telling the Christmas story from the viewpoint of different characters from the Nativity.

"We will be saying to people, 'Come inside and hear from a character from the Christmas story—come outside and be a character from the Christmas story,'" said one of the organizers, Cathedral Canon Jean Kerr, before the event.