

Round Rock church presents Christmas on the Corner

December 18, 2023

Over the course of two weekends earlier this month, about 6,000 people attended outdoor live Nativity presentations in downtown Round Rock—including some who said they learned about the events surrounding Jesus' birth for the first time.



The shepherds watch their flocks with Lone Star Bakery in the background during a Christmas on the Corner presentation by First Baptist Church in Round Rock. (Photo / Henry Huey @HenryHueyPhoto)

“I’m always amazed when people say they had seen Nativity scenes all their lives, but they didn’t know the story behind it,” said Janis Reeder, who has coordinated Christmas on the Corner since First Baptist Church in Round

Rock launched the program in 2017.

This year, those who received their initial introduction to the story of Jesus' birth included a young man from Punjab, India, who had come to historic downtown Round Rock to see the Hometown Holiday Christmas light display, Pastor Dustin Slaton said.

The young Sikh was so intrigued by what he saw and heard at Christmas on the Corner, he brought his father with him the next night.

The 19-minute dramatic musical program—presented three times a night two weekends in early December—involves about 100 volunteers from First Baptist Church, said Slaton, who has served the congregation since January 2021.

“That includes the cast, the people involved in building sets and the ladies who made cookies,” he said.

This year, the church gave away 3,292 cookies to guests who attended Christmas on the Corner—not counting the ones eaten by the volunteers.

Called by God to ‘tell his story’



Janis Reeder, who has spearheaded

Christmas on the Corner since its beginning, holds grandson Waylon, who portrayed baby Jesus this year. They are accompanied by Logan Pool as Joseph and Madison Reeves as Mary. (Photo / Henry Huey @HenryHueyPhoto)

Reeder has been involved 18 years in leading drama for Christmas presentations at First Baptist Church. For more than a decade, the church presented traditional Christmas musical pageants in the church sanctuary.

When a sanctuary renovation in 2017 made the space unsuitable for the annual Christmas program, Reeder initially thought it meant the end of a beloved tradition.

Then, while waiting in the drive-through lane of Lone Star Bakery to buy Round Rock Donuts, she looked at the nearby church parking lot. She felt sure God was opening a door for the congregation to take the Christmas story outside the four walls of its building.

“When my creative juices get going, it’s kind of scary,” she said.

With the exception of a one-year interruption due to the COVID pandemic, the church has presented Christmas on the Corner every December since then, and the number of attendees has increased every season.

Volunteer builders in the church constructed a 40-foot-wide platform for the outdoor presentation.



Logan Pool as Joseph and Madison Reeves as Mary look lovingly at Waylon Reeder, portraying baby Jesus, in the First Baptist Church of Round Rock presentation of Christmas on the Corner. (Photo / Henry Huey @HenryHueyPhoto)

“The first year, it was a pretty expensive proposition with no money in the budget, but I was astonished at how many people contributed,” Reeder said.

The drama uses prerecorded music and narration—using a script Reeder wrote—and incorporates live animals into the presentation.

“I’ve become quite a camel aficionado,” she said.

Each performance ends with a gospel presentation in both English and Spanish.

“We’ve had people tell us they’ve never heard the Christmas story before. And we’ve had people join our church as a result of it,” Slaton said. “They’ve said, ‘We want to be part of a church that does something like this.’”

Reeder views Christmas on the Corner as an expression of God’s calling on her life “to tell his story,” and it’s become a passion project for her.

“I can’t not do it,” she said.



First Baptist Church in Round Rock presents Christmas on the Corner.
(Photo / Henry Huey @HenryHueyPhoto)