

Special Decorations, Words & Traditions for Christmas

Lights – In the Bible, Jesus says “I Am the Light of the World.” John 8:12
We decorate with lights to show this new light of Christ which shines most brightly when it is the darkest time of the year.

Star – symbolizes the star which came to shine over the scene of Jesus’ birth, leading the way for the 3 Wise Men to find him.

Crèche – French word referring to the group of figures arranged to represent the birth of Christ. Many families have a crèche set for the children to set up.

Manger – a feeding trough (sounds like “toff”) filled with hay in which the baby Jesus was laid after he was born

Nativity – refers to the Birth of Christ, a scene which includes Jesus, Mary, Joseph, the animals who were inside the stall, usually an ox and a donkey, shepherds, sheep & lambs, and the 3 Wise Men

Wise Men – also called the Three Magi, or the Three Kings—in some countries they have a special holiday to celebrate when the three wise men came from far away, probably in today’s Iran, to worship Jesus, the baby they had heard was a special king. They were learned men who studied the stars and they noticed the unusual star appearing in the sky, and this they realized was a token of a very special event. To Christians, the Wise Men symbolize how the Jesus is recognized by non-Jewish people all over the world. We give presents today, just as the Wise Men did to Jesus.

Shepherds – men carrying a bent-topped wooden pole whose job is to look after flocks of sheep, to keep them safe from wolves and lions, and to show them to good places to graze.

Christmas Tree – The Christmas tree came from the “miracle plays” held in Germany from 900-1400 AD. Actors performed on flat wagons pulled by horses that moved from town to town. These wagons looked like a stage on wheels. The plays were about the miracles of Jesus and early Christians. One play was about the creation of the world. The only thing on the stage was the “Paradise Tree” – a fir tree with apples on it. Since this play ended with the promise of Christ’s coming, dramas were performed during the Advent/Christmas season. By the 1500’s people began using fir trees for their personal Christmas celebrations. Tradition says that Martin Luther the priest who began the Reformation, was the first to put candles on a Christmas tree. German immigrants brought the tree custom to America in 1710. Electric lights were first put on a Christmas tree in 1895 by Ralph Morris who worked for the telephone company. Ornaments on today’s trees are different from country to country.