



Socially distanced Christmas for families

We hope that these ideas inspire you to see how we can create the Christmas atmosphere we all love and share that with the families we serve in new and different ways.

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 - a. There are so many resources, these are just a few more we spotted and think are great. No doubt we and you will find many more in the coming weeks.

Remember

Jesus was not born with a Christmas tree in the corner or mince pies being shared among visitors. Christmas may be different this year but it can be just as precious and exciting if we focus on how we share the story rather than the trimmings we cannot have.



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Things to think about

Coronavirus Rules

- Be proactive and know your local rules.
- Be aware they can change...plan with contingency for how it could transfer.
- Focus on what you can do rather than dwell on what you cannot.

Planning

- Risk assess! This is a standard requirement even outside of Covid, but it is important to risk assess that specifically too.
- Think about families involved in your church and families in the wider community.
- How will you publicise it?
 - Personal invitation, local Facebook group, banner on the church, school newsletter, shop noticeboards etc.
- Talk to other local churches
 - So you don't all do your event on the same day.
 - So you can have a variety of different things on offer to your local community.
 - Find opportunities to work together on things.
 - BUT, do not compare yourself or your event to the church up the road. People need and want different things, what do your community need from you and how can you offer that in your unique way?



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Spaces

We have all the same spaces as we normally do, we might use them differently but they are still there. These are the main spaces and a few ideas. Although this is a Christmas resource these ideas are relevant in general both during social distancing and beyond.

Inside

As part of your normal service

- Invite to bring snacks, toys, books etc. to help.
- Explain what is in place to support them being able to come in conversation about what will be helpful for them.
- Pew or area where they can be most comfortable (ask them don't assume you know what is most helpful).
- Create family space where children can move a little without breaking distancing.
- Videos of children and families included.
- Consider length of service, what is accessible/engaging for them?

Service specifically aimed at families

- Households in a pew, around a table, under a tent or create spaces using foam floor tiles to help children see their space.
- All resources that they need in their space.
- Lead from the front simply and concisely and give spaces for families to worship as they adapt to their families ages and stages as they tell the story, reflect, do the activities etc.

Use the space creatively

- Stations that households move between. Christmas tree festival, stations of Christmas.
- Decorate with a tree, lights etc. Have Christmas music, hymns on.



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Outside

Decorate your building and grounds.

- Tree, lights, message of hope across the church.

Use ground space at church or elsewhere (homestead, farm etc.)

- Stations to move between, something permanent or as part of an event.
- A chance to sit and reflect with someone as they lead the household in the story and simple conversational reflection with each household.

Home

Online – services, groups, sharing websites or activities, Christmas playlist, short video stories, songs or thoughts, filming at home for a service.

Offline – sending resource packs home with stories, reflections and prayers, dropping something off, sharing photos, spiritual activities outside and at home.

Public spaces

Do speak to people and check any relevant permissions!

Schools – collective worship, resources, Christmas greetings – chat to your schools about what might be helpful.

Open spaces – Drive thru event, nativity scene.

Community event – either for them or facilitate something anyone can join.

This is a real opportunity to get to know your community and their needs and how you can involve people in your worship this Christmas. It is a chance to not do the things you always do but be creative and try new things and explore Christmas worship in new ways.

Remember Jesus was not born in the midst of a carol service. They are great and we will miss them but they are not a necessity to celebrate Jesus' birth!



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Spotlights

These are some amazing ideas that we heard about and invited people to share for others. Each is planned in a specific context but we love how easy they are to adapt to different spaces or ways of celebrating.

Stations of Christmas

Choose the key parts of the Christmas story that you want to share. For each one consider what you want people to take away e.g. Mary discovering she was pregnant linking to trusting God.

Have the stations spread out (around the church, outside space) each with:

- The story
- A simple sentence or two with the message
- A question to talk about
- An activity to do.
- You could use images, objects and decorations to draw people into each one.



[Click here](#) to watch Kathryn talk about her idea.

Variations:

The stations could be set up outside (weather permitting), in the main church or in the hall. To ensure distancing you could ask people to book slots.

The activity could be something active, a few questions, decide an action for later. It could also include drawing or writing. You could do this by putting family packs together with the resources and they either take the whole pack away, or they take their bits and leave the craft supplies in a box on the way out...that is then left untouched for at least 3 days.

This could also be adapted to collective worship with the story, message and question or activity. You could send it in written for staff to lead or record videos to send.

You could set it up outside and have a different station each week that stays, or a different station each day in the week before. It could be very simple.



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Christingle

For some churches this is their big event, for some families it is a tradition that they remember as children. The Children's Society have various resources and ideas to help translate this tradition into new contexts this year.

Click on the links to open the website:

[Christingle Trail](#) – A QR trail for Christmas. A series of QR codes for you to print and put up. Families use their smart phones and it opens a picture with questions and activities. You can laminate the codes and have things to spot and explore connected to the images they open. You could do it on one day or a series of days and change the display for people passing. This is being run with Muddy Church.

[Christingle Service](#) – There are loads of resources to help you plan and to use in a virtual or socially distanced service. Virtual services could be for families at home but lots of churches are also offering it to their local schools as their Christmas service. It can be live or pre-recorded. Another great idea to have individual packs to be given out with all the ingredients to make their own Christingle before or during the service.



National Christingle service – On 13th December (shown through the Church of England website). It will be available afterwards for churches and schools to use.

[Shop](#) – Almost everything you need is available through their shops but downloadable resources but also bags and other resources that will be posted out.



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Angel bombing

This is not new and it has been used for all kinds of occasions. The basic premise is have lots of angels/stars/Christmas thing and put them all out around your local community the night before the last day of school or the 23rd December. Then broadcast what you have done.

They get people out exploring or children finding an exciting walk to school. They become Christmas tree decorations and you can encourage people to share pictures through social media. It is a great way to bring a smile and gift your community and to advertise Christmas services etc. that you are running.

[Click here](#) to watch April talk about how they do it.

Variations:

You can avoid plastic if you don't include the paper invitation. But think about how people will find out what it is all about.

You can advertise on social media, especially if there is a community page. You could also put up a large poster on your church (or another place) if it easily visible, ask to put it in the school or community newsletter.

You can buy wooden shapes from a variety of places. If you have people who love art, knitting crocheting you could have lots of different angels or stars.





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Café Christmas

Café Church is an interactive and creative way of bringing families together for worship that is Covid Secure. We use the hall and each family is sat around their own table like a café. They book into the service so there is enough seating and we can create designated spaces for each family, with their own resources within that area, socially distanced from other families.

[Click here](#) to see Jen talk about how it works for them.

Variations:

This can be done around tables, sat in pews or on picnic blankets outside.

You could provide family crafts, games, prayer activities and family challenges all based around your Christmas theme. As long as there is space they can do active games like “Who can wrap a person the best?” with each household as a team providing there is space created for them to get up.

Ideas include:

- Print out the story for families to read as a script with different parts.
- Have objects in a bowl to represent each part of the story and you have to lift out the object when you think its part is being spoken about (sheep, star, angel etc.)
- Each household has a part (kings, shepherds, holy family, angels etc.) They have actions or words to say when it is their part of the story.
- Team games where each household is a team: Wrap a family member, Put a jigsaw picture together.
- Pictures in a bag to help families pray together e.g. picture of food, elderly person, hospital, someone looking cold, presents etc.
- Ideas to respond. Give families a chance to respond to the story or message on their table. Have a few ideas to give them ideas. It might include questions to talk about, suggest drawing the part of the story they think is most important, writing a diary as if you were one of the shepherds or wise men, writing a poem or song etc.



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Christmas trail

Sheep, donkeys and a stable. You might have these available to you if there is a local farm who have a field or space that people could come and experience the story with their family. At each stop there would be words that tell the part of the story and perhaps a question to think about and something fun to spot or do (Can you tell which sheep is which?). The stable or shed could be set up with a crib.



[Click here](#) for Wendy and the sheep sharing their ideas.

Variations:

Set it up around the church yard or other open space without real animals.



Encourage people to come in their own fancy dress. Perhaps have a space for people to take their own photo in the nativity. It could be a simple gazebo or you could create a cardboard background with a nativity picture that people have their photo in front of.

Include a checklist of natural things to spot as they go around. Choose things that they might see depending on the area. Wherever possible include both the word and a real picture for those that can't read.

Could some real animals visit for the day? Or some large cut-outs or make them 3D out of recycling that won't go soggy in the rain to create scenes.



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Posada

Traditionally the Posada begins on the 16th December and a holy family (knitted, ceramic, wood) and it moves between church families and then comes to church on the 24th December for a service of welcome or crib service. There are simple prayers that are said between families as it is handed over and prayers and reflections for the family on the day they have it.

Passing the holy family through a series of houses and hands is unlikely to be recommended this year but the idea of welcoming the holy family and thinking about the different people who are part of the story can still happen.

A resource has been put together for each of the 9 days. It moves through the story and characters over the 9 days. Each has the Bible story, a reflection and an activity. In preparation or during the holy family can be created and added.

[Click here](#) for the resource (please note this resource will be released on 6th November but a taster is available.)

Variations:

There is supporting material (including an introduction video that can be used or seen as an example to make your own) so that it can be used in schools as collective worship.

You could send it to families with a resource bag to make their own family and either the website link for each of the days or create a card for each day within the bag.

As a family you could do this yourselves. Choose what material you want to use to create the family out of and choose a time you can sit together each day.

Include a doorstep Posada. Only 1 person touches the family and transports them between the houses. They place the family on the doorstep and step back so the household can come to the door for a short prayer of welcome and a photo.



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Advent windows

25 windows in the neighbourhood. The windows are numbered 1 to 25 and you decorate the window and start lighting it every night from your day. So window 1 is lit all through advent but number 24 only appears and it lit on the 24th. Ideally you facilitate it as a community event.



[Click here](#) to see how Gail is doing it.

Variations:

Run it with churches in the same area so you can encourage church families to be involved and theme their window with the Christmas story.



Publicise it through a community page and invite people to be involved in doing a window as a community event.

Share a map marking the rough area each number will be so they know where to explore each night. Or so they can plan an evening walk to find a few at a time.

You assign numbers randomly to houses or put them in an order that creates a trail. Perhaps the last one could be a window at the church?

In the church window or just in your own window have advent candles and 'light' one a week. This would work as part of a trail or by itself.



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Wild nativity

There will be no live nativity plays in school or in church this year. Some may enjoy not having that pressure but some will be sad they are missing something they expected in their child's first year of school.

Why not create a simple video where each family or household take a part and then you join them together with the sound to show at church or send to families.

Variation:

The level of acting can depend on who you have acting:

- Very young children – ask for them to be dressed up and filmed running or playing or anything. And then record someone narrating the story (you could read from a children's version of the Bible or of the story). Link the videos at the correct part of the story.
- Older children get them doing specific things or with speaking parts.
- You can use a variety of each with some having lines and others without.
- You might want to include other members of your congregation as well.
- If a nativity feels a bit much or you have too many budding stars, you could have videos sent in to play with a Christmas song.
- See 'Other resources' for ideas of where to get scripts.

Worried about your video editing ability? Lots of phones have a simple editor that allows you to stitch videos together and add a couple of creative bits. But ask around for someone who knows or is willing to give it a go!



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Other resources and ideas

These are some of the other amazing ideas that we heard about.

[Church of England](#) – Comfort and Joy is their theme this year. Some of their resources and ideas are here.

[All Age Worship](#) – This website has plenty of puppet scripts, dramas and ideas for Christmas. Some are already suitable for doing in a distanced way and others will need a little adapting for distancing or for recording. There are also some scripts that focus on coronavirus.

[Messy Church](#) – Resources and support for running your Messy Church this Christmas. These ideas may also be useful in different settings.

[Muddy Church](#) – A QR trail to get outside and celebrate in the world God made. This is a collaboration with the Children's Society Christingle.

[It begins in Bethlehem](#) – A script, a booklet and a video from the Bible Society of a nativity rhyme by Bob Hartman.

[Advent and Christmas resources](#) – There are more ideas on the Diocese of Coventry website. It includes website links to resources and thinking about some of these ideas with different age groups.