

## Christmas 2020- what will you do?

Christmas 2020 will be a Christmas like no other for the Church. Has your church wondered what you could do both to worship and to share the message of Christmas hope with your community? Even if you haven't been able to meet physically, there are still things you could do to encourage one another and your community. Here are some suggestions you could consider.

### How to get started:

- **Start off by praying** individually or as a church about what you could do- or what God could do through you- this Christmas.
- **Think about your church members- what will they be able to do?** Who can do what? For example, if many are housebound or shielding, it would be good to do something they can join in with from home (making something, writing cards) while if you have a number of more active members you could consider something outdoors. Do you have someone who is a champion knitter? Or someone who loves carpentry? Can you use their skills?
- **Think about your community-** who lives there or works there, who passes through? What are their needs? For example, is your church building on a busy road where people will see window displays or an outdoor display? Are there elderly people who may be lonely at Christmas? Are there young families who might appreciate craft activity packs or a DIY Christingle?
- **Pick one or two ideas and focus on doing them well-** don't try to do everything.
- **Choose someone to coordinate:** for each project, ask someone to coordinate efforts to make sure everything gets done. You might want to appoint a small group who can meet (online or in person) to keep an eye on progress.
- **Talk to others:** tell other churches in your area what you are doing and see if they would like to join in. You may find community groups would like to be involved, or that local shops will donate items or window space.
- **Start early:** some things may take longer than expected, especially sourcing materials.
- **Welcome:** whatever you do, try to find some way to give people an opportunity to connect further with your church, to join you in worship online, to speak to someone if they want help or prayer.
- **Check the guidance:** if you're not sure if what you want to do is allowed, talk to Lois or Angie or check the guidance at <https://www.methodist.org.uk/about-us/coronavirus/official-guidance/> and <https://www.methodist.org.uk/for-churches/property/coronavirus-guidance-for-property/> Remember guidance may change before December so keep an eye on the news. You will need to do a risk assessment for activities in your building or grounds.
- **Remember why we are doing this:** it's easy to get wrapped up in the busyness of Christmas, or to get cynical, but try to keep the focus on Christ. That's the point of Christmas, after all!

The Children, Youth & Families team have put together some resources and suggestions of ways your church could celebrate Christmas this year. Do look at the full pack as there are some great ideas. You may also have your own thoughts!

Here are a selection of ideas and some suggestions of how you could make them work for you.

## Christmas Trails

Set up a series of displays and invite your community to follow the trail. You could work with other churches in your area (both other Methodist churches and ecumenical friends) to put together an outdoor trail across several sites.

For example, one church's grounds might host Mary and Joseph and donkey on their way to Bethlehem; one might host the shepherds and their sheep; another might host the wise men following a star. The last church in the trail could have a stable with all the characters.

Variations might include:

- Sheep trail- challenge people to spot a certain number of sheep!
- Follow the star(s)!
- Shop window advent displays
- Christmas tree displays with different themes (e.g. each tree with decorations representing a different carol)



## Knitted Angels

A few years ago Clifton Methodist decorated their community with knitted angels. You can find ideas for how to do something similar and knitting, crochet and sewing patterns at [www.christmasangel.net/](http://www.christmasangel.net/)

- You could combine this with the trails idea and make an angel trail leading to your displays!
- Or you could leave the angels somewhere with an invitation for people to take them home.
- Or deliver them as gifts to care homes or those who are alone to show they are remembered and cared for.



## Carol services and worship

For many churches carol services attract more visitors than any other service. We are also finding that our online services are attracting people who may not have been regular attenders in the past. Start thinking early how you can prepare for this.

### Carols and music

At time of writing (late September) we are allowed to use church buildings to record singing by a small group for use in online worship. Could you get some volunteers to record carols to use in your services? (Please note that there is guidance on how to do this safely- contact Lois or Angie for help). Using your own recordings means the performance is not copyrighted so you are able to use this online with only the usual streaming licences to cover the music and words.

If you aren't able to do this, try asking other churches nearby if they have made any recordings that they would be happy for you to use.

### Christingle/ All Age Worship

The Children, Youth & Families pack contains ideas for Christingles and various Christmas crafts. Could you send out a craft pack of ideas and resources to families in your church? Or offer an online family-friendly service to uniformed groups that use your building?



## In-person services

- Current guidance still prohibits congregational singing, this applies both inside and outside. However small groups are allowed to sing to lead worship (with precautions).
- If you are having a Christmas service in your building, make sure you consider what you will do if unexpected guests arrive. We want to be welcoming but we need to keep people safe, and social distancing will mean there is not as much space as usual. If you are putting up posters or other advertising, make it clear that people will need to book- and how to book- and to wear masks (unless they are exempt). What alternatives could you offer rather than simply turning people away (e.g. a link to an online service, booking for another service?)
- Make sure people know what to expect from a service, rather than turning up expecting to sing and being disappointed.

## Adopt a neighbour

Many people will be worried about being alone this Christmas, or about not being able to visit family. Ask members of your congregation to volunteer to 'adopt' a neighbour, or if they would like to be adopted. You'll need a co-ordinator to keep two lists, one of adopters and one of adoptees, and to match people up.

Then, the adopters can think about how- within government rules- they can help make Christmas special for their adoptee. Here's some ideas:

- Phone them on Christmas day to make sure they have someone to talk to.
- Offer to help them set up zoom or skype so they can talk to family.
- Take them a card and a present.
- Go and sing carols outside their house.
- Take them a piece of Christmas cake or some mince pies.
- Invite them for a meal (if circumstances and rules allow) or offer to take a plate round.

You could extend this by asking members of community groups who use your building if they would like to be involved.

## Other suggestions

- You could deliver cards to your community which include a message from the Church and details of where to find your services online, or of what you are doing locally. Include contact details in case people want to contact you- rather than include an individual's contact details, you could create an email address for your church with a free email service. You can get flyers or business cards printed quite cheaply online e.g. [www.vistaprint.co.uk](http://www.vistaprint.co.uk) or you can use free apps such as [www.canva.com](http://www.canva.com) to design your cards using their templates.
- Encourage church members to donate, if they are able, to local foodbanks to help those who will be struggling financially at Christmas. Other local and national charities often run Christmas schemes to donate presents to children who wouldn't otherwise get any, or to help those who are homeless. Keep an eye out in local media.
- Equally, you may be aware of people in your own congregation who are struggling financially. If appropriate, you could refer them to one of these schemes or arrange for help in other ways.