

Inviting baptism families to church at Christmas

Christmas is one of the loveliest times to visit a church, and a great time for reconnecting with baptism families. Many churches will have special services for children and families, such as christingles, carol services, nativity services, and more, so there are lots of opportunities to invite families to get involved.

Your local church may well have lots of things to see and do over Christmas – great for helping children understand the meaning behind all the food and gifts, while having some fun too.

Christingle

Christingle services are visual and provide lots of scope to get involved so are really popular with families. Christingle uses a special symbol, a decorated orange, to explore the story of God's love for the world at Christmas.

- The orange represents the world.
- Fruits or sweets which are pinned to the orange represent God's creation and the blessings of the seasons.
- The candle embedded in the orange represents Jesus, the light of the world bringing hope to those in darkness.
- The red ribbon round the orange represents the love of God and the blood of Jesus.

Crib service

Most churches also do a service for children and families based on the Christmas story. In some churches this is done using puppets or by gradually bringing the nativity set figures to the crib and arranging them around the manger.

In other churches everyone is invited to dress up and act it out, singing favourite carols to help tell the story. This is a great and fun way for families and children to get involved in a meaningful way, and it doesn't matter if there ten people all dressed as Mary!

Carol services

We hear Carols so often in the shops and on the radio that they're like a soundtrack for December. But for many people would recognise that its really special to hear them in church as part of the telling of the Christmas story. Sometimes the words are prayers for ourselves or for the world we live in, like these from 'Away in a manger':

“Be near me, Lord Jesus, I ask thee to stay close by me for ever, and love me, I pray.”

Services and events for everyone

- Nine Lessons and Carols or Christmas Morning.

Other services and events

- **Space for rest and remembering** - Think about providing space for people to come and just be quiet, or to remember people who have died. The joy of Christmas can seem very far away, especially if the first Christmas without that person.
- **Christmas fetes and events** - Many churches will hold extra social or fundraising events in the run-up to Christmas, which can be a great place to invite other people from the local community keen to pick up some last-minute hand-made gifts and produce. Some churches also hold special activities for children, with crafts and singing.
- **Festivals** - Think about holding a themed festival in the lead up to Christmas. This might be a ‘Christmas tree festival’ or a ‘Nativity set festival’, something that gives local community groups the chance to get involved in decorating the church, and for everyone to come and enjoy seeing the church ‘decked out’ ready for Christmas.

The timing of services and the type of service can make a real difference to how easy it feels to bring small children to church, and many Christmas services are particularly family-friendly. So Christmas is a great time to reconnect with baptism families and others.