Advent & Christmas 2020

ideas & resources
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contents</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>page 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Services</td>
<td>page 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Videos</td>
<td>page 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activities</td>
<td>page 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final note</td>
<td>page 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Session outline</td>
<td>page 9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
We are all seeking ways to create new memories and make this Christmas special, despite it seeming to be very different this year.

As we try to raise expectations and encourage families to build on existing traditions, while creatively doing something new, we can think carefully how we will tell the Christmas story this year.

You could show a video version of the Christmas story, from the list of examples on page 5. Think which one would suit the people in your community. Ask them to think about how they could tell the story themselves in their own way. When people are involved they gain so much more and create those significant memories that last.

Some might be happy to be filmed outside their house dressed up and/or telling part of the Nativity story; scene one at one house, scene two next door, scene three down the road, and so on. Some young people might be able to tell the story digitally or with stop-motion animation!

Some might want to make the story in a craft way which can be photographed and shared.

Some families might be able to share a carol and share their singing/music.

Some churches might want to film the Christmas story travelling around their local area. People will enjoy recognising local landmarks.

Some groups might want to discuss and share their thoughts and ideas after watching a video together. This can open-up conversations about the significance for individuals of Jesus’s birth.

Some churches might decide to ask families to decorate a window with something from the Christmas story. Think how you can then share this more widely with others in your community.

Some churches/communities may want to all put a star up at the same time.

Please share your ideas with others and let’s make this Christmas really special.
Services

Each year churches host a variety of services over Advent and Christmas. The shape of those services will probably look different this year, whether you hold them physically or digitally. Thankfully, there are a range of resources available to help you explore the possibilities.

Christingle
The Children’s Society have produced a guide to help churches run a Christingle service online.

Crib
A colleague in the Diocese of St Albans has put together this guide on how to run a Crib service over Zoom, with three PowerPoint presentations and some Closing Prayers (you can choose your own carols).
https://stalbanscme.com/2020/09/22/crib-service-on-zoom/

Nativity
St George’s Church in Leeds, one of the Diocese’s resourcing churches, have recorded ‘Mr Emporium’s Gift Shop’, an interactive Nativity for families, complete with resources, that your church can use too. Find out more and contact them via https://stgs.org.uk/nativity.
If you would like to plan your own Nativity service but are not quite sure how, BuildingFaith have suggestions for how you might be able to record one, or even hold it outside!
https://buildfaith.org/christmas-pageants-2020/

Carols
If your church are unable to hold services at all this Christmas, you might like to direct people to this self-directed online service hosted by WhyChristmas.
https://www.whychristmas.com/carolservice/
Videos can be used to introduce a story, tell a story again or help explore a story. Sometimes they are used as a stand-alone resource, while in other settings they are used to start a discussion. The ‘how to use’ question is every bit as important as the ‘what to use’. There are hundreds of videos out there, but we have listed a few we like here:

**Story-telling**
- Each year the Bible Society produce an animated version of the Christmas story. This year’s video is 'It Begins in Bethelehem', which you can find here: [https://youtu.be/D06k9vulAVQ](https://youtu.be/D06k9vulAVQ).
- HOPEtogether have made a stop-motion video for this year, using Happyland figures. You can find their offering here: [https://youtu.be/6a4pxLGNDy8](https://youtu.be/6a4pxLGNDy8).
- It doesn’t have to be animated or brand new to be engaging. A church in New Zealand have made Nativity videos with the help of their children ([https://youtu.be/kWq60oyrHvQ](https://youtu.be/kWq60oyrHvQ)), while a church in the USA had the adults acting out the children’s narration ([https://youtu.be/suowe2czxcA](https://youtu.be/suowe2czxcA)).

**Exploration**
- This animated video from J John tells the Christmas story in the light of Eden, God’s promise and the history of God’s people: [https://youtu.be/Dbp24wZQa3Y](https://youtu.be/Dbp24wZQa3Y).
- Fusion produced ‘re-rap Christmas’, three videos exploring the story from the perspectives of the shepherds, Mary, and the wise men. [https://youtu.be/cQNMtoMC9O1](https://youtu.be/cQNMtoMC9O1).
- If people are familiar with the Christmas story, then you can spend more time focusing on the significance of the story, like this spoken word piece: [https://youtu.be/0jRILcUezmM](https://youtu.be/0jRILcUezmM).

**Do it yourself**
- Making your own Christmas video can be a way of having something tailored to your exact needs, but also an activity in its own right, a way of involving people from your church and community. See more about this in our section on Activities.
Activities

Whether you are leading something in a service, running a group for children or young people, or offering resources for families to use at home, there are a range of activities you can do. They are arranged in an approximate order of activities led/coordinated at a church level to activities led/coordinated at a household level.

Make a video
Whether you don’t like any of the Nativity Christmas videos you’ve seen, or they have inspired you to try your own, making a video can be a lot of fun, and a great way of involving a large number of people in your Christmas services and helping them explore the story. The simplest option is for people to record themselves reading Bible verses which one person then stitches together, but you can also send out scripts and/or costumes—or leave people to devise their own! It doesn’t have to be the Christmas story either; a series of people explaining why Christmas matters to them can be really powerful.

Advent/Nativity Trails
By coordinating with other households, you can create a series of decorations for people to see as they walk around the local area. From images in windows to stuffed figures outside, this collection of scenes can be augmented with a map that show people where to go to find them all/see the next in the series. You can find one example on the third page of this document produced by the Diocese of Bath & Wells: https://www.bathandwells.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/12-Ideas-for-Advent-Christmas-2020.pdf

Rhythm of Life
The Children, Young People and Families Team have produced an Advent resource to help families engage with the Diocese of Leeds’ new Rhythm of Life initiative. A series of videos and challenges, these can be accessed directly online or downloaded for printing off at home. https://learning.leeds.anglican.org/rol-families/
**Messy Church**
The team at Messy Church have produced a session for people to hold a meeting at home. It includes all of the components of a Messy Church service (minus the gathering bit); ideas for activities, celebration and food, as well as a prayer.
https://www.messychurch.org.uk/resource/messy-church-home-messy-christmas

**Outdoor Christmas**
Friends at Blackburn Diocese have produced a series of activities for families to explore, which are based partly or entirely outside. This depends on the weather, but if people are getting tired of being cooped up then this is a great way to engage with God outdoors.
https://www.bdeducation.org.uk/product/outdoor-christmas/

**Bible Chat Mat**
The Go Team in Bath & Wells have produced a series of Bible Chat Mats, a sheet that encourages doodling and colouring while people explore and respond to a story. There are Mats for many stories (with more on the way), and Christmas is one of the stories covered.

**Nativity Cut-out**
This three-page, printable resource is a colouring and cutting activity that provides a time and space for thinking about the Christmas story and utilising your creative abilities!
We hope the resources collated here are helpful as you plan your Advent and Christmas events. There are some important things to bear in mind as you go:

Guidelines for what you can and cannot do have changed multiple times this year. Whatever you do, please make sure that you are respectful of government guidance/legal requirements. If distributing resources, please follow safe practices with regard to facemasks, hand sanitiser, etc.

If you are using videos or photos of young people, make sure you have consent to use the footage/images (and that that consent specifies where and/or how you will use them). You will also need consent if you are running online sessions with children or young people without a parent/guardian present.

Do what you can, but don’t worry about what you can’t. Wherever possible, involve others in developing plans—that way you can share the thinking and the doing, rather than it all relying on one person. However, this is God’s work that you are doing, not yours. Your earnest offering is what matters, and God will use that in whatever way is right. Making people feel known and loved is more important than everything being shiny.

The Diocese of Leeds employs a Children, Young People and Families Team to support churches and people in their ministry. If you need advice or ideas, please get in touch with us—it’s what we’re paid to do! Our individual details are at https://www.leeds.anglican.org/children-youth/team, but you can E-mail us all at childrenyouth@leeds.anglican.org.

Merry Christmas!
If you have never run a session before and are trying to work out where to start, this outline is designed to help you. If you need any ideas or further assistance, contact us at childrenyouth@leeds.anglican.org.

Welcome
Greet people as they enter your session. Give a little leeway for latecomers—this isn’t a business meeting and families can have chaotic timekeeping sometimes. You might want to include a short prayer too.

Icebreaker
A quick game or quiz to help people settle in. Bonus points if it links with the story/theme.

Story/theme
Unpack the story/theme you will be looking at. This could involve a short talk, a video, people reading out a passage.

Activity
The activity is to help people explore the story/theme, working out its meaning and implications. This could take the form of a conversation, a game, an activity, a challenge or a prayer, to name but a few examples. A time for feedback at the end, where people share what they’ve discussed/made/decided can be helpful.

Challenge
Why did the story/theme matter? This is a chance for a recap of that, and to consider what the personal learning points are.

Prayer
Closing prayers can be a time where many people pray, one person prays with a time of response, or just a short blessing. Use your relationship with/knowledge of those present to decide what seems most appropriate.