

A COVID CHRISTMAS?

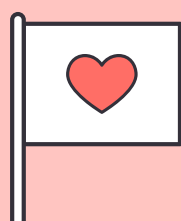
5 THINGS TO THINK ABOUT NOW

A Christmas like no other

How can churches 'do' Christmas with children and families during a pandemic? We may not be able to meet in church at all, and if we are, there won't be busy Crib Services and Christingles. Number restrictions, pre-booking and password-protected Zoom links mean that church is having to operate like a members-only club instead of offering open-door hospitality. Church families who have drifted away during lockdown may not come back.

Families who come once a year may not come at all. How can our churches nurture the families we know this Christmas? How can we reach out and share the love of Christ and the joy of His birth with families in our socially-distanced communities?

Here are some initial thoughts and examples to help your planning: you can find many more on the [Diocesan website](#). If you would like to talk through any ideas, please contact Claire Benton-Evans: youthandchildren@dioceseofedinburgh.org



Stay local

Learn from lockdown about projects that can bring people together:

- A trail of Nativity scenes in windows, for children to follow
- Painted stones - [Baby Jesus Rocks!](#)
- [Knitted Angels](#)
- The Christmas story retold as a slideshow of photos taken in your local area



Christmas online

The pros and cons of online worship are overleaf, but consider the possibilities:

- Do something familiar in a different way: if you have a tried and trusted Nativity Service format, can you think creatively about how to share it online?
- Let go of something that you've "always done" at Christmas and try something new online! This year is a first time for us all



Faith at home

Fill party bags with tempting resources. Share them safely in your town centre and deliver them to your church families. Bags could include:

- [25 Ways To be Thankful in Advent](#) - a free downloadable calendar
- Prayer stars - to write on and add to the family Christmas tree
- [At-home Christingles](#)



The personal touch

Head offline to offer tangible gifts and practical outreach:

- Doorstep drops of Christmas treats
- Care packages
- Christmas cards (hand-made by children for elderly people)
- [Food Bank Advent Calendars](#)
- Pray for your community, handing out prayer request cards to homes and local shops

Two key questions to ask about Christmas:

How can this church be a blessing to our community?

How can this church bless your family?

PROS AND CONS

FOUR WAYS OF BEING CHURCH DURING A COVID CHRISTMAS

WORSHIP ON ZOOM

Unlimited numbers; participants can feel a visible part of the church family; screen-sharing brings visual resources up close

Excludes those who struggle with digital access; excludes visitors because Zoom details can't be shared publicly; singing together or joining in the responses causes audio glitches

WORSHIP IN PERSON

Being physically present and actively involved; maintaining a connection with the church family and place of worship

Very limited numbers; the elderly & vulnerable may self-exclude; restrictions on singing, physical contact & sharing food may be felt more keenly at Christmas

WORSHIP ON FACEBOOK/YOUTUBE

Unlimited numbers & open access to all; can provide quality music; service can be pre-recorded; participants can interact through comments

Excludes those who struggle with digital access; a more passive viewing experience; can be time-consuming to film and requires someone with video-editing skills

PRACTICAL OUTREACH*

Reaches the church family and the wider community; can be a strong act of witness. Eye-catching projects can get a lot of attention

Can be a time-consuming project to plan and co-ordinate: needs committed people, plus resources

*See Stay Local and The Personal Touch, overleaf, for examples

In reality, many churches will choose to mix and match different approaches. Just as schools have offered "blended learning", so there is an opportunity for "blended worship". For example:

At-home Christingle: bags delivered/handed out locally, containing a DIY Christingle and a flyer with details of a pre-recorded, open-access service

Crib Service: Leaders pre-record Nativity scenes with their own children and hold a Crib Service on Zoom. Encourage dressing-up!

For more ideas, check out the [Covid Christmas resources](#) on the Diocesan website.