

# MAKING THE MOST OF ADVENT AND CHRISTMAS

## CHRISTMAS ISN'T CANCELLED!

With so many things not able to happen it is a great time for us to see if we can offer some creative ways to help people know the 'comfort and joy' that is at the heart of the Christmas story. Thinking about caring acts and creative events is a way of ensuring we both show and share the story of Emmanuel, God with us.

It is estimated that the Church of England has 50,000 people who are now part of our online fringe, many of whom have been invited to attend by a church goer. It seems Christians have found it easier to invite people along to things during lockdown than normal, so let's make the most of this by encouraging people to continue to invite through the Christmas season as well, and by ensuring we have a suitable range of online and physical gathered events to invite them to.

Below are some reflections on how we might best approach this. Online we are collating ideas and resources on making the most of Advent and Christmas. Why not [take a look](#) and add your own ideas and resources to help others make the most of this season.

## PAUSE

Before diving into the details of what we might do, it is good to pause for a few minutes and think carefully about what we could do. Here are a few ideas.

- Energy levels aren't high in many places, and as we enter the next phase of lockdown over the winter

months we need to be realistic about the art of the possible (see our [Leading with Hope](#) webinar for more on this). So rather than look at the ideas below and on the Padlet board and think of what you would like to do, be realistic and think about what it might be possible to do. And if the honest answer is none of them, that is fine.

- Try to ensure that it doesn't depend on just you. Draw one or two other people into your 'Christmas planning team' so that you can not only share ideas and but also the workload.
- Be careful not to be so caught up with the safety challenges of physically gathered Christmas events that you miss out on the opportunity to engage people with something wonderfully creative online. Ideally a hybrid Christmas will be a good way to go, some things done physically gathered, some online.
- With all the other challenges around, perhaps the wisest way forward is not to try and do too much, but to do one thing (or two) and do it really well. Whereas in the past we may have had multiple Christmas events for all sorts of different groups, maybe this is the year to focus on just one thing.



- People know this Christmas is going to be different. So it is a good time for us to experiment, to try some new things, to do less. Through that process we may well discover new ways of celebrating Christmas we will want to carry forward into the years to come.
- Simple things can make a big difference. A creative post on your community Facebook group, a lovely poster outside your church building, a Christmas card through each homes' door. Don't think it has to be 'big' or newsworthy.
- Every community has its vulnerable, lonely and poor. Who are they this year and how can we ensure we don't miss connecting and caring for them?

With these thoughts in mind, prayerfully consider the two categories of caring acts and creative events below, and discern which God might be nudging you as a church to invest in.

### CARING ACTS

These build on the remarkable way the Church has provided for those in need during the lockdown.

- What if families who haven't yet 'bubbled' did so with a person living on their own and not already in a bubble who is on their street/in their community and invited them in to celebrate with them?
- What if we delivered Christmas food parcels/hampers to those who won't be able to afford to celebrate?
- What if we created a place of memorial where we gathered the names of everyone in our community who has died from COVID, and invited loved ones to come and light candles and receive a

comforting word? (see the Church of England resources on remembering).

- What if we used the Next Door social media App to connect with our local streets to discover what the needs are and offered to help?

### CREATIVE EVENTS

These build on the wonderful way the Church has pivoted to online services and now to a hybrid reality. One of the great gifts of going online is accessibility, and that is perhaps something we can use creatively this Advent and Christmas to engage with a greater number of people and a wider audience than normal.

Of course digital poverty and technical challenges mean not everyone can access online (and some of the suggestions on the Padlet board are for them), but so many have accessed events and services who haven't previously had any connection with church or have been limited in their access due to health or disability it would be good to build on that.

### IDEAS AND RESOURCES

There are lots of creative suggestions on the [Padlet board](#), but often other people's ideas are best used as a platform from which to create your own idea. Do share whatever you come up with on the Padlet board. It may well be a platform for someone else.

The Church of England is also producing a wide variety of resources for Comfort



and Joy, which you can find [here](#), including some webinars they are running to explain more.

**LEAD ON**

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