

Planning for Advent, Christmas and Epiphany

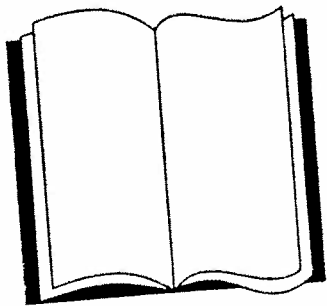
Guidelines for peaceful, Christ-focused celebrations

- Whenever possible, plan special events at already established time periods at church.
- Depending on the size of your congregation, limit the number of Christmastide activities to the one or ones that mean most to your members.
- Consider a special Epiphany program or event after Christmas when schedules are less hectic and people may be more likely to reflect on the true meaning of the season.
- If you are not able to provide special programs, use the church bulletin to list special community programs or Christ-centered television programs. Suggest ways that individuals and families might become involved in service to others.



Ideas for Advent

- Host an Advent Festival. Invite people to make an Advent wreath. Hand out devotional booklets for daily use after lighting the Advent candles. Participants might also make an Advent calendar or a banner for your worship area or their home.
- Learn a new Advent hymn each Sunday during Advent.
- Host a hymn sing and sing a variety of Advent hymns and Christmas carols.
- Use the "Time with Children" during worship to tell about Advent customs.
- If you have a church library, display Christmas books in a visible place.
- Have a book fair. Many religious bookstores will lend books on consignment for sale.



- Have a simple church dinner and a program about celebrating an alternative Christmas.
- Create a display of Christmas Service Projects. Encourage families or individuals to choose one or two projects to do during the season.
- Plan a worship service that will provide an extended time for quiet personal reflection and prayer, encouraging each person to prepare individually for celebrating Christ's birth.
- Have a gift-making workshop where people can make inexpensive and special gifts for others.



Ideas for Christmastide and Epiphany

- Encourage people to do a "random act of kindness" on each of the twelve days of Christmas.
- Use the church newsletter or worship bulletin to suggest a specific prayer concern for each of the twelve days of Christmas.
- Gather people to make Yule Logs to use during the twelve days of Christmas.
- Encourage families or individuals to help at a food bank or soup kitchen. (Many kitchens provide Christmas or New Year's dinner.)
- Sponsor a trip to an art museum to see how the birth of Christ has been portrayed in art.
- Encourage individuals or families to plan some time daily for really listening to Christmas tapes or CDs.
- Prepare a program and present it to residents of a nursing home, group home, or prison. People in these settings are often forgotten after Christmas.
- Dedicate one evening or a Saturday morning toward the end of Christmastide to undecorate the church.
- Host a New Year's Eve dinner. Invite new Canadians who may be very lonely in this season.
- Hold a potluck dinner. Ask family or individuals to come prepared to tell one story about their most meaningful Christmas.
- Take advantage of school holidays. Hold a short Winter Vacation Bible School or Day Camp.
- Plan a gathering of university students who are home for the holidays.



(Adapted from Planning for Advent/Christmas/Epiphany, Tom Malone, Alert Magazine)