



CHRISTMAS IDEAS

FOR KIDS + CHURCHES

IT'S THE CRAZY SEASON!

It's become known as the crazy season. The season of stress, overfilled malls, and maxed out credit cards; of fat men in red suits, of Christmas trees and a few overplayed jingles. Living in the Southern hemisphere where it is Summer with 30 degree heat, it seems crazy to be singing songs about dashing through the snow or eating the traditional mince pies when they're not actually made of mince. It seems crazy to just be celebrating Christmas like everyone else when we don't know what Christmas is really about.

So, what is Christmas?

Christmas is about family, it's about cherishing our God in heaven who is crazy about you and !! **God loved the world so much that He, sent, He gave as a gift to humanity His one and only Son...** so that we might follow Jesus' example and be reunited with our heavenly father. It's the crazy season. It's also the time when people smile at you, in the street, your grocery checkout lady looks you in the eye and for a few short weeks people's worlds appear to expand, before rapidly shrinking back down to size in time for the Boxing Day sales.

Christmas, while heavily commercialized, **is a fantastic opportunity to start a conversation with your kids about true love and what it really means.** That crazy love that God the father has for all of us His children.

The Discipleship Ministry Team - Children
South Pacific Division

THIS IS HOW MUCH
GOD LOVED THE
WORLD





HISTORICAL FACTS ABOUT CHRISTMAS

Christmas is the date set aside by the 'world' for the celebration of the birth of Jesus Christ. Jesus was not born on December 25th this date was chosen to coincide with a Roman celebration. These celebrations came just after the winter solstice in the northern hemisphere and were celebrated to make known that winter is not forever.

Facts about the origins:

- * Christmas actually comes from the term the "Mass of Christ". It was however shortened to "Christ Mass". Sometimes the shorter version "Xmas" is also used.
- * Boxing Day is traditionally a day of giving to the less fortunate and charitable institutions in the form of money and gifts. Historically it was the custom for tradesmen to collect their Christmas boxes (gifts) in return for their good and reliable service throughout the year on Boxing Day.
- * The tradition of Santa Claus came from the legend of St Nicholas

Find out more here:

<http://www.stnicholascenter.org/pages/who-is-st-nicholas/>

<http://www.coca-colacompany.com/stories/coke-lore-santa-claus>

CHRISTMAS IDEAS



Kids will naturally have questions about Christmas and how God fits into this picture. With all of the traditions and love; of looking past yourself and finding joy in giving to others it is important that our kids realise that the **deaths and births, joys and heartaches associated with living don't stop at Christmas.** And for the majority of our communities the only hope this world has, the only hope this worlds needs will be represented by a nativity scene standing in their front yard, wrapped up in Christmas lights hoping that one day they will notice.

Christmas is a fantastic opportunity to start a conversation with your kids about true love, God's gift to us and what it really looks like in our lives. **Try to get intergenerational, build authentic relationships and make a few noteworthy memories together as a family or as a church.**

To help you get started think about:



Being intentional

We are so busy these days that we miss the important moments unless we schedule them in. Take the time this week to sit down with your family and write out two simple ways my family is going to tune into God and each other this holiday season. Now print out a calendar for the month and write down two or more dates/times for your family to DO these things.



Starting new & old traditions

Christmas is the time of traditions and love; of looking past yourself and finding joy in giving it to others. There are so many incredible traditions associated with Christmas . As a family get your kids involved in participating in old and creating new family Christmas traditions.

Do a little research on ideas (read this booklet) then sit down with your kids and ask what they would like to do. The reality is that most kids have an opinion and are so excited when they are asked to share it. Once ideas have been shared agree on 1-5 that you would like to do this year and schedule them in.

Church community service ideas:

Have the kids in the Sabbath school classes create something to give to all the adults in church or to their neighbours to tell them that they love them and appreciate them. For example:



Big picnic

A before Christmas plan a big church picnic. Invite the community. Have activities (scavenger hunts, photo booth, sports, crafts etc.). Use this a opportunity to get to know the people in your neighborhood.



Donation drive

Many different organizations are looking for donations the year round. Simple things like:

- Clothes,blankets to your local women's/men's shelter
- Blankets to the animal shelter
- Canned food to the food kitchen or international aid agency
- Money to aid agencies such as ADRA

<https://www.adra.org.au/>



Operation Christmas child

Fill one or more shoeboxes with things for a child in need.

Ideas here <https://www.samaritanspurse.org.au/what-we-do/operation-christmas-child/>



Run an old movie fundraiser:

Christmas comes with a host of old classic movies perfect for watching together as a church family. Organise to have a church BBQ one Sabbath evening. Have a closing Sabbath worship and then show an old movie in the church hall. Consider selling tickets to see the movie and donating the money to charity. Some good old Christmas movies include:

- White Christmas
- Holiday Inn
- Christmas on 34th street
- Going my way
- Polar express

Before showing any movie in a church setting we suggest previewing it! **A good rating website is www.kids-in-mind.com**

Ideas here http://www.thegirlcreative.com/family-movie-night-printable-tickets/#_a5y_p=2398160
<http://www.minted.com/julep/2014/07/01/printable-popcorn-boxes/>
<http://www.yellowblissroad.com/christmas-movie-night-free-printable/>



Thankfulness tree:

This is a fun idea for in the foyer or main auditorium of your church. It's an intergenerational activity that you can do together as a congregation (possibly as a part of the welcome). For this you will need a printer, pens, paper, scissors, string, branches, a pot or vase and white paint.

How To: Gather large branches and if you have time spray-paint them white (may require two coats). Stick them together in a plant pot of large vase so they stand up. Place this in the church foyer or auditorium. Decorate the tree with a few Christmas ornaments and pre-hung stars (can make 3D or 2D stars or boxes). Cut out as many hearts as you need for one or two, for each member of your congregation, thread sewing cotton or any other string through the hearts.

On Sabbath have a child or adult introduce the activity (have children hand out the stars/tags at the door or when everyone is seated) have each member in the church write on the heart one thing they love about Jesus, or the church, or that they are thankful for this week. Then have everyone come and hang their stars on the tree.

Ideas here <http://look-what-i-made.com/2014/12/19/minimal-christmas-decoration/>
<https://liagriffith.com/make-a-thankful-tree-for-your-celebration-centerpiece/>
<http://strawberry-chic.blogspot.com.au/2011/11/diy-tuesday-holiday-gold-stars.html>
<https://jonesdesigncompany.com/holiday/thankfulness/>



Gifts and craft's for kids to create for others:

Have the kids in the Sabbath school classes create something to give to all the adults in church or to their neighbours to tell them that they love them and appreciate them. For example:



Woven heart filled with chocolate

This is a Danish Christmas tradition. Print and cut out the heart template (link below) and weave together. Once finished fill with something special and include a note.

Instructions [http://www.craftster.org/forum/index.php%3Ftopic=363 100.0](http://www.craftster.org/forum/index.php%3Ftopic=363%3F100.0)



Printed message/Bible verse with gift attached

Print a little card (the size of a business card) and attach a chocolate, packaged cookie, candy or anything else that is economical and message appropriate.

Ideas here <http://www.homemade-gifts-made-easy.com/gift-bag-template.html>
<http://www.yellowblissroad.com/free-printable-gift-tags-printables-blog-hop/>
<http://greetingsfromthegrotto.blogspot.com.au/2011/01/better-late-than-never-christmas-post.html>



Printed message/Bible verse with gift attached

Print a little card (the size of a business card) and attach a chocolate, packaged cookie, candy or anything else that is economical and message appropriate.

Ideas here <http://alldays.com/2013/01/so-loved-valentines-day-cards-free-printable.html>
<http://simpleasthatblog.com/2015/01/eos-lip-balm-valentine-candies-printable-tags.html>



The giving plate:

Similar to the previous idea but no-food to avoid allergies etc.

Ideas here <http://www.theidearoom.net/2015/01/50-diy-kids-classroom-valentines-day-ideas.html>
<http://lisastorms.typepad.com/lisa-storms/2013/02/printable-arrow-valentines.html>



Secret love messages from Jesus

Print out messages from Jesus and hide them inside this fortune cookie like origami. Place them in baskets for kids to hand out or take home.

Ideas here <http://bunchesandbits.blogspot.com.au/2010/02/fortune-cookie-class-valentines.html>



Looking for the letter J?
Try looking upside-down



The Candy Cane Gospel:

According to folklore, the Christmas candy was created by a Christian candymaker in the 18th century when Christianity was banned from public forum in certain areas of Europe. The candymaker prayed to find a way to share the true meaning of Christmas with others and was given the inspiration to create the Candy Cane as a tool to share the Gospel.

How to Share the Gospel Using a Candy Cane:

White Candy – A sweet symbol of the holiness and purity of our sinless Savior (2 Corinthians 5:31, 1 John 1:7) and a celebration that through His sacrifice our sins were washed away, making us white as snow (Isaiah 53:5).

Red Stripes – A visible reminder that by the shedding of Christ's blood and His death on the cross we were rescued from our sins and given eternal life. (Ephesians 1:7 & 2:8, Revelation 1:5, John 3:16, Luke 22:20).

Shepherd's Staff – Jesus is the Good Shepherd and His sheep will hear His voice and follow Him. (Psalm 23:1, John 10:11, John 10:27-30, Isaiah 40:11)

Letter J – When the candy cane is turned upside down, it looks like a "J" representing the name of the baby born in in a stable in Bethlehem: Jesus, which means Savior (Matthew 1:21, John 3:17).

Idea from <http://arabahjoy.com/share-the-gospel-using-candy-cane/www.lucianaborges.squarespace.com>

Family ideas:

Kids have a great ability to break down people's defences and to open lines of communication. The command to love your neighbours is one command of God that can be easier to obey with your kids than without. This season look for ways to involve your kids in getting to know your neighbour. Try an idea from the list, or better yet come up with your own!



Kindness elves

Create a new tradition for Christmas with the Kindness Elves, an alternative to the popular Elf on the Shelf idea, and place the focus instead on positive, character-building activities for kids. Teaching love, kindness and gratitude with a hope to raise kids who move away from the "entitlement" attitude which pervades our modern generation. Visit here to read about the tradition

Ideas here <http://theimaginationtree.com/2013/11/alternative-elf-on-shelf-tradition-kindness-elf-kindness-elves.html>



Happiness jar

As a family start a happiness jar. This is a jar that you keep in a visible location, every time something memorable, happy or exciting happens, write it down and put it in the jar. Next year at Christmas wrap this jar and put it under the tree for family to read and remember the happy moments.

Ideas here <http://www.mommypotamus.com/gratitude-happiness-jar/>:
<http://thespeechroomnews.com/2015/01/diy-slp-happiness-jar.html>

Family giving:

Many people are lonely at Christmas students, elderly, single parents, immigrants and those away from family. A simple way to help lonely people feel seen is to give a gift or even a card.



Mason jar gifts

- <http://crazylittleprojects.com/2014/10/cookies-jar-recipes-chocolate-peppermint-double-chocolate-toffee.html>
- <http://simpleasthatblog.com/2015/12/simple-mason-jar-gifts-with-printable-tags.html>
- <http://lml.d.org/2015/12/18/hot-chocolate-mix/>



Comfort kit

- <http://prettyprovidence.com/slippers-gift-idea/>



Sundae in a box

- <http://smashedpeasandcarrots.com/ice-cream-sundae-in-a-box-gift-idea/>
- <http://makingtheworldcuter.com/2015/09/ice-cream-sundae-gift/>



Ginger bread in a box

- <http://www.anightowlblog.com/2015/11/christmas-morning-coffee-gift-basket.html/>



Family thank you card

- <http://www.anightowlblog.com/2015/11/christmas-morning-coffee-g>
- <http://45walldesign.blogspot.com.au/2012/01/2011-holiday-card.html>



The Giving Plate:

The tradition of the giving plate taps into the joy of giving a gift to be passed on. As a family make a giving plate then give the plate full of baked goods to a friend, family member, church member, neighbor, teacher or co-worker. Once the food is gone, it's time for the gift recipient to pay it forward by passing the giving plate to someone new.

How to make a giving plate:

Step 1 - Purchase a ceramic dinner/serving plate and a few permanent markers from a local homeware store.

Step 2 - Wash the plate and clean with alcohol based cleaner. Print out a pattern or template (see links below) place template face down on the plate and use a pencil to shade over the lettering to transfer the design.

Step 3 - Use an oil-based marker to color in the design. Place the plate in a cold oven then warm to 180 degrees. Bake the plate at 180-degrees for 30 minutes. Turn off the oven and wait until it has completely cooled before removing the plate.

Step 4 - Bake something yummy and gift to someone.

Ideas here <http://build-basic.com/pass-the-love/#WBfPNS19670>

<http://lulubellelaine.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/TheGiving-Plate-Lettering.pdf>



One



Two



Three



Four







Christmas Eve tradition's:

Think back to childhood, what did your family do on Christmas Eve? Every family has a different tradition. Here are a few to consider in addition to reading the nativity story.

Other traditions:



Finger food dinner: have each kid choose one finger-food dish each, like a crackers and cheese tray, quartered sandwiches, chips and dip, brownies, or a fruit tray. Then have them prepare it themselves with help, where needed from the parents.



Christmas Eve box: In some contries it is a tradition for each person to open one gift on Christmas Eve. An alternative to this is to make a Christmas Eve Box. In this large box place a variety of things such as snacks, drink mixes, a storybook or movie, new pajamas or slippers, or a coupon for a Christmas Eve camp-out in the living room.



Christmas Eve campout: What do you get if you combine Christmas eve, reading the nativity story (Luke 2:1-20 or Matthew 1:18-25), caroling with flashlights and a tent constructed from blankets? The Christmas tent tradition!

Example: <http://www.thedatingdivas.com/christmas-campout/>

*christmas
party*

DECEMBER 12, 2015

FOUR O'CLOCK IN THE AFTERNOON

LIVE OAK BEACH

SANTA CRUZ, CA



Christmas dinner extension:

The Christmas season can be very lonely for many people. Research shows that suicide rates are highest during the festive season.

To help give kids a heart for others at Christmas consider including non-members in your family traditions or extending your family for Christmas dinner to include students, single parents, elderly, immigrants and those away from family.



Pancakes & pajamas: A fun way to extend the family for Christmas if you are inviting other family with kids is have a pancakes and pajamas party. Invite the other family over to eat pancakes and enjoy the morning. Perhaps rather than giving presents consider making sharpy mugs.

Example: <http://www.iheartnaptime.net/mug-gift-idea/?pp=1>



Send invitations: Have the kids create/print invitations for those you are wanting to invite to join you for a Christmas tradition or on Christmas day. Make sure to give these out early.



Potluck Christmas: Christmas meals don't need to be fancy or break the bank. If you are extending the family for Christmas dinner consider making it a potluck. Put together a list of food (veggies, salad, savory, dessert, drink) and have each person bring a plate.

