

Why are you talking about Christmas now?

I know we have just finished the summer and many children are now just going back to school, so why talk about Christmas in mid-September? Vital churches are planning now for the Advent and Christmas seasons, which will be very different, in most communities, from previous years. It is going to take more advanced planning to negotiate this season and if we want to reach new people in December, and we need to talk about it now. Unlike Easter, Christmas is still in the culture of our society and people will respond to Christmas activities and engage our churches. But with the strong possibility that church buildings will still be closed or open on a very limited basis, we will have to radically adapt our usual traditions.

Here are some of the things church leaders are talking about and designing for Advent and Christmas:

- A packet that can go to homes filled with family activities and resources for Advent.**
- Recording individual parts of a Christmas Pageant that can be weaved together into an online service to be posted on websites and social media.**
- Planning Christmas Caroling through neighborhoods the church would like to reach (all done with social distancing) or having a few singers on the back of a flat-bed truck and doing a tour of the community.**
- Discerning a local mission project that will impact the community and inviting the neighborhood to help.**
- Recording church members reading the Christmas story for online Advent and Christmas Eve services.**
- Research to see if there will be any virtual Town celebrations this year. There were churches that connected to such events on Memorial Day and the 4th of July.**
- Send a daily devotion by text to everyone who has connected to your online worship services.**
- Inviting musicians from the neighborhood, schools and colleges to play in this season. Again, recordings can be done and used in a variety of ways.**
- A sermon series on the hope of the coming Christ Child. There are so many in our communities that need a hopeful message.**
- An online "Blue Christmas" service for people who are mourning and need a quiet time to reflect.**
- Thanking teachers and school administrators for their creative and challenging work of teaching this fall in very unusual circumstances.**

This is by no means an exhaustive list; the point is that churches will need to be creative to connect with people this Christmas. Start planning now and be prepared to connect many people to the coming of a Child.