

SHARE THE LIGHT

AN IDEA A DAY FOR
ADVENT

Much of 2020 has felt like we're stumbling in the dark. The Covid-19 pandemic has swept around the world with devastating effect – for some it has brought the pain of bereavement, for some the disruption of jobs lost, businesses wrecked and financial hardship, for others mental health issues triggered by the isolation of lockdown. For all of us, it's meant uncertainty about the future, and adjustment to a 'new normal' of social distancing, masks, health checks and huge change to our lives.

When so much has changed, and is uncertain, it's good to know that God's love for us is rock solid and unchanging. And the message of Christmas remains a free gift, full of hope and blessing: good news of great joy for ALL the people. There IS light at the end of the tunnel.

So while your church's Christmas might look rather different this year, Jesus can remain right at the centre. Rather than focus on what you can't do like before, let's take a look at the many ways we can celebrate the birth of Jesus.

We have a great video campaign for you this year plus stacks of ideas you can use to be creative this Christmas off the back of it. Search #ShareTheLight or see cpo.org.uk for more details.

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

Weave it into your daily routine – you can pray sat in your favourite chair, out on a run or walking the kids to school. Pick one or two activities to do with family or your 'bubble' – whatever works for you. It's an ideas bank for you to draw on as you Share the Light this Advent!

Week 1:

Tuesday 1st – Saturday 5th December

Tuesday 1st – PRAYER

Pray for key workers in your communities – hospital staff to school teams, funeral professionals to cleaners, council staff to social workers, counsellors to track and trace teams. If you know any, ask them for specific needs and practical ways to support them (eg hand cream for nurses).

Wednesday 2nd – FAMILY

Family focus – Whether you are a family, live on your own, or with housemates, how can you care for those in your neighbourhood this Christmas, sharing the goodwill, peace and hope that the Christmas story brings? Surprise gifts / give away some toys / litter picking your street / pray walk at your local park/play area as a family or on your own.



Thursday 3rd – SHARE

Stories of light – Share stories on your church website, social media or YouTube channel on where you have found light in 2020, or maybe particularly why Christmas is a time of light for you. Encourage people to film a short (30 seconds to 1 minute) testimony, which you can use on your digital channels. Use the hashtag #ShareTheLight to make sure that we see your videos!

Friday 4th – CELEBRATE

Christmas nostalgia – How about having a virtual tea party on Zoom where participants can share favourite Christmas memories, carols, food and traditions? It could be a good way for older generations to share Christmas celebrations of past years, and for different cultures to bring richness and variety to people's understanding of how the festival is celebrated.

Saturday 5th – ACTION

Acts of kindness – how can you bring the love of God to those in need in your communities? Maybe there are those who are shielding who need some help with shopping, DIY, cleaning or tasks around the house? Or maybe just a phone call or Zoom chat would lift their spirits?

Week 2:

Sunday 6th – Saturday 12th

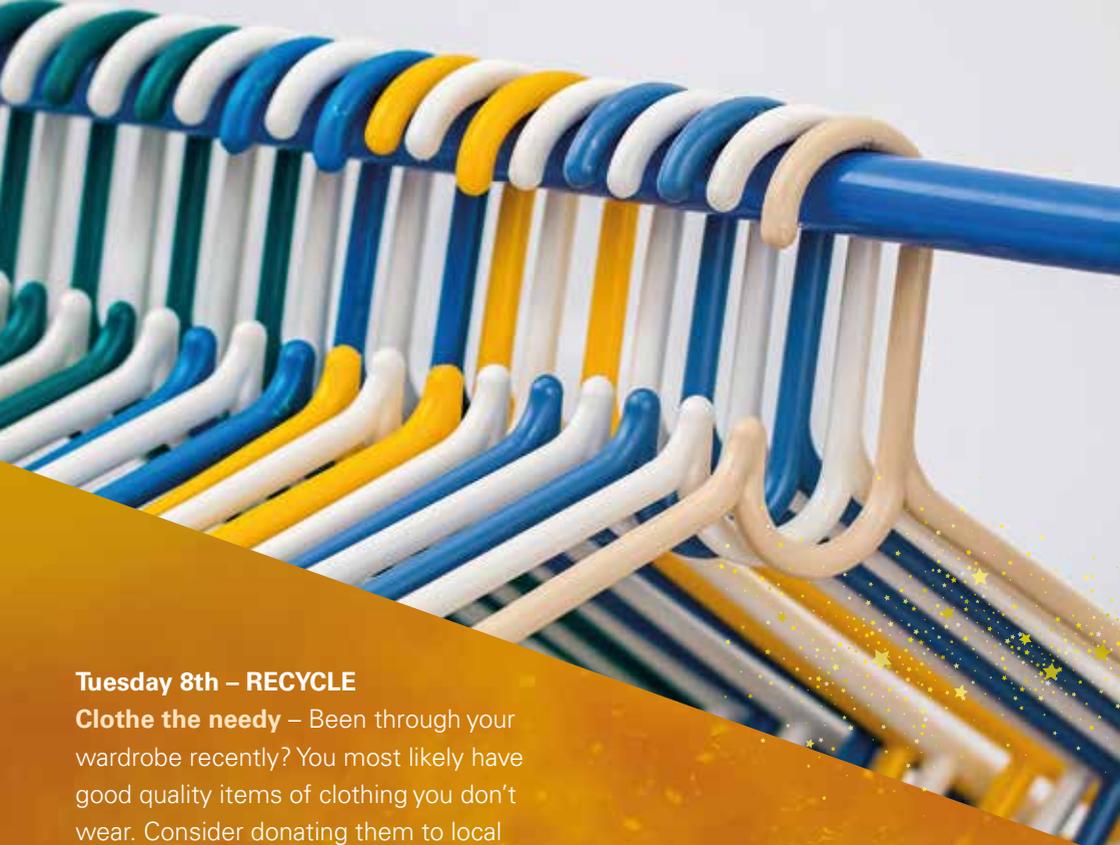
Sunday 6th – PRAYER

Give thanks – for the enduring gifts of Christmas that are freely available to us: the peace, love and hope that the birth of Jesus brings. Pray for those you know in your community who particularly need to hear 'good news of great joy' this Christmas – and ask God how you can be part of the answer to that prayer.

Monday 7th – SHARE

Card the community – With the likelihood that many people will be even more isolated this Christmas, why not send a Christmas card to households you wouldn't normally? Maybe there are people you got to know during lockdown via community initiatives, or elderly neighbours with no family nearby. CPO has plenty to choose from (cpo.org.uk/cards), and it could be a great way to introduce the Share the Light film, too.





Tuesday 8th – RECYCLE

Clothe the needy – Been through your wardrobe recently? You most likely have good quality items of clothing you don't wear. Consider donating them to local charity shops or taking them to recycling centres where they can be reused or the material recycled. Most of us could dispense with 50% of our clothes and shoes without a problem. You could also consider buying pre-loved this Christmas or supporting small businesses, saying goodbye to fast fashion.

Wednesday 9th – FAMILY

Crafty creative – A fun activity for a rainy evening which will keep young children and grandchildren busy is to make your own Nativity scene using lolly sticks. See our Share The Light Advent Activity Box. Lolly sticks are also easily available at pound shops, Hobbycraft, craft outlets and online. If you share any images on social media make sure you use the hashtag #ShareTheLight so we can see your creations!

Thursday 10th – WALK/RUN

Prayer walk/run – if you're a runner or a keen walker, plan to do a prayer run/walk around your community, praying God's blessing on people as you pass them, and praying for God's peace in the households you pass. Church leaders: why not co-ordinate as many as possible to do this in their area at a particular time? If you aren't able to do this grab a map of your local community and pray for each street near you.

Friday 11th – CELEBRATE

Candles together – one alternative to a Christingle service could be to see if families in your church – or household 'bubbles' – were up for singing a carol outside at a set time, around some carols. Front gardens could work well if you have one, or outside your church, suitably distanced, particularly if you are in a location which people pass by.
NB: Please only partake in this activity if you can spread out adequately and abide by social distancing guidelines in your area.

Saturday 12th – ACTION

Press the generosity button – are there local charities who need help, whether Christian initiatives or just community projects that make life better for people? Maybe they need practical items, a financial gift, or the gift of time/volunteering? How can you bring the extravagant generosity of God to them this Christmas?



A collage of images including a laptop with a video call, a green mug, and a star-shaped arrangement of photos.

Week 3:

Sunday 13th – Saturday 19th

Sunday 13th – PRAYER

Unseen heroes – pray for your community's unseen heroes this Christmas: the shop workers and cleaners, council workers and refuse collectors, the postal workers and helpline staff. Pray for those in particularly tough places: prison workers, benefits office staff, social workers and mental health practitioners. Name any you know and ask God how you could be a blessing to them.

Monday 14th – FRIENDS

Friendship focus – seeing some of our friends may prove difficult or impossible this Christmas, so why not take time today to make contact with those you won't get to see, via social media, a phone call – or even an old-fashioned letter? It will be a chance to keep your friendship strong and maybe even share something of the good news of Christmas.

Tuesday 15th – ENVIRONMENT

Cleaning up – is there an area in your neighbourhood that is badly in need of a litter-pick or tidy up, but no-one wants to get involved, or it's low on the local council's priority list? Perhaps an elderly neighbour would appreciate some help in their garden (always ask permission first). Maybe your church could gift some time to do the work and bless the local community? Even a small team giving a few hours can make quite an impact. Salt and light in action.

Wednesday 16th – FAMILY

Crafty creative – make some Christmas decorations you can hang on your tree or even in your front window. Our Share the Light Advent Activity Box includes pieces for an angel decoration that can be coloured in or decorated with glitter. Or you can find similar craft components in your local pound shop, Hobbycraft, craft store or online.

Thursday 17th – REST

Take time out – Christmas can get frantic, and while this year is different, it may still feel stressful. So take time out to go for a walk, sit in quiet with a book, listen to some music, spend time with God, or do whatever you find de-stresses you. God loves us for who we are rather than what we do. Relax in that love and give thanks his blessings are new every day.

Week 4:

Sunday 20th – Friday 25th

Friday 18th – CELEBRATE

Virtual Christingle – even if your church is hosting suitably distanced Christingle services, there will be plenty who can't come or are not confident at gathering with others, so why not hatch plans for a Zoom Christingle, or a stream on YouTube or similar. Words to public domain carols can be easily displayed and you can encourage people to supply their own oranges, candles, cocktail sticks and sweets via pre-publicity on social media and church website.

Saturday 19th – ACTION

Love the vulnerable – Christmas can be a desperately lonely and painful time for those on the margins, or in particular need. A Christmas dinner may not be possible if restrictions are in place, but charities working with homeless people, asylum seekers, refugees, addicts and many others would welcome non-perishable food, wrapped gifts for children, and practical items. Check their website and social media to see what they are in most need of at the moment.

Sunday 20th – PRAYER

Worldwide Church – pray for the Church around the world this Christmas, particularly in countries where there is persecution and oppression, and where Covid lockdown has affected those on the margins most. Pray for the Light of Jesus to shine out from his people, for them to have strength and hope in the midst of suffering, and to be those who care and love those in need selflessly. Find prayer ideas at www.opendoorsuk.org or www.24-7prayer.com

Monday 21st – ACTION

Gratitude day – Everyone appreciates being thanked, even if it's for something simple and unremarkable. Plan ways you can show gratitude today that overflows from God's love for us (1 Thessalonians 5: 18). From a small card of appreciation for those who help or encourage you, to a small gift for those who least expect it, or even just a smile and a kind word. You might just brighten someone's day!

Tuesday 22nd – PARTY

Zoom Christmas Fancy Dress

Party – Stuck in lockdown? Can't get people together for a party? Use your imagination and send out invites for a Christmas-themed fancy dress party on Zoom: people can dress up as characters from Christmas films, Christmas stories, Christmas songs and carols, and of course the Nativity story itself. Have a crazy cake competition, organise a quiz and silly games, but also see how you can celebrate the birth of Jesus too.

Wednesday 23rd – FAMILY

Jar of Peace – Jesus said "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid." (John 14: 27). Our Share the Light Advent Activity Box has an activity where you decorate an old jam or coffee jar, and put a tealight inside it. It could be something you light each evening for a while or even display in your front window. Pray God's peace on your neighbourhood.

Thursday 24th – REMEMBER

Remember – how has God helped you and those close to you this year? In a year like no other, many of us have faced challenges to our health, our jobs, our families and friends, our communities, and our way of life, or know someone that has been affected. Maybe write a prayer of thanks, or express how you feel to God, good or bad. Perhaps there are others you'd like to thank too. As you prepare for Christmas Day, remember: God has prepared us for a future with him. We are forgiven, we are loved and we have a place in his kingdom.

Friday 25th – CELEBRATE

Good news of great joy – however you celebrate this year, thank God for Jesus: the greatest gift of all time, the Light of the World, and the King of Kings. Nothing will ever separate us from his love and his Kingdom will never end. Hallelujah!



SHARE HOPE | LOVE | COMPASSION | JOY | JESUS' BIRTH THE LIGHT

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