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## Mulled Wine and Mince Pies

Whilst not everyone is comfortable at either inviting, or being invited, into homes, nevertheless asking friends round for a drink is not unknown at this time of year. Why not encourage people in church to hold a mulled wine and mince pie (or beer and butties, or tea and toast...) party for their neighbours (you could even provide recipes for both)? Holding it immediately after the Carol Service provides the opportunity to continue any conversations.

## Where's Jesus?

People may not come to church anticipating that they will discover who Jesus is, but somewhere along the way it is worth giving them the opportunity of finding out a bit more about him – lectionary readings provide a good platform for the gospel to be explored. And it may be worthwhile having some booklets (such as **Why Christmas?**) available. You might also find it helpful to add the following to all printed material: *To find out more about Jesus visit [www.christianity.org.uk](http://www.christianity.org.uk) or [www.reiesus.co.uk/christmas](http://www.reiesus.co.uk/christmas)*

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## Taking it further

Whilst most visitors may not be looking to explore faith, some might have their interest aroused. Why not think about providing some form of opportunity straight after Christmas to help them take that interest a step forward (maybe an enquirer's course), and have invitations freely available at all your services so that people can easily pick one up. If you want suggestions, have a word with Mike Talbot ([mike.talbot@carlisle-diocese.org.uk](mailto:mike.talbot@carlisle-diocese.org.uk)).

## What next?

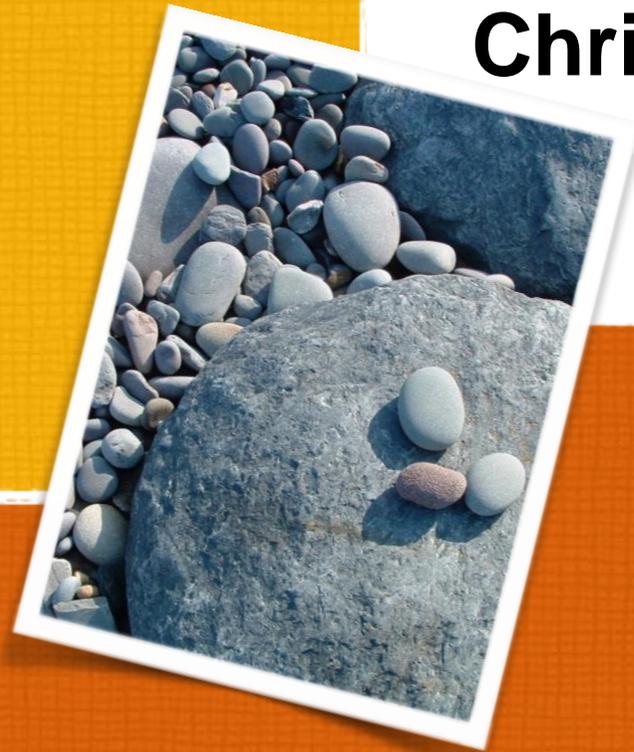
For whatever reason, chances are that you have had more people through the doors over Christmas than on a usual Sunday. What might you be able to invite them back to early in the New Year, so that they (and you) aren't left waiting another 12 months before you see each other again? Songs of Praise? Quiz night? What might attract that casual Christmas visitor back again? (Why not ask them? See what they say).

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# Hints & Tips

## Making the most of Christmas



Me reach  
In reach  
Out reach

# Making the most of Christmas

O Come all ye faithful... only it isn't just the regular crowd that are likely to put in an appearance at some point over the Christmas period. In 2015, across Cumbria, Anglicans alone saw an average of 12,300 people in their churches week by week – and this rose to 33,300 over Christmas, which is one time of the year when people want to come to church. They may be drawn by a desire to sing carols, a hankering after a by-gone era, or simply going with the traditional feeling that can pervade the season. They may, or may not, be coming because of a sense of spiritual awareness, but it provides us with a chance to make the most of the opportunity with which we are presented. For most churches this is seen as our 'busy season', and the thought of adding to that can be daunting. But there are a number of small steps that are possible which may help visitors look beyond the immediate and begin to engage with the God who came to live amongst us.

# 1

## Pray

'Take people to God before you take God to people'. If we are to see people come to faith, then prayer is essential. Why not use the season of Advent to encourage church members to pray for one or two (or more!) people every day, that they might discover more of God, and his purpose in their lives. Try **141@1** – invite people to pray for one person for one minute at 1pm every day (or **242@2** etc!). Suggest they set the alarm on their phones to remind them.

## Invite

Having prayed, encourage people to invite those they have prayed for to one of the services that are being held. Statistics show that most people attend an event because of a personal invitation. 'I'm going. It's going to be good. Would you like to come as well?' Of all the events that the church lays on, Christmas is probably the easiest to offer an invitation to – so encourage everyone in the church to think about inviting 2-3 friends or relations to come with them to a service.

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## Publicity

Whilst personal invitations are critical, having a piece of good quality professionally printed publicity to offer to people is also important. An A6 sized card with all the main services, along with times and an indication of what is happening is helpful to give to friends and neighbours. Is it possible to put flyers in shop windows, or local community centres? Have a look at someone like [www.vistaprint.co.uk](http://www.vistaprint.co.uk) who offer good deals (and quick turn round) on publicity. CPO also produce a range of Christmas invitations.

## Carol Services

Most of us have them. Are they designed for the regular worshipper or the visitor? This is probably the key shop window service – so it is worth thinking through the content from the perspective of a non-attender. Why not ask someone who doesn't usually come to church what they would look for in a carol service – what is sung, read, done. Make sure the church is as warm as you can make it, even if the heating has to go on much earlier than usual.

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## Think family

Many churches hold a service for families around 4pm on Christmas Eve – 30-40 minutes, lots of carols, a simple telling of the Christmas story; perhaps a pop-up nativity (see [www.biblesociety.org.uk](http://www.biblesociety.org.uk) for resources); or a Christingle service. Often this is the service at which the majority of people are strangers to regular church. And whilst it is aimed at pre-school children, experience says that teenagers who have long given up on church come along, dragging parents behind them.

## How do you rate?

Whilst it is important to offer a warm welcome all through the year, it is especially crucial at this season. Are there enough people on the door, who know what they have to do? Have sufficient service sheets been printed? Are people able to sit where they feel comfortable? And do you need to take an offering up at the Carol Service or Midnight Communion? The Treasurer might be keen to make the most of the opportunity, but in a season of giving, perhaps we can give back to the community – and not ask them for money!

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