



# 10 Ideas for Christmas

**Diocese of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich**



## Christmas 2020

Unlike any Christmas in memory, this one is clearly going to be different.

- Goalposts are constantly moving, making it difficult to plan
- Question marks still linger over congregational singing and
- Limitations on numbers make it hard to have the crowds we'd love and make us unsure what we can do face to face.

But make no mistake, the Great British Public are still going to want to celebrate Christmas and the opportunities and options are great so let's get our creative juices going and see if we can make this an excellent Christmas to remember.

Scroll through the ideas below, have a good look at Google (more and more resources will become available as we get closer to Christmas), get your volunteers motivated and have a fantastic Christmas!

Look out for the £££ and  indications to see if this idea will cost a lot or a little and the time it might involve, and take the plunge.

All the best,

Inspiring Ipswich

## National ready-made CofE resources

An excellent set of nine pre-prepared services for Advent and Christmas from the Church of England featuring well-known faces, which you can show as-is or which you can use alongside your own materials.

Also available is a resource hub full of images and videos which can be freely used, and a set of reflections which will be available in a booklet and on an app.

### Top Tips

Make sure your church is on 'A Church Near You' and has added its Christmas services and activities to the page.

Keep checking back on these Comfort and Joy web pages on [churchofengland.org](http://churchofengland.org) for new content.

Look out for the pre-prepared music videos that the Comfort and Joy initiative is making available to all.

Printed materials are also available.



**Comfort**  
and Joy

### Christmas stations

This can be done as low-key or large-scale as you like. Create large-scale outside 'stations' which tell the Christmas story and which school children and others can go round and see in the weeks before Christmas. Play carols through loud speakers, if possible. Staff the event with wrapped-up-warm church volunteers and, if allowed, provide refreshments and give-aways that can be hung on the tree and which talk of the meaning of Christmas.

#### Top Tips

Find the best location possible. Ask your local council if you can use a village green, park or scrubland if your churchyard isn't well placed.

Consider doing this ecumenically.

Make each station as creative as possible.

Invest in the best outside PA and lighting system you can afford.

Make sure everyone involved feels safe. Take time over your risk assessment.



## Mary and Joseph on the road again

Got a friendly farmer with a trailer or a safe open-top van? Create a nativity scene in the back with space for a few characters of the Story to be socially-distanced. Take the van around your parish in the weekends before Christmas. Accompany the van with carols tunefully playing and, if safe, hand out individually wrapped copies of 'Why Christmas?' or equivalent as you tour the streets.

### Top Tips

Ensure the trailer / van is safe.

Advertise the route in local schools, parish magazines, etc.

Give out individually wrapped chocolates (using gloves) if allowed and appropriate.

Don't ask for money!



## Sharing the story of Christmas one windowsill at a time

Encourage members of your church to use their front windows to help tell the story of Christmas to passers-by. Either do it randomly or create an official trail with different parts of the Christmas story being told in each window. Advertise in the nearest school, post office, shop etc.

### Top Tips

Use nativity sets, fairy lights, children's artwork, glass pens, words from the gospels or carols, an advent candle (if safe to do so.)

Make it attractive and perhaps vary it every few days to pique interest.

Possibly create a prize for the most imaginative window...

Encourage parishioners who don't go to church to join in. The more the merrier!



## Film locals telling the story and release on Christmas Eve

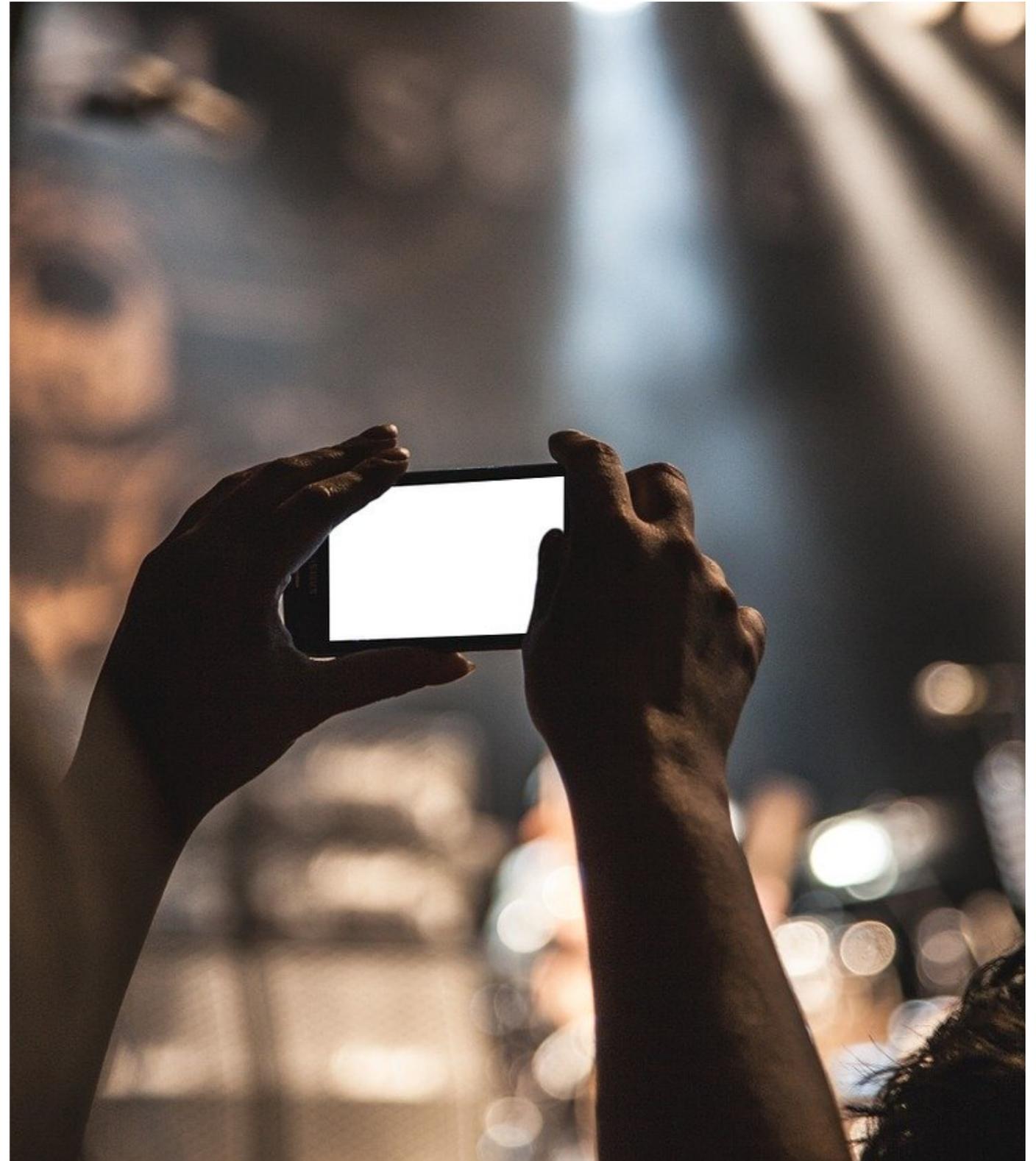
Invite members of your local community (not just church-going members) to dress up and read parts of the Christmas story. If they can video themselves, great. If not, use a phone to video them from the front gate etc. Edit together and send out to the local community via social media etc on Christmas Eve.

### Top Tips

Use props, local landmarks and real inns, babies and parents, if possible.

Add some humour, top and tail the video well, and add at the end a 1 minute explanation of why the Christmas Story is still relevant today.

Ask any young people connected with the church to help you make it eye-catching and attention-grabbing.



## Zoom Carol Services

Lots of people love to sing carols around Christmas. Pick a Sunday evening and invite your community to Carols by Candlelight around their home computer.

Ask everyone to mute, turn off their lights and light a candle or two to create atmosphere, and play carols through the host's computer (not through the microphone) with the words on a screen. Intermingle with lessons / readings and a short talk but make it half as long as usual to retain interest.

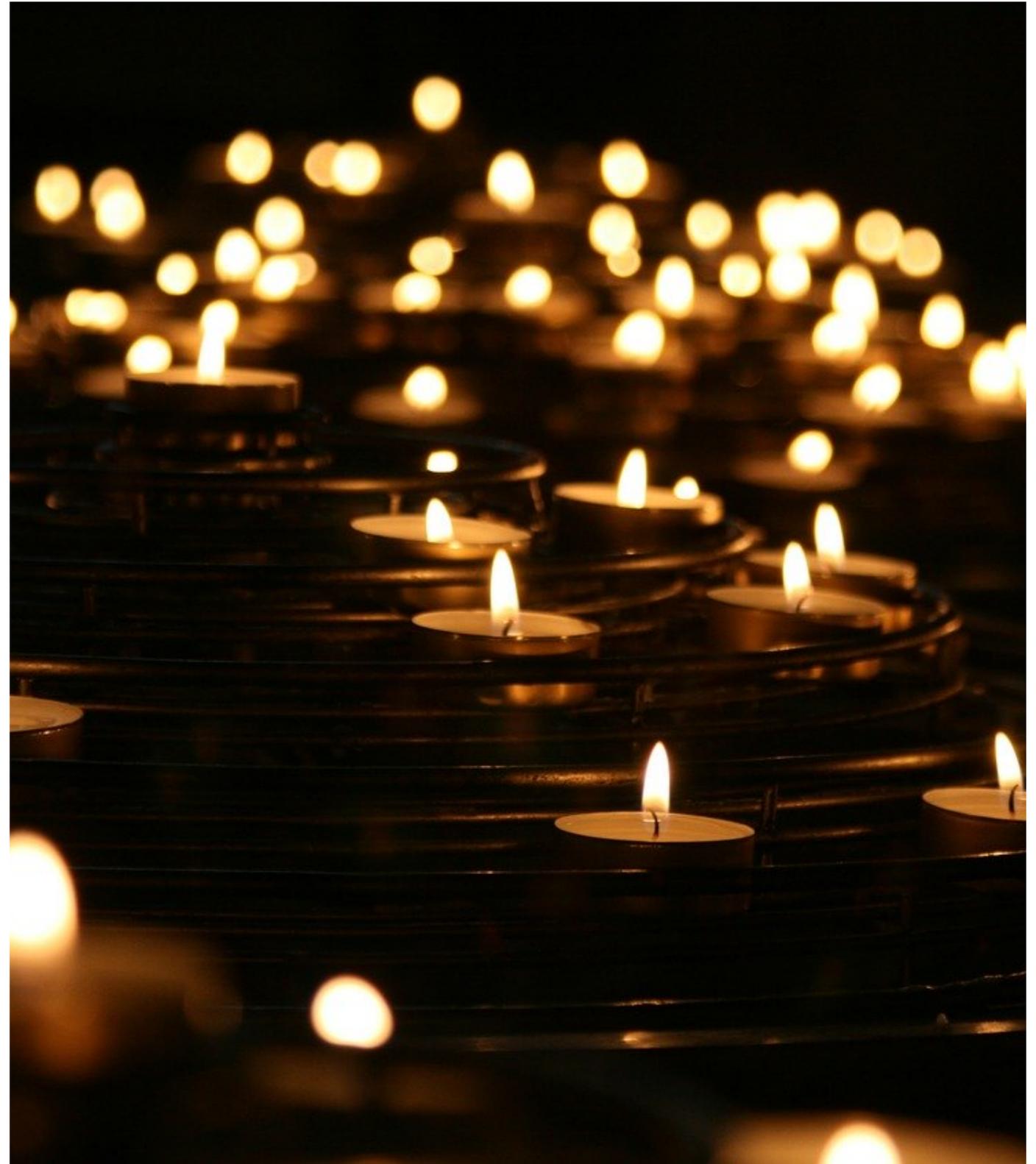
### Top Tips

Put as much thought into advertising, planning and rehearsing this as you would a normal carol service.

Make the readings shorter.

Ensure your zoom licence can cope with the numbers you expect and the length of the service.

Have technical people on side in case of mishaps!



## Have yourself a very Merry Facebook Christmas

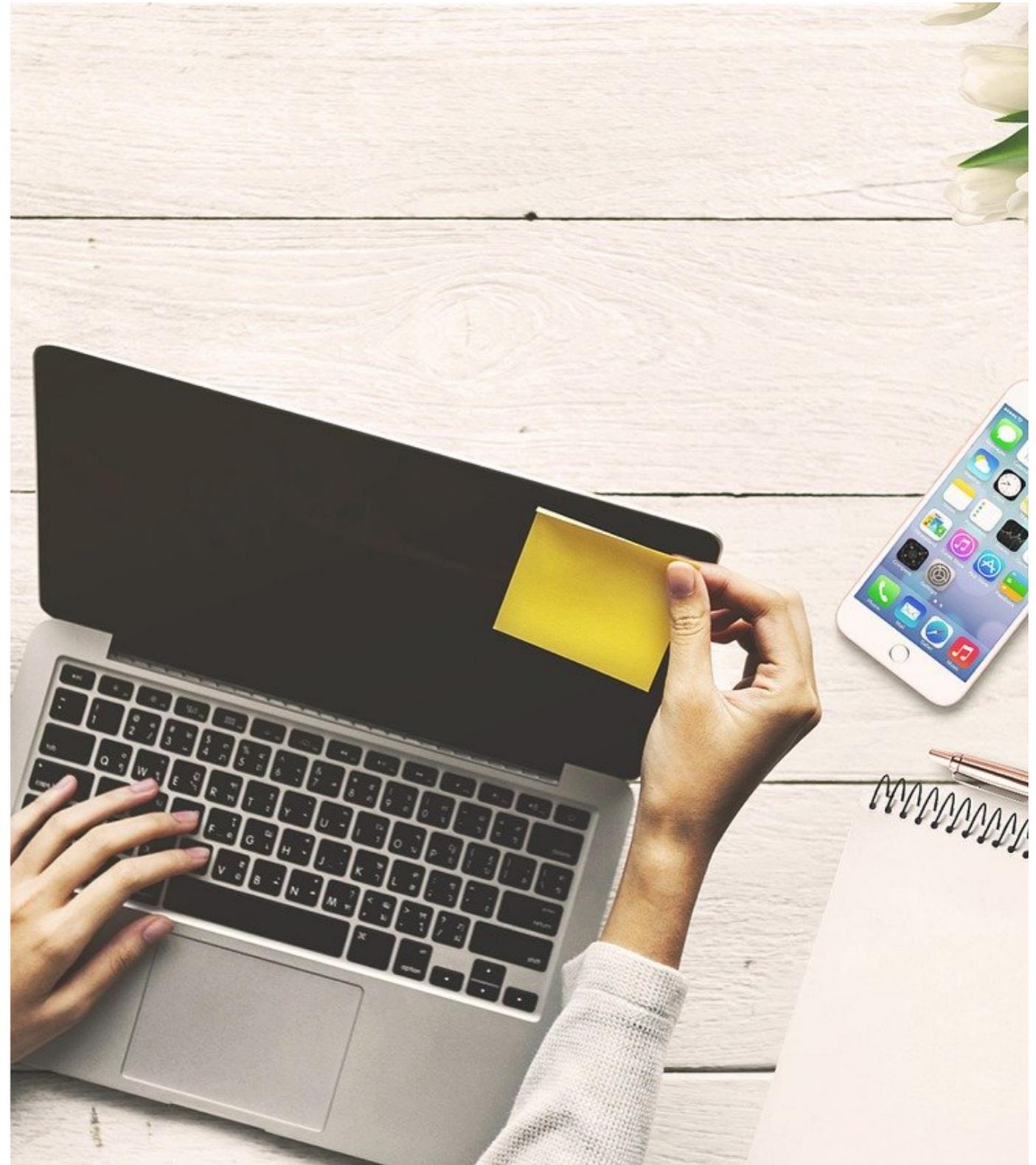
Facebook (and other social media platforms too) are great to use at this time of year. Provoke a 'teaser campaign' throughout Advent following a picture of a crib scene, like a traditional 'posada.' Each day post pictures of the crib scene (on a phone or tablet) in a different location (eg in people's homes, workplaces, schools) add bits of the Christmas story with each post and use the exercise to talk about getting ready for Christmas.

### Top Tips

There are lots of variations on this. Be creative!

Alternatively, you could produce a different image each day throughout Advent and see where they go.

A few prizes for the most imaginative, bizarre places might create extra interest.



## Light up computer screens

The Children's Society have produced an excellent free guide to holding a virtual Christingle service this year so head over to their website [www.childrenssociety.org.uk](http://www.childrenssociety.org.uk) and find lots of resources to help you hold your Christingle service online. Who knows, you might get even more people than usual?

### Top Tips

Either send out oranges and sweets to homes or leave them in the church porch or equivalent for people to collect.

Make use of the Christingle arts, crafts and games resource on the website.

Remember to ensure that the key messages come across amidst all the activity.



## Carols on the Street

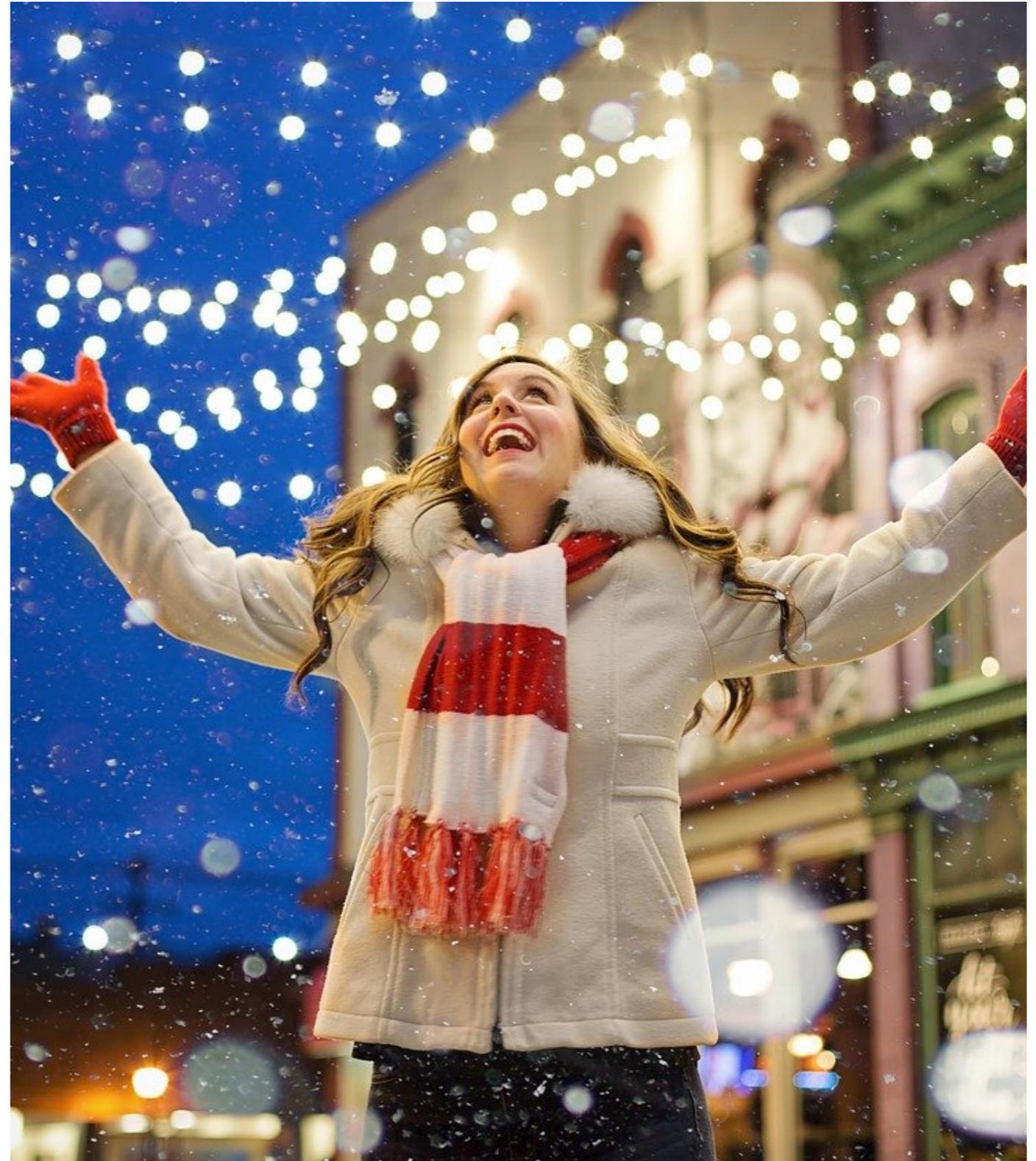
Choose a good night and declare it a night for carols in your neighbourhood/parish. Produce an online sheet with a few well known carols and invite your community at 6pm, say, to all sing the carols in households by the roadside where they live. Ask each household to take a photo of them singing or better still, a video, and load it onto your church social media page. Also include a short talk about the Christmas story on said page for all to hear.

### Top Tips

If you have a choir or worship group ask them to take some videos of them doing this sort of thing to kick it off.

See if you can get schools and uniformed groups involved.

Encourage people to be as creative as they want eg wear Santa hats, carry lanterns, wear battery-powered fairy lights, whatever takes their fancy!



## Messy Christmas bags

If you can't run Messy Church in person this December how about posting or delivering Messy Christmas bags to the families you usually have contact with.

Include craft resources, a sheet with a Bible reading, some prayers and basic instructions.

### Top Tips

Scripture Union sell some lovely, bauble-shaped Christmas story books which can hang on a tree and be revisited each year.

Add a Christmas chocolate if you can.

Don't forget to add links to other things your church is doing over Christmas and beyond e.g running an Alpha course.



**Wishing you a merry, joyful and hope-filled Christmas**





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