

12 Ideas for Advent & Christmas

that can be used with children, young people and families, at home and in the community



NEW FOR 2020
from the Go Team



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12 Ideas for Advent & Christmas

Introduction

This Christmas is likely to be different for us all, not least in the way we gather, prepare and celebrate with children, young people and families in our communities.

This resource aims to provide you with creative ideas that can be used in the lead up to Christmas, at home and in the local community, putting the story of Jesus' birth at the centre of our countdown and celebrations.

The Go Team have collated these ideas with the current COVID-19 restrictions in mind and with an accent on things you can do as a household. Many of the ideas can be adapted to your context and the age and ability of those involved. At this time it may be more about providing ideas and resources that your scattered community can join in with, rather than gathering them together in one place.

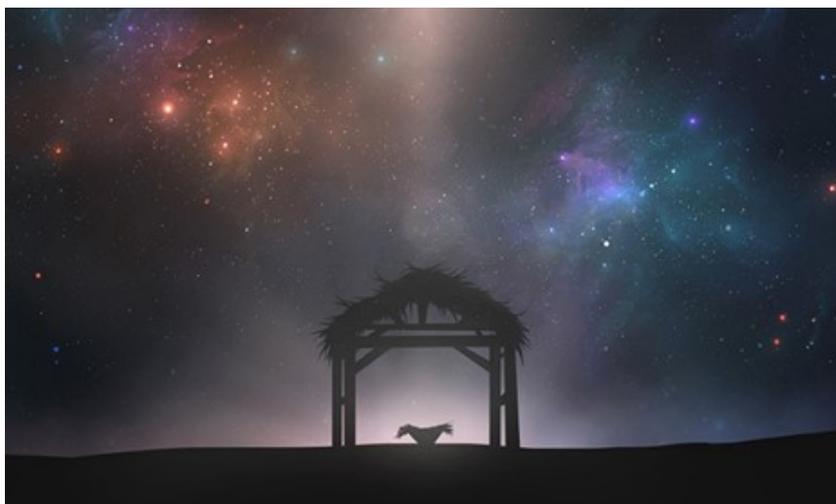
If you are planning activities and events for a group you will of course need to adhere to the Government restrictions and guidance in place at the time, ensuring necessary hygiene and social distancing precautions are kept in place and that you have an up to date Risk Assessment.

Latest information and guidance can be found at www.bathandwells.org.uk

As we seek to live and tell the story of Jesus, we hope and pray that these ideas will help you and provide you with some inspiration.

For further help and support contact one of the Go Team Advisers. We would love to hear your stories and experiences of using this resource. Please share them with us by sending us an email or sharing your photos with us on Twitter (@GoTeamAdvisers) and Instagram (GoTeamAdvisers).

For all the latest news, resources and online events please subscribe to our newsletter **Inform** at www.bathandwells.org.uk/ministry/children-young-people



12 Ideas for Advent & Christmas

1. Advent Angel Trail

In the summer months, many towns and villages do Scarecrow Trails. This entails organisations and individuals making 3-D scarecrows and placing them where people can see them. Each scarecrow is given a number and people get a sheet with clues of where to find each scarecrow. A cup/prize is given to the winning scarecrow entrant and a small fee for those doing the trail raises money for local causes. In the village where Tony lives, this is organised by the church and hundreds of individuals and families take part. They start at the church, pick up their trail sheet and a few hours later return to the church to hand it in, vote for their favourite scarecrow and have a cup of tea and cake.

This year, the church considered cancelling it, but instead they waited until lockdown was eased. They had to put COVID-19 secure measures in place and were not able to serve refreshments, but it was a roaring success with more families than usual joining in. There was a real sense of community, especially as most households had been behind closed doors for weeks.



Christmas is going to look very different for most of us this year, so we would like to encourage churches to be creative and do things outdoors and in the community where possible. Why not consider doing an adapted version of a Scarecrow Trail, replacing scarecrows with Advent Angels? Advent is a time when we prepare for Christmas. We are reminded of this in the Christmas story as different people set out on journeys. As they journeyed, angels appeared to them and directed them towards the coming of Jesus. All the COVID-19 secure measures will need to be in place e.g. rule of six, but this could be a creative way of churches sharing the Christmas story in their communities this year.

2. Advent Collection Collage

Each day during Advent, go for a walk with others in your household. As you walk collect small items that have fallen from trees or bushes or other things that you find on the floor like stones or discarded bits of plastic. This can be one item each day or several different items, you decide. (Please be careful when picking things up, especially if they are sharp or mucky, wearing gloves might be useful.)

Take these home each day and store them safely to be used later. By December 23rd you should have quite a collection. On December 24th set aside time where your household can get together around a table to make a collage together. Have a sheet of A4 or A3 paper or card, some scissors, PVA glue or sticky tape. Spread your collected items on the table, and together make your collage. If you have collected lots of items you may want to make more than one collage. The collage could be of a nativity scene or simply something relating to Christmas. As you make the collage talk about what Christmas means to you. If other households do this activity, take pictures and share them.



3. Christmas Nativity lights

This year to help generate some Christmas spirit, people are being encouraged to decorate the front of their houses and gardens (if they have one) with lots of Christmas lights and to leave them on during the hours of darkness. This might be a good way of bringing some community Christmas cheer but it will not be good for the environment. As an alternative to Christmas lights illuminating our communities during Advent, why not create a 3-D nativity scene on the front of your house or in the front garden. It would also be good to have one in front of every church. The Nativity scene could be large or small, traditional or abstract. Be creative! If you don't have a front garden, a window can easily be used. To help show community solidarity, agree with all those taking part to light up your nativity scene for two hours each evening during Advent. This will be similar to many of those households that lit candles at 19.00 each Sunday during lockdown to represent hope against Coronavirus. If it is done early enough, it might encourage households with children to walk around their community to view them before bedtime. Only two hours, with minimal lighting, will have less of an impact on the environment.



4. 24 Angels and a Baby

If you are not able to decorate the outside of your house, choose one window that people can see from outside and focus on decorating that. One suggestion is to fix some lines of string on the inside of the window and make 24 angels. These can all be the same or each one can be different. Also make a baby Jesus in a manger. Then during Advent simply add one angel each day by fixing it to the string. Leave a space in the centre of the window where you can place Jesus on Christmas Day.



Mini paper angels: There are lots of creative ideas around for making your own paper or fabric angels. You could even knit some of them! Here's one idea we found you could try...

<https://www.thecrafttrain.com/mini-paper-angels/>



5. Outside Prayer Space (supporting the Foodbank)

With carol services and nativities looking very different this year, have you considered using your outdoor space to creatively engage with your local community? Why not set up a prayer space in your churchyard and use it to support your local food bank? Set up a gazebo or space in your churchyard where you encourage people to bring their gifts (in the form of in date non-perishable food items). You could create a reflective space, with a manger and encourage people from the community to make a journey there, where they offer their food gifts to Jesus. With it being winter, you need to be careful that the items are collected or can be kept safe and dry and are not left out for too long. It may be worth setting this up over a week or weekend. Once people have reached your churchyard, you could inspire them to spend some time reflecting on the reason for the season. Why not have some battery operated tealights available for people to light as they leave their gift, encouraging them say a prayer to Jesus, Light of the World? You could also have details of your Christmas services (online or otherwise) to take away.



6. Advent Photo Challenge

Why not set people of all ages in your church community the challenge of taking a photo a day throughout Advent? You may like to suggest a theme such as light or hope for the whole of Advent, or you may like to have a word for each day which inspires a photograph.

Encourage people to take a photo a day to help them pause and reflect through the season of Advent (it doesn't have to be a competition or about photo quality). You may like to give them some verses from the Bible to read each day. They could create a collage of their images at the end which could be shared in your online Christmas service, or you could turn it into a social media challenge posting a photo each day (please be aware of the age restrictions of social media platforms and choose age appropriately or suggest children/young people post through a parent/carer's social media account).



Below are 24 words you could use to inspire photos...

Light	Patience	Good news	Trust
Inspire	Preparation	Courage	Waiting
Joy	Hope	Grace	Kindness
Peace	Family	Faith	Promise
Prayer	New Life	Holy	Rest
Wonder	Blessed	Gentleness	Love

7. Candles of Hope & Light

Wouldn't it be great to fill your town or village with a message of hope and light this Christmas? We suggest getting hold of a large quantity of candles and printing a message that you can attach to the candle with string or an elastic band and then placing them around your neighbourhood for people to pick up and take home. You can use this as an opportunity to invite people to join your Christmas services (online or otherwise) and let them know about church life but make sure you include a message about light and hope. You may even like to add a reflection they could do when lighting their candle.

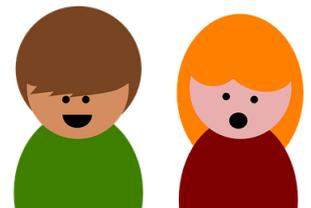
We recommend washing your hands before assembling the candles and wearing gloves when placing them around your village or town. Think about how you can get all ages of your congregation involved in preparing and distributing the candles. Example message to go with each candle:

Please take home this candle from *insert name of church*
Jesus spoke to them, saying, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life." John 8: 12
Take 5 minutes. Light your candle and sit on your own or with people from your household. Reflect or discuss the words above and consider what they mean to you. You may like to listen to your favourite Christmas Carol as well.
We invite you to join our online *insert service* on *insert date* at *insert time* visit *insert website*
Happy Christmas from all at *insert name of church*
To find out more about your local church, visit www.....



8. Christmas Carol Countdown

Why not journey through Advent with a carol a day? And as you do, take time to stop and remember why we celebrate. You can do this on your own or as a family, class or online group.



Listen on radio, CD, vinyl, YouTube, online, on your device, ask Alexa! – share your favourite finds with others on social media. Classic FM have a list of 30 you could try:

<https://www.classicfm.com/discover-music/occasions/christmas/nations-top-30-christmas-carols/>

or check out Rend Collective, For King And Country and Lauren Daigle for contemporary versions.

Read the lyrics, find them online or in a hymn book, read and reflect on the words, use as a quiet time.

Sing on your own, with family or in your Zoom groups (do remember current restrictions about singing with those from other households).

Create a lip sync video of your favourite carol on your phone and share with friends, or create actions!

Play a carol on a musical instrument or learn a new one.

Try to find some in different languages. Here's an example: Il Est Né (He is Born), a traditional French Christmas carol <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ba0dVszm3io>

Record as an online group, **write** your own or **illustrate** your favourite one.

Get creative with carols and remember to do it safely!



9. Posada Family 2020

Thanks to Sue Rodford (Children & Family Worker, Hardington Vale) for sharing this idea with us.

In our parish we have a tradition of a Posada Box that goes on its travels from 1st December to 24th December when it arrives at the church and is the central feature of the Family Crib Service. Families sign up to look after the Posada Box for one day and night. In the traditional Posada Box is a knitted Holy Family and animals, 2 nativity story books (one for younger children and one for older children) and a Posada prayer. In the lid of the box are the details of which family has the box on which night with their address and mobile number (this is with their permission) so one family can pass the box on to the next. Families are asked to put the Holy Family in a window of their house for others to see.

However, with COVID-19 restrictions I have had to think of a way of having a wipeable Posada Box and contents. This is my idea....

PRE COVID	DURING COVID
Plastic carry box with lid (wipeable)	Plastic carry box with lid (wipeable)
Knitted Holy Family with knitted animals (cannot be washed)	Wooden painted and varnished Holy Family, animals and crib (wipeable with anti-bac wipes or can be gently washed in warm soapy water). Made from cutting down wooden rolling pins (bought from Proper Job and Asda) and decorated by myself. Also, a wooden pastry brush (Asda) for baby Jesus and a small wooden box (The Works) for the crib.
Nativity Story Books (cannot be wiped)	Take the Nativity Story Books apart and laminate them. If you have a ring binder use this to rebind the books or put into plastic wallet folders (wipeable with anti-bac wipes). This idea came from the Story Museum in Oxford.
Posada prayer on card (cannot be wiped)	Posada prayer photocopied and laminated (wipeable)
	Include instructions in box for wiping the box and contents before and after use. Laminate these.
	Include 24 small packs of anti-bac wipes for each household to use (B&M Home Stores)
The families take a photo of the Posada in their house and send to me for a display in church of the Posada journey.	The families take photo of the Posada in their house and send to me for an online display of the Posada journey.



Below you can see my Nativity figures ready to be painted and if you look on Pinterest under 'homemade wooden nativity figures' there are lots of simple painting designs you can follow.

I will be using white acrylic gesso (The Works) for the undercoat after lightly sanding the wooden figures; and acrylic paints to paint the designs followed by a clear varnish.

See next page for Posada Prayers.



Posada Prayers

A PRAYER FOR FAMILIES

We pray for families around the world.
For the family of our parish community;
For our own families;
For families who are separated at this time of year;
For those with no family.
That Christmas may be a time of preparation and thought;
That Jesus will be at the centre of our lives;
That we may unite and forgive each other;
That we may look forward with confidence,
Showing true love for one another.
Amen.

A PRAYER FOR THOSE WHO TRAVEL

Father,
We pray for all those who will travel today to school or work or play;
For those who will travel home to visit families and friends at Christmas;
For those who are seeking God's will in their lives.
As we travel through life, unite us in your love;
And help us to draw comfort and strength from one another;
To grow in love and grace.
Through Christ our Lord, Amen.



10. It's Christmas! Bible Chat Mat

Following the success of our first 12 Bible Chat Mats themed on the stories of Jesus, we commissioned illustrator Andy Gray to produce a Christmas special. You can download the pdf for free here:

<https://www.bathandwells.org.uk/ministry/children-young-people/bible-chat-mat/>

The Bible Chat Mat is a great way to share the story of the birth of Jesus from Luke chapter 2, whether around a meal table or sitting on the sofa at home, or in a church or school group.

Read the Bible passage together (in an age appropriate version), have a conversation about what you've read using the questions as a guide, and take time to pray together asking God that he would reveal new things to you from this amazing story and use you to bless others this Christmas. The sheets can be coloured in and doodled on, allowing you to respond to the Bible story in your own unique way. And don't forget to find all the hidden sheep and angels!

How about sending a copy to the families you are in touch with as a church in the lead up to Christmas? It could be used as part of an online Christmas service or simply sent with Christmas greetings from your church. Print some and pop them in the post or share them via email or in a WhatsApp group.



11. Sing 'The Twelve Days of Christmas' (Online)

It often feels like the only time of year we can get away with a bit of singing is at Christmas (unless you lead a pre-school group or your youth are veterans of Soul Survivor!) and yet this year singing with those outside of your household, in public gatherings, parties and all the usual services is going to be restricted (do check www.churchofengland.org for latest guidance before planning activities).

With all that in mind, how about singing a version of 'The Twelve Days of Christmas' online?

Idea 1: Singing 'The Twelve Days of Christmas' on Zoom

This will require your youth or children's Zoom group to be at least 10 or 12 people including leaders. The more the merrier so perhaps invite parents and siblings to join in too if they're not already involved.

Make sure all those involved have a copy of the words with added instructions in **bold** (see next page).

Have one particular household take the lead in singing the song (e.g. if you're the leader, you and those in your household) and invite the rest of the group to join in the words underlined as applicable.

[Note: We haven't tried this yet but we'd love to know if it works. The results may not be musical harmony but they could be hilarious!]

Idea 2: Recording a collab version of 'The Twelve Days of Christmas'

If you have a youth/children's group or group of families that are up for a musical challenge, how about recording a collaborative version of 'The Twelve Days of Christmas' or another Christmas song?

Divide up the song lyrics giving different parts to different families and asking them to record themselves singing their part on a phone. It's worth sending them a guide track so that all the videos are in the same key etc. This could be a pre-recorded version (have a look online) or one that you record yourself. You could also ask them to dress up in Christmas jumpers or other seasonal attire.

When all the videos are in, use video editing software to put all the parts together (it may be that one of your young people is able to do this for you). Show the complete song at a Christmas service or event, or put it on the church YouTube channel. (Remember to gain consent for this when asking people to take part if it is your intention to use it online or in front of an audience.)

At this time when we aren't so able to meet up, it could be a good way of seeing one another's faces!

What is 'The Twelve Days of Christmas' all about?

There are a number of ideas about the origins of the song. Whilst some have reduced it to a little more than a silly Christmas carol, most scholars of the Catholic Church deem it a very important surviving example of a time when that denomination used codes to disguise their teachings. To find out more visit:

<https://www.christianity.com/wiki/holidays/the-12-days-of-christmas-lyrics-meaning.html>



The Twelve Days of Christmas (on Zoom)

On the first day of Christmas my true love sent to me, a partridge in a pear tree

EVERYONE

On the second day of Christmas my true love sent to me, two turtle doves

those on a laptop/computer

On the third day of Christmas my true love sent to me, three French hens

those on a tablet/phone

On the fourth day of Christmas my true love sent to me, four calling birds

all leaders/adults

On the fifth day of Christmas my true love sent to me, five gold rings

EVERYONE

On the sixth day of Christmas my true love sent to me, six geese a-laying

those with blue eyes

On the seventh day of Christmas my true love sent to me, seven swans a-swimming

those wearing something red

On the eighth day of Christmas my true love sent to me, eight maids a-milking

those who like sprouts

On the ninth day of Christmas my true love sent to me, nine ladies dancing

those with Christmas tree up

On the tenth day of Christmas my true love sent to me, ten lords a-leaping

those with dance moves

On the eleventh day of Christmas my true love sent to me, eleven pipers piping

all who play a musical instrument

On the twelfth day of Christmas my true love sent to me, twelve drummers drumming

all young people

12. Photo Christmas Baubles



You will need

Card or old Christmas cards/birthday cards/old books/cereal packets

Family photographs

Cord, ribbon or wool

Scissors

Glue stick

Felt pens

For decoration— felt/wrapping paper/glitter/fabric/sequins/lolly sticks/beads etc.

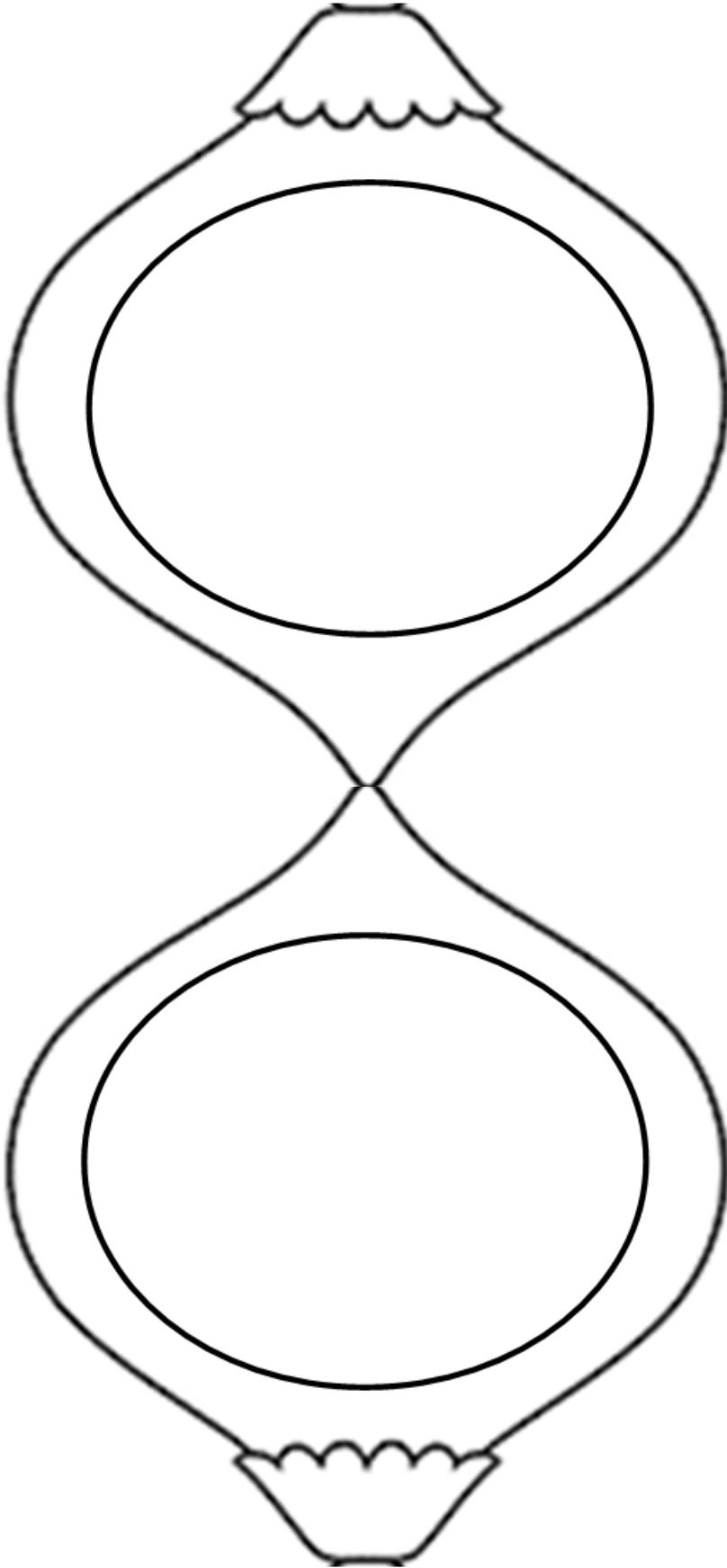
Thread/cord/string for hanging

Instructions

- Draw around template and cut out (see templates for individual instructions and more ideas, adapt shapes and sizes for variety and to suit all abilities)
- Stick or staple together your items
- Add cord/beads and any other decoration

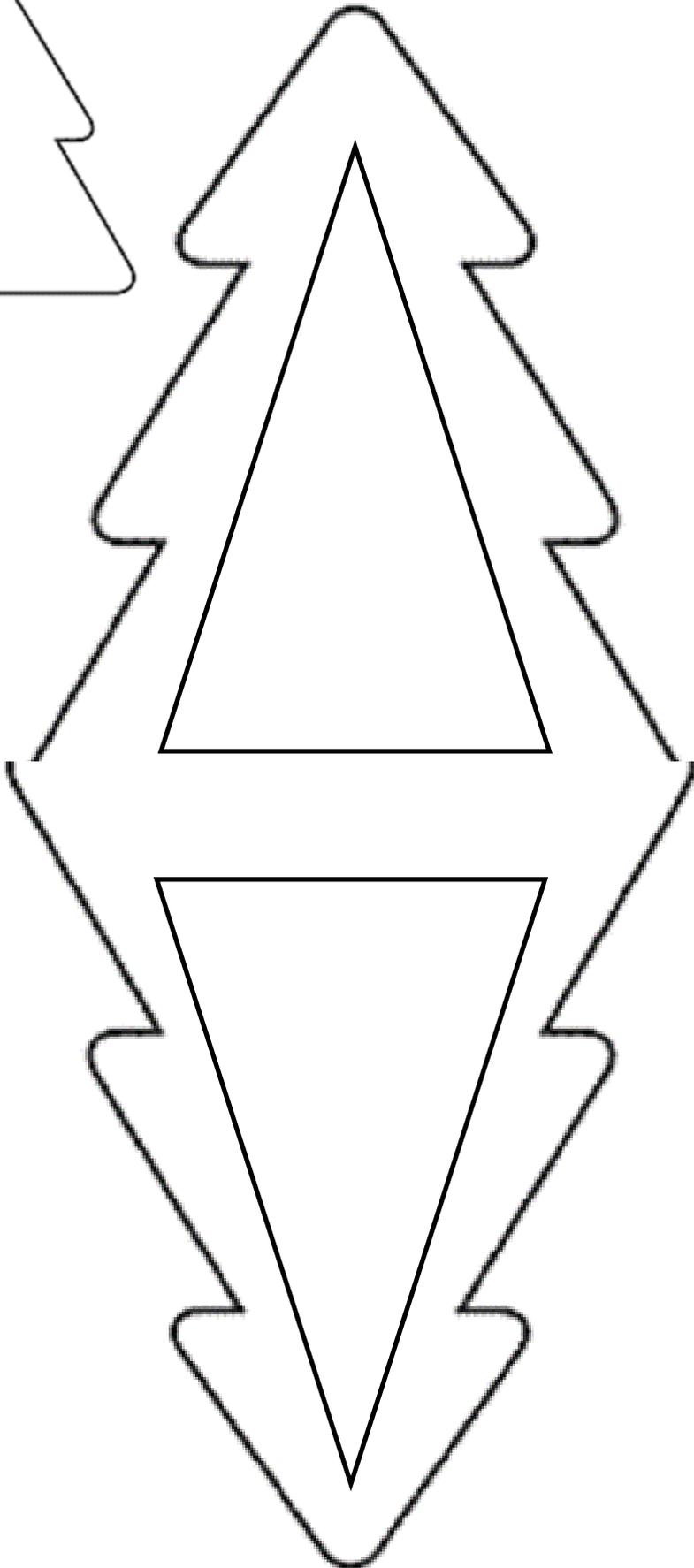
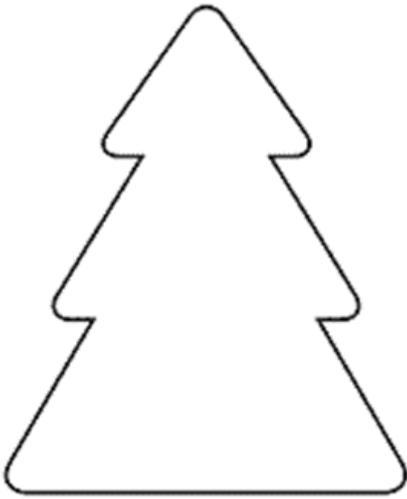


Template

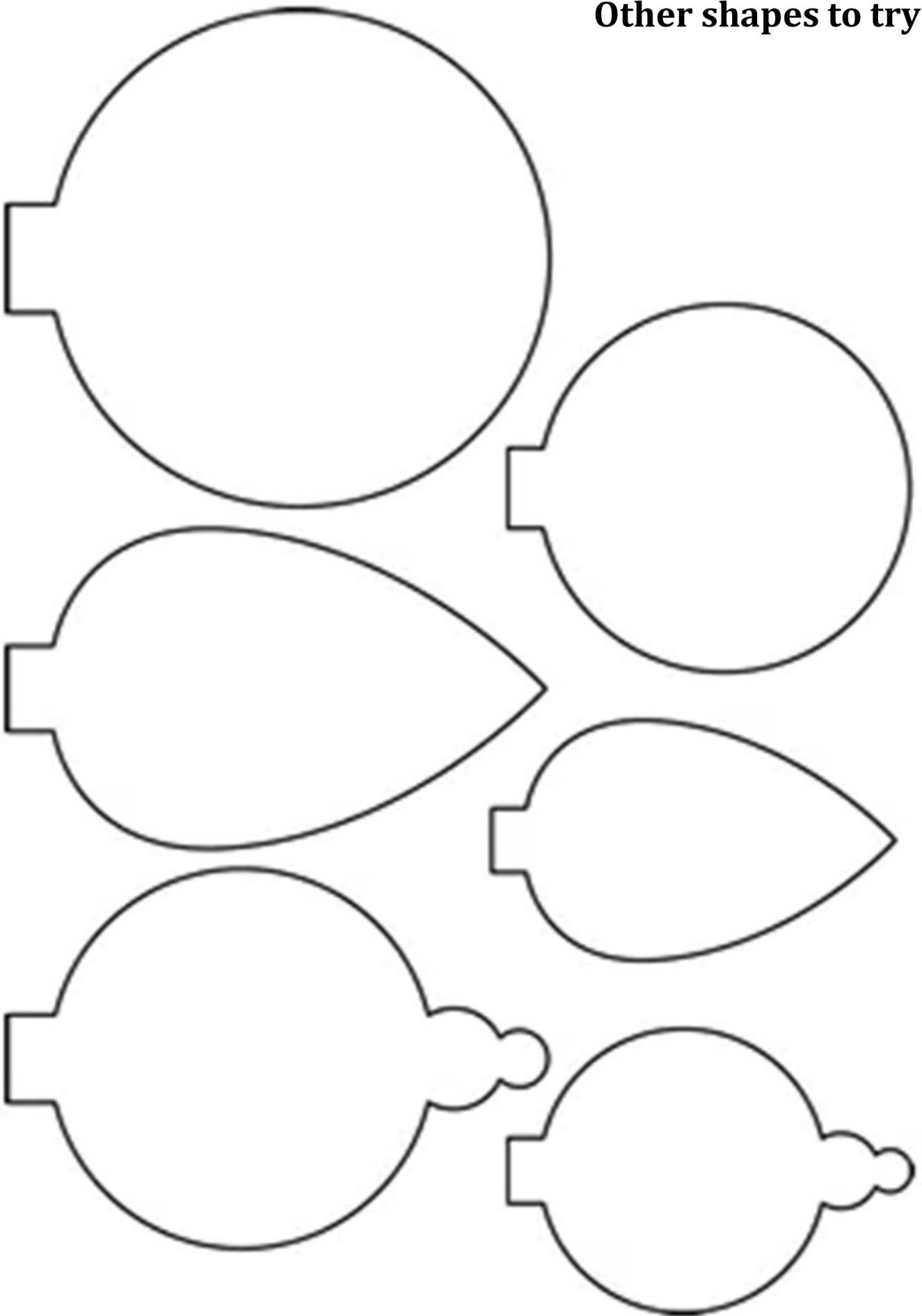


1. Cut around the outside line from your card
2. Cut your photo slightly bigger than the inner oval B
3. Cut out the inner oval on one side ready to insert your photograph B
4. Cut out one side and inner oval onto your felt/fabric or wrapping paper to make the frame.
5. Use the shape cut from this to stick onto the back
6. Write your message on D
7. Insert and stick your cord at E

Christmas Tree Template Frame



Other shapes to try





Wooden Photo Baubles

Available from Baker Ross

Buy in packs of 10 or 20

Click here:

https://www.bakerross.co.uk/wooden-photo-baubles?&gclid=Cj0KCQjw4f35BRDBARIsAPePBHwNOH9ySI2fNZZhi6fvxKhTGH7TTYXHa7mIQ8dWGe06FLvDnOyBFgaAtxjEALw_wcB



A great way to stay in touch and feel closer to all those we have missed or that we won't get to see this year.

You can send them to friends and family.

Make them as a class or church group and hang on a community tree.

Send them instead of cards this year.

A way of being together as a family, school, group or community when you can't be together in the same way at the moment.

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