

EVENT IDEAS

to EQUIP the
local church.

An Encouragement:

"The fellowship that we have whilst working together to pull off an event is precious. The amount of sharing and chatting that goes on whilst peeling and slicing a mountain of carrots is wonderful. Rolling up your sleeves and working together, for the gospel, is an incredible privilege. It is an opportunity for everyone to be involved, to get to know one another so much better and, above all, to share our precious Saviour with people who need Him."

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1. Introduction

The pages that follow are full of ideas and resources that can help you and your church engage with your local community. Events for young and old, individuals and groups. Opportunities for your church to grow together as you serve the locality, and introduce others to Jesus.

These ideas/resources have come from YOU, and we are so grateful for every single contribution.

What you will read is largely unedited, but names of individuals and churches have not been included. If you would like to learn more about how a particular event has been organized or a resource used, then please let us know and we can put you in touch with the right person.

Enjoy!!

A prayer for one another:

**"As we are captured more by his glory, so we will speak. Not fluently. Not impressively.
But genuinely from the heart – and our passion will communicate more than our eloquence ever could."**

Glen Scrivener

Pat Norbury, Ceri Thomas & Elaine Macdonald
EQUIP '21 Women's Event Coordinators
Designed by Lois M Adams



2. Events linked to the Calendar Year



Christmas Meal. Christmas needs no excuse for celebration! People are happy to come - just because it's Christmas. We have used 'straplines' for our events such as 'It's the most wonderful time of the year', but Christmas is a reason all of its own.



Christmas Songs and Supper. This evening involved inviting an excellent Christian singer, a local Christian group and our own youngsters to delight us with some great music. Our speaker acted as an MC for the evening and skilfully wove the Christmas message into the presentation using the lyrics of the songs. We served a buffet supper at this event as it was harder to establish numbers beforehand as this was a church-wide event.

Wreath-Making. In the lead-up to Christmas, we have had a Christmas Wreath-Making Evening. This was a popular event and gave the opportunity to invite people to come back for more Christmas Events.

You will need:

- A circular wire - 6 or 8 inch.
- Wire, wire cutters, secateurs, glue gun.
- Greenery from gardens/ hedges - fir, eucalyptus, holly, laurel, ivy, pine.
- Decorations for the wreaths such as orange slices, pine cone, baubles, ribbon.



Set up tables where 4 - 6 women can work around each one.

On each table place the circular wire, extra wire, wire cutters, and some greenery.

Have other areas where folk can get extra greenery, choose their embellishments and use a glue gun. Ask someone to give a demonstration at the start of the evening or to give step by step instructions. It might be helpful to give each table a laminated sheet of instructions as ladies work at a different pace! Serve refreshments at the beginning or mid-way through the evening and this would be a good time to introduce the speaker that will share her testimony or a short gospel presentation. Encourage women to chat around the tables and perhaps discuss the message.



New Year Meal.

People usually have family gatherings on 31st December, so our New Year Meal has usually taken place in the first week of January. The menu needs to be a little lighter than usual - after the over indulgences of Christmas, most ladies are on a diet by January! New Year Resolutions and apprehension about what the coming year will bring are often themes for these events.



Chinese New Year

Dates: 2022 - Tuesday, February 1st 2023 - Sunday, January 22nd

Valentine's Day

Valentine's Meal. Naturally, this was a couples' event but the principle was still for a church-couple to invite a non-church couple to come along for an evening out together. We asked for volunteers amongst church members to babysit for a younger couple to come and bring friends. Other ladies cooked, served etc, so that no-one felt left out. The theme of 'love' led straight to the gospel message.

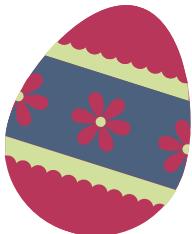


St David's Day A Taste of Wales.

Held on March 1st, we had a simple supper of Cawl with Welsh cheeses followed by Welsh Cakes and Bara Brith.



Easter Easter Egg Hunt. Easter Trail - See 'Nativity Trail' for practical help.



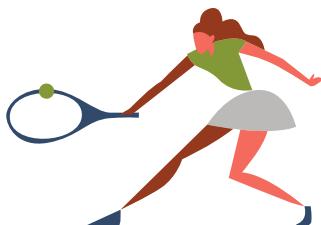
American Evening

July 4th.
Thanksgiving.



Wimbledon

Wimbledon Tea. We watched the Ladies' Singles Final together on the big screen in church and then had a cream tea together afterwards. Strawberries essential.



Specific Celebrations

Royal Celebrations. The Queen's Jubilees and Royal Weddings have been good excuses for a ladies' meal - even an 'indoor street party' on one occasion.



Awareness Days.

Taking advantage of these annual awareness days.



Summer

Summer Evening. Summer's here - let's get together. The church hall was decorated in a summery/gardening theme and the menu was salmon salad. Easy!

Wish you were here! This was another summer outreach meal, but with a Cruise Ship theme. It took some creativity to turn the church hall into the deck of a Cruise Ship, but it was great fun. It's amazing what effects you can achieve with a stripey deck chair and a straw hat!



VE Day. Commemoration of dates such as VE Day appeal to an older audience, you can change the style and approach to suit the age group. For instance, you could prepare a lunch or afternoon tea (Spam sandwiches optional) as this age group would probably prefer that to an evening event.

3. Other One-Off Events

Running

If you have some keen runners in your church and there aren't many local running clubs, what about setting up your own free running club? In Machen, Caerphilly, a church has set up a Parkrun and the majority of the volunteers are from the local church. After the run they invite everyone back to the church hall for tea, coffee and bacon sandwiches! This communicates to the community clearly that the church is there to serve them and that they love them.

Women's netball league

Organise a regular training session and invite friends along to join the team. This gives women the opportunity to play sport in a more relaxed setting. You could encourage other churches to set up a team and hold local tournaments. Some churches in Cardiff have set up netball teams and compete in a league. The main purpose of this is to create friendships through shared enjoyment that could open the door to gospel conversations e.g. going for a coffee after training.

Badminton Evening

As a church we hire a few badminton courts on a Monday evening and play a variety of casual games. Members are encouraged to bring their non Christian friends along from the local community.

A variety of fitness or dance workouts (e.g. Zumba)

Encourage church members who are qualified or who have a passion to share their love of exercise to lead sessions which people can bring their friends along to. This will go well with the trend of encouraging both physical and spiritual wellness.

Life Issues

An evening where a subject is discussed by a panel e.g. a doctor or another professional, and a Christian who has first hand experience of the specific issue. These evenings can touch on people's sensitivities and can raise questions of suffering and God, so they need to be prepared sensitively and with wisdom. Some ideas could include mental health, miscarriage, bereavement, fostering/adoption, divorce and illness.





Accessory Swap

An evening of swapping scarves, jewellery, bags etc. Easy to arrange, and went down very well. All rounded off with a bite to eat and a gospel talk.

'Because you're worth it'

We hear that message so much in advertising, but so many people feel worth-less. This was an opportunity for our speaker to explain how precious we all are to God and how Jesus was willing to die for us 'because we're worth it'.

Pamper Evening

We asked our ladies:
Who has a foot spa? Massage chair? Scented candles? Who can paint nails?
Who can give a facial? Who can make a face pack?

Go with what you've got. Who doesn't want to be pampered once in a while? We served drinks and nibbles, and we had lots of time to chat. Offering babysitting was key in helping it work, and all those who baby-sat were DBS checked. The evening included a very short talk based on us being 'fearfully and wonderfully made'.

Just Desserts

This was intended to be a once-monthly evening for ladies, and the suggestion was that they would just have drinks and desserts. The feeling was that many would need to feed their family first, so we met at 8pm in a local hotel. Church members invited family, friends and neighbours.

Much of the first evening was chat over the dessert, and then we had a photo quiz based on famous faces. It's not always easy to recognize someone. This led into a 2 minute talk about recognizing Jesus as God's Son.

Unfortunately, in the community where it was tried there was no alternative place to meet, and it was generally felt that the price of the coffee and dessert was too high for most people. The lesson is to plan well ahead – the organizers worked one month at a time – and find a place and style that works for the people you are trying to reach.



Chocolate Tasting

Lots of fun things to do - chocolate tasting, blind tasting to name the type of chocolate, chocolate fountain... and of course, lots of chocolate cake! So many turn to the ultimate comfort food when things are tough, but where does real comfort come from? Or rather, who does it come from?

Step by Step

We had a 'reception' point where folk were greeted, welcomed and given a score card on which there were a list of games plus space for a score. Participants carried this around to each game and were awarded a mark out of 10 by the person looking after the game. Whoever was looking after a game needed a pen and timer. Discretion was used depending on age of the participants - younger members needed to be allocated a little more time.

A series of 'stations' (tables) were arranged around the room, all with a chocolate theme. Some ideas:

- Chocolate Tasting. You'll need a selection of 5 different chocolate bars, blindfolds. A variety of chocolate bars are cut up into very small pieces and individuals (1 from each group, blindfolded) have to identify the chocolate bars.
- Smarties / M&Ms / Maltesers Transfer. (Other brands of chocolate work just as well.) You'll need 2 bowls, one empty and one containing 10 smarties (or similar chocolate), and a pair of chopsticks. Using the chopsticks, see how many chocolates an individual can transfer from the full bowl into the empty bowl in 10 / 20 seconds.
- Suck the Buttons. Similar to above. You'll need 2 bowls, one empty and one containing chocolate buttons, and straws. Using a straw how many sweets can an individual transfer by sucking from the full bowl to the empty bowl in 10/20 seconds.
- Fancy Dress Feast. You'll need a selection of gloves, mittens, hats and scarves, a large bar of chocolate, plastic or wooden knives and forks. Again, in a given time of 20 seconds, the participant has to put on a hat, scarf and gloves and using the plastic/wooden knife and fork, see how many cubes of chocolate they can cut off the block.
- After Eight Tower. You'll need After Eight Mints (or something similar) and gloves. Wearing gloves, how high a tower of mints can someone build (leaning them against each other) in 20 seconds.
- How many in the jar? You'll need a glass sweet jar containing Maltesers or any chocolate sweets. Participants guess how many sweets are in the jar. The nearest one gets 10 / 20 / 30 points - you choose. This might help as a 'decider' if scores are close!

While score cards are being counted, have someone give a short talk/epilogue. Then serve refreshments and award prizes ... possibly chocolates??

- Refreshments. Hot chocolate, any variety of chocolate tray-bakes and cakes, a chocolate fountain (with marshmallows and fruit to dip - young children will need to be supervised as will the chocolate fountain!)



'Bake Off' Evening



Idea 1. This was our 'take' on the TV competition. Instead of competing against one another, we invited 4 ladies to make or bake something that had a story behind it or had featured in a significant way in their lives. One lady was able to show us how to make the fried potato cakes her Mum had made for her. She was part of a large family, and had grown up in Zimbabwe. Not only did she remember how her Mum had fed many mouths, with little money or resources, but how she had trusted God to care for her and her growing family. Her Mum was faithful in pointing her, and others, to the Lord.

Ideal 2. People were invited to bring a particular type of bake e.g. cake, dessert. Everyone who attended then had chance to taste and to vote on them. The hardest part of this was working out a scoring system that was easy to run, and (incredibly) having to taste so many things! The secret, only taste a small amount of each. Non-bakers could come just to taste – but you do need enough cakes/desserts to make it competitive. Awarded a prize of some sort. A food-themed short talk was given at an appropriate point in the evening.

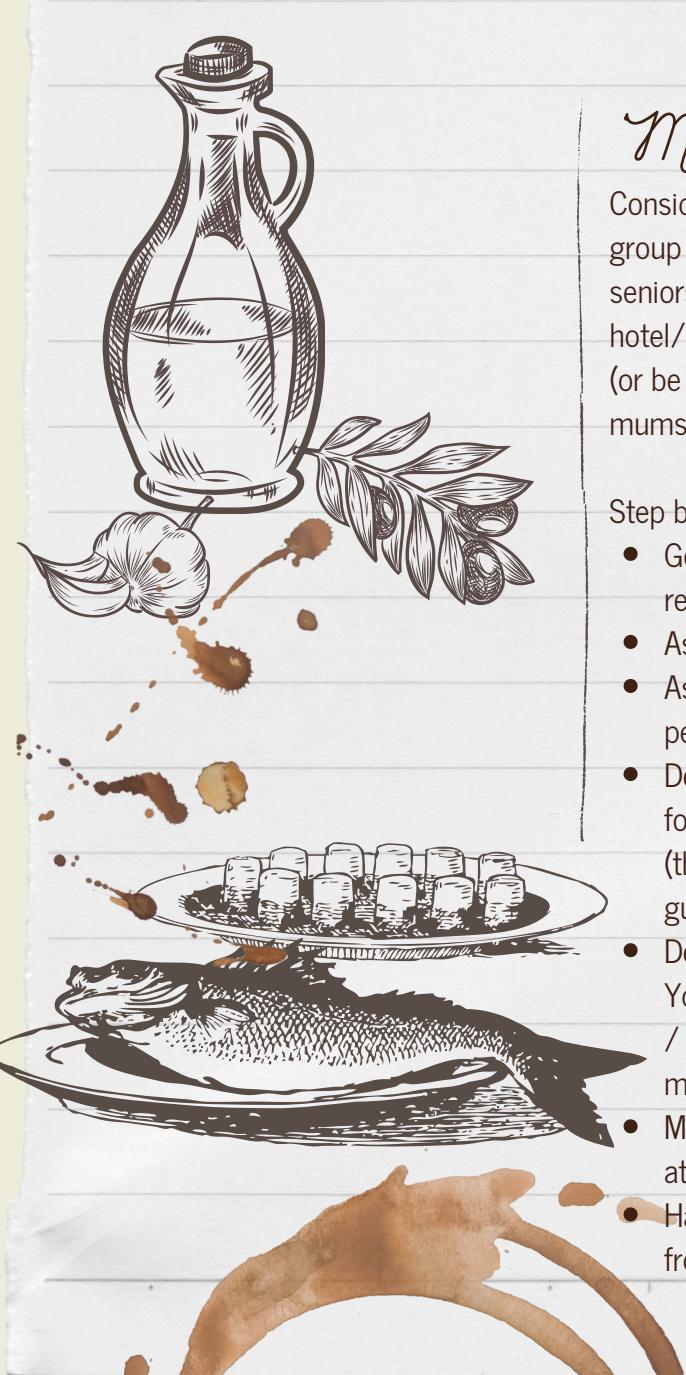
Sunday Tea for the Elderly (Monthly)

I used to work for Contact the Elderly, now called Re-engage, setting up CONTACT groups in South and Mid Wales. CONTACT groups consisted of volunteer drivers, volunteer hosts and isolated elderly people. Once a month, on a Sunday, the group would get together for afternoon tea. Drivers would pick up one or two older people each and bring them to tea at the home of a local host. People had a lovely time, and you could see their mood and their desire and ability to communicate improve over the course of the afternoon. Even physical ailments seemed much better by the time we dropped people off. It was not always possible to find hosts with big enough homes (and tea pots!) to fit everyone in so we would often meet at community halls etc.

Not long after that, I started attending chapel and was saved and baptised! I suggested that we partner with Re-engage and run our own CONTACT group. We wanted to be useful in the community and share God's love. Volunteer drivers, cake bakers, sandwich makers and washer-uppers all come from chapel. All our guests come from the local community.

We 'recruited' guests by finding out where older people were meeting – we made contact and invited ourselves to go along and talk to them. We visited a local luncheon club, a local sheltered scheme and put something in the paper. We very quickly had 8 older guests that increased to 13 in no time. We've had a lovely and blessed time over the last few years – our guests are so grateful and turn out come rain or shine.





Meal Out

Consider going out for an evening, perhaps with a specific age group in mind e.g. young mums, mums with teenagers, carers, seniors. There maybe the opportunity to book a room in a local hotel/cricket club/coffee shop. Invite a speaker to give a short talk (or be interviewed) at some point during the evening. If it's a young mums' evening, ask a health visitor to speak.

Step by step:

- Go to the restaurant for a meal yourself first. They may recognise you when you go back and ask about a meal event!
- Ask them when are the quietest evenings.
- Ask what deals they would offer if you could guarantee 30/40 people eating.
- Decide on a ticket price then ask church to subsidize payment for your guests or offer to pay for your invited guest yourself (this will depend on the relationship you have already with your guest).
- Decide on a good topic for a talk or an interview with someone. Your guests must be aware that they are coming to hear a talk / an interview. This must not come as a surprise after the meal, this is the purpose of the evening / meal out!
- Make sure your speaker can be heard. Ask about amplification at the venue / think about a portable PA system.
- Have some free literature for guests to take away e.g. literature from '10ofthose'



Quiz Evening

Run 3-4 rounds, then pause for food of some sort. At the end of the food - as people settle down to the last few rounds - a short talk that links the gospel to a quiz theme e.g. to a well-known TV quiz. Or the talk can happen while the scores are being added up. Include a variety of rounds e.g. pictures, music, as well as more traditional questions.

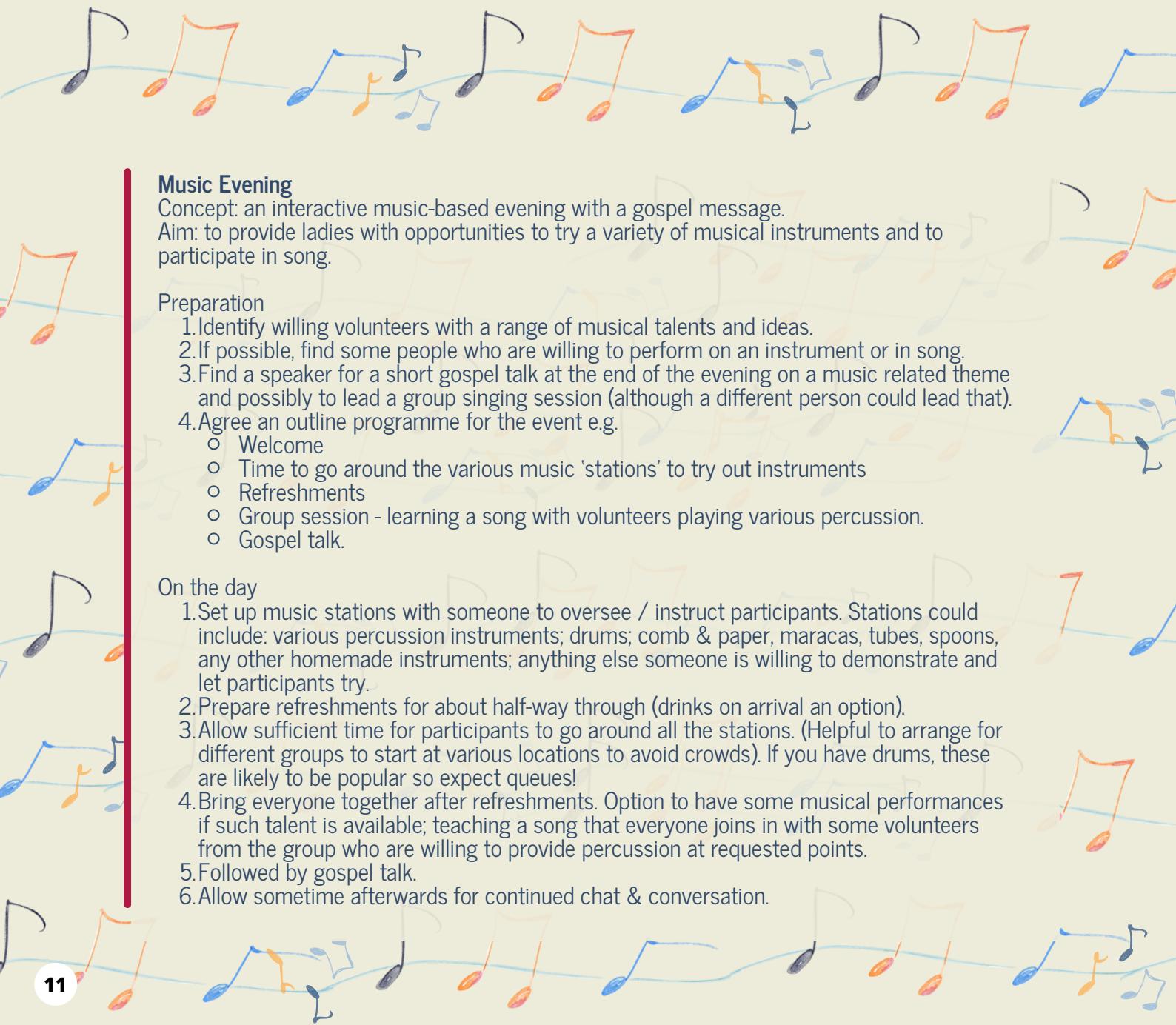


Craft Evening

1. These evenings are great opportunities to share our crafting skills with one another, try out something new or just watch how it's done. Creativity is one of the characteristics of our God, who made everything, in such colour and beauty. These evenings are always rounded off with cakes and coffee.

An example, one of the church members taught us how to make tissue paper flowers of different designs. She had printed out a small card for everyone that included the verse 'Consider the lilies of the field...' and talked about God's care for us. The talk lasted just a couple of minutes.

2. Craft events are a great way to engage communities- including specific groups of wanted such as women, families or older people. They provide fantastic opportunities for relationship building, making communities aware of who you are, and 'easy' invite opportunities for the congregation. Many people feel more confident if they are doing something together, and it gives a good opportunity to chat.



Music Evening

Concept: an interactive music-based evening with a gospel message.

Aim: to provide ladies with opportunities to try a variety of musical instruments and to participate in song.

Preparation

1. Identify willing volunteers with a range of musical talents and ideas.
2. If possible, find some people who are willing to perform on an instrument or in song.
3. Find a speaker for a short gospel talk at the end of the evening on a music related theme and possibly to lead a group singing session (although a different person could lead that).
4. Agree an outline programme for the event e.g.
 - Welcome
 - Time to go around the various music 'stations' to try out instruments
 - Refreshments
 - Group session - learning a song with volunteers playing various percussion.
 - Gospel talk.

On the day

1. Set up music stations with someone to oversee / instruct participants. Stations could include: various percussion instruments; drums; comb & paper, maracas, tubes, spoons, any other homemade instruments; anything else someone is willing to demonstrate and let participants try.
2. Prepare refreshments for about half-way through (drinks on arrival an option).
3. Allow sufficient time for participants to go around all the stations. (Helpful to arrange for different groups to start at various locations to avoid crowds). If you have drums, these are likely to be popular so expect queues!
4. Bring everyone together after refreshments. Option to have some musical performances if such talent is available; teaching a song that everyone joins in with some volunteers from the group who are willing to provide percussion at requested points.
5. Followed by gospel talk.
6. Allow sometime afterwards for continued chat & conversation.

4. Regular Events, Short Courses, Resources



Care for the Family
Courses, Resources



Book Club



Christianity Explored
Course, Resource



Christians Against Poverty
(CAP) Courses, Resources



Come Dine with Me.



Film Club.
Film followed by discussion e.g.
'The Help', 'Hidden Figures'

5. Step by Step

Some opportunities written up in more detail.



A) NATIVITY TRAIL

People are always looking for festive things to do around Christmas time. Putting on a Nativity Trail, either as an individual or as a church, is a good way to reach out to your local community and share the true message of Christmas! It will give you opportunities to meet with families in your area and build relationships with them; but it is also something that people can access throughout the Christmas season, which we can trust God to use to grow His Kingdom (regardless of whether we see the fruit or not)!

Some things to consider when planning your trail:

- **Timescale:** it could run for a day or two, with helpers along the way; or it could be up for a few weeks around Christmas for people to access as they are able.
- **Route:** think about which area to use and a suitable route. Consider how long you want the trail to take, whether it's pushchair/wheelchair friendly, and where you will place your clues (lampposts, windows, other). Walk around the route to check it works.
- **Permissions:** if using public lampposts (as opposed to the windows of people you know), contact your local council to get permission.
- **Map:** create a map or list of directions for participants to use to find the clues. These could be accessed on a website, given out as paper copies or saved on Google Maps (link can be shared by website, social media, messages).
- **Content:** Consider what to include on your clues. Some ideas – bright colours, bold text, pictures, numbers, QR code (e.g. to link to church website), questions or activities to complete, church logo.
- **Materials:** you will need some/all of the following – card/paper, printer, laminator/laminating sheets (especially if outside, to protect from rain), glue, scissors, guillotine, cable ties for lampposts/blue tack for windows, prizes (plus envelopes and stamps if posting prizes).
- **Timings:** allow time to plan your route/map/resources, put up the clues, publicise, give out prizes and take down the clues. Consider whether you want to use the Trail to promote other Christmas outreach events or services.
- **Publicity:** decide how you will let people know about the Trail. This could be via a website, social media, flyers, personal invitations.
- **Prizes:** if you are giving out a prize pack, consider elements like a Christian book, tract, candy cane or other treats, stickers, church contact cards. Make plans for collecting participants details so that packs can be delivered by volunteers/posted/collected in person.
- **Further info:** give the option for people to follow up on what they've read. Perhaps include a link to your church website, an invitation to church or an outreach event, contact details to find out more.

"Brothers and sisters, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labour in the Lord is not in vain." 1 Cor. 15:58



B) COMMUNITY CAROL SINGING

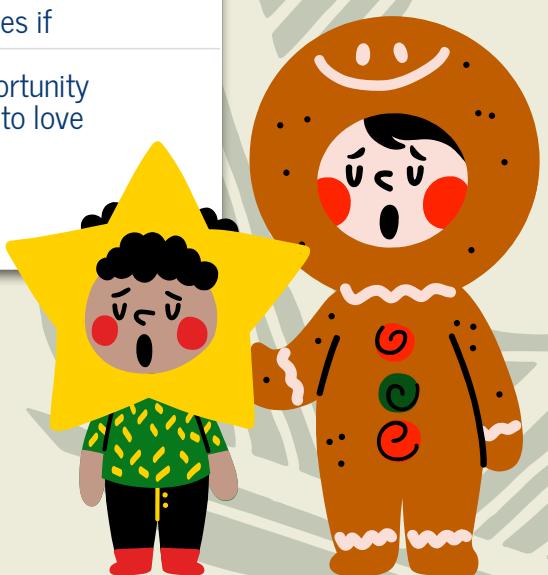
Christmas is a great time to engage the community as people are looking for 'Christmassy' things to do! Also, many have either been brought up understanding the 'Christmas story' so are happy to hear about it, or are intrigued to find out more. As well as the many examples of opportunities to invite people 'in', through events and services, Christmas also gives an opportunity to go 'out' into the community! For example, get involved in community-run activities, serve at local school Christmas Fairs, and enjoy Carol Singing. We have gone Community Carol Singing around the streets local to the church. It can be a great opportunity to advertise upcoming events/ services, promote who you are, and build relationships with the local community.

Top tips: Before the event.

- This can be a whole church activity, or a particular group if you're wanting a more niche opportunity e.g. youth, women, a home group, families etc.
- Get a musical person to lead the group i.e. count you in, set the key, work out which verses you'll sing etc
- Get some music sheets for everyone to sing from. Some carols have a lot of verses!
- Consider splitting into multiple groups if there are lots of you / depending on the area you are going around (width of pavements, can you stand in the road safely etc)
- You could either walk a pre-designated route, or set up in a few different areas at different times and drive between locations. If walking, consider those who may not be able to walk as far (young kids, older people etc) and plan safe routes.
- Advertise on social media or posters beforehand where you'll be. Get people excited to look out for you. To build interest, you can even ask the public to suggest what streets to visit!
- If you think it worthwhile, you can organise a practice beforehand. Encourage the musical members of your congregation to come along and help keep the rest of the group going. (Although it's not all about quality, you want to sound as good as you can.)
- Think about look and feel. This would ideally happen in the dark, so consider bringing along some lanterns. Battery powered tealights in jam jars (or transparent plastic cups for kids) with some string to create a handle work really well! Wear Christmas jumpers, carry leaflets in wicker baskets etc

During the event

- Remember it takes longer than you think to walk a big group of people around, so plan the time carefully.
- You can try and chat to people who come out and watch you. Introduce who you are, and use the opportunity to build relationships!
- You can have a few people to give out flyers / post through letterboxes if you want to advertise upcoming events / services.
- People will likely try and give you money. You can use this as an opportunity to say who you are and why you're doing it, that you are just wanting to love the community and tell people about X events coming up!



C) 'COLOUR ME BEAUTIFUL'

Way back in Jan 2020, when Corona was still a fizzy drink, we put on a woman's event entitled 'New Year, New You.' We were especially keen to invite mums from our Jelly Tots group and enable women in the church to invite their friends to a fun evening which included: a clothes swap; a presentation from a colour consultant at 'Colour Me Beautiful', and a gospel challenge.

'Colour Me Beautiful' is a service which provides fashion & style consultants to help women dress well and 'feel fabulous in every way.'

The aim of the evening wasn't just to identify what colour clothes we should be wearing, though her analysis of each one of us was incredible. Who knew navy was a universal colour?! Go, check your wardrobes! And though the presentation was fun, interactive and interesting, the most exciting part was the chance to share a gospel talk on identity. Using the story of the Samaritan woman, we were able to explore that who we are isn't as important as whose we are. And the security of knowing Jesus is the only way to 'feel fabulous in every way'.

It took a lot of organisation and some wonderful helpers to sort the donated clothes & shoes, hang them on rails according to colour and serve refreshments on the night. The cost of hiring the lady with her expertise was expensive, but worth every penny. We also gave each guest a little gift bag with a lovely handwritten verse used in the talk, as well as free beauty gifts which we'd begged and borrowed from local department stores.

We prayed and prayed again for this event as we weren't sure if it would work. God was kind, of course. Many people came, over half weren't from the church. Praise God! It was 10:30 pm when some of our friends left the building for their homes! There were a couple of good conversations on the back of the event. Some of the school mums still wear the clothes they swapped that evening! And so we just continue to pray that by God's spirit, the words they heard will eventually adorn their hearts.

D) ENGLISH CONVERSATION – ‘TIME TO TALK’

1. English conversation.

This was first brought to my attention by our Pastor as part of an outreach into the community, in particular the opportunity to offer English conversation to Eastern Europeans in the town. Initially, we had several meetings with about four interested individuals in the fellowship. In these meetings it was decided not to market this as lessons, but rather ‘English conversation’ - an opportunity to practise English. None of us were TEFL trained. However, I have a background in language teaching which is why I was approached in the first place. In retrospect it was necessary, as the people who came were all at different levels so some language teaching skills were helpful. I spoke to people who had run this type of activity before to gain some insight into potential pitfalls. It was decided it would need a name for advertisement purposes and we were able to have the name translated into Polish, Arabic as well as English. Several resources were recommended to us by other groups but more often than not we produced our own to cater for the needs of those who came.

- It was often topic based which gave us opportunity to show an interest in their families, customs and practices. It became a two way communication or even three way!
- We advertised in the library, local schools and the Polish shops in town by putting up posters and leaving flyers.
- We were able to build relationships with them over a period of time and ensured that they were not taken out of their comfort zone. We kept it lighthearted.
- The sessions were usually divided into 3 parts, depending on numbers. We would start as one group then split into smaller groups with activities to practise/talk about and then come back as one group again.
- Simple refreshments were always provided.
- We were careful not to divert from the language teaching, but Christmas and Easter gave us great opportunities to firstly share how these festivals were celebrated in their countries. They even brought a Polish meal for us to eat one Christmas! It also gave us an opportunity to let them hear the Christmas and Easter accounts in English and Polish courtesy of the Bible app. - We had plans to hold a simple Carol Service for them as well.

2. Friends International

International Cafe (weekly/fortnightly). Some International Cafes feature a short bible talk each week. Other ways of introducing Christian content from the front that can help spark off deeper conversations for those who are interested include: testimonies; announcements; thought for the day; drama. See Friends International link for more details:
www.friendsinternational.uk/free-ministry-resources/?category=cafe-ministry

3. English Classes/ Conversation Café

Things to consider:

- Pray that you will be able to clearly share the gospel with the folk you will meet.
- Find out what other free provision already exists in your locality to identify any gaps.
- Speaking is usually the skill most in need of practise with a first language English speaker, so try to organise lessons/activities based on this.
- Find out from those who attend if there is anything else you can help them with (e.g. filling in forms).
- Decide what form your gospel input will take and make sure that your advertising makes this clear e.g. “The evening will include a short talk about the Christian message.”
- Advertise in the job centre, on local social media, community notice boards, the library (if permission is given).
- If you have contact with a local school, see about advertising there.
- If possible, run this in the church building so that people know where to come for other church activities.
- Provide free refreshments.
- Make some simple English gospels freely available e.g NLT Mark’s gospel.
- Have a selection of literature available in other languages if possible.
- Have church flyers/leaflets available so you can invite people to other church activities as you have opportunity.
- Change your approach if you identify a new, or changed, need.
- Get plenty of people from your church involved.
- Show that you genuinely care for people’s needs, both spiritual and practical.

Things to avoid:

- Going overboard on the refreshments, this may cause embarrassment.
- Being shy about the gospel, you are doing this because you are a Christian.
- Running something on your own, open invitations mean anyone can turn up.

E) PARENTING IS NOT FOR COWARDS!

Churches can have a significant role to play in coming alongside and giving support to families. Toddler groups, nursery schools, after school clubs and holiday clubs are some ways to help and have good contact with families. Thank God for all of these and more!

We have also found that running a parenting course with people who have grown to know and trust us, is hugely appreciated and very helpful. You may need to get over the assumption that parenting courses are for failing parents. (Helpful hint, you could say... "We are running a new course - would you come along and tell us if you think the material is any good?" This puts the spotlight on the course not the parent.) When you have run a successful course, it will get round by word of mouth and you can use quotes from parents to advertise the next course.

In itself a parenting course is a good thing, however, at the end we have offered an optional extra session to look at Family Values and Spiritual Development. (Almost everyone comes, as they have enjoyed the course, built good relationships with us, and consider that what we have to say is worth listening to.) In this session we've explored our responsibility to guide our children in the big issues of life and considered questions children may ask and how we can help their spiritual development.

The aims:

- to consider our own values and beliefs and what we will pass on,
- to raise awareness of the spiritual dimension to life,
- to outline some Christian perspectives,
- to signpost next steps people can take (i.e. church events, Alpha, Christianity Explored) Essentially we are posing the question "How do you answer your children's questions, if no-one has answered yours?!"

This is not a presentation of the gospel, but opens up discussion in a relaxed way, and is designed as a bridge to hearing the good news. (The material for this session was put together by us, we are happy to share it if others are interested, but it is not professionally produced.) Some comments on this discussion include 'It was one of the most useful sessions of the course.' 'I need to find out more.' 'Can I bring the children on Sunday?' Many parents have commented how helpful it is to discuss the question of spiritual dimension to life in a light, open atmosphere. The biggest problem was getting people to go home at the end! Almost every time someone has journeyed from this session to salvation.

I have used **Care for the Family's 'Time out for Parents'** courses and found them interactive, practical and easy to adapt to different situations.

The courses:

Families come in all shapes and sizes, often struggling with the challenges of bringing up their children in today's demanding world. (Many would say parenting is 50% worry and 50% guilt!).

- recognise the good things parents are already doing,
- provide a reassuring environment where parents can learn new skills, - encourage changes that may help,
- remind parents they are not alone.

One parent wrote 'I would recommend this course as I learnt to laugh again and have fun with my child. To see a happy face and discipline all at the same time.'

For information and details of courses go to careforthefamily.org.uk In order to run the 'Time out for Parents' courses you need to do Care for the Family training (which is excellent). There may well be a trained facilitator in your area who would run the 6 sessions for you. It is worth emailing or having a conversation with them on the phone.

F) ONE TO ONE BIBLE DISCUSSION

Why? Evangelism is introducing someone to Jesus, discipleship is bringing them closer to Jesus to know Him better. The best way to do both is to read the Bible with them. We don't need to divide evangelism and discipleship in our methods, we can lay the foundations of the Christian life right from the beginning by helping people see Christ in Scripture so that they continue to see and hear His voice as they grow in Him.

'For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, "The righteous shall live by faith." Romans 1:16-17. God's good news is powerful to save, so let's bring people to His Son by opening up His word with them and ask the Holy Spirit do work!'

Get into a position to ask.

Do you have non-Christians in your life that you know well or have recently started building a friendship with? If not, get out there! Join a society or club, volunteer in your community, go for coffee with a work colleague, get to know someone better at the school gate. Don't wait for people to come to church events, you go to them in whatever way possible in your stage of life.

Don't be shy to ask. As you get to know people, be an ambassador for Christ. Mention your faith naturally in conversations. Ask what they believe about different topics and listen well to their thoughts and opinions before asking, "would you like to know what I think ... I base all that on Jesus' life and teaching." Then you could go on to ask "would you like to look at what Jesus actually said and did? We could look together at a biography of his life, they're historical documents written by eye-witnesses." Or simply "do you want to read the Bible with me and see for yourself what Jesus said and did?" (All that doesn't usually happen in one conversation.)

Suggested Resources:

- UCCF Uncover Mark, Luke and John
- Study Bible
- The Word One to One
- The Good Book Guide to Mark by Tim Chester
- Christianity Explored
- Podcast: Help me teach the Bible with Nancy Guthrie
- Get in touch for resources to read the Bible with friends from other religions.

What to do. Meet somewhere they feel comfortable. Ask them where is best to meet. You could offer your home, or go to their house or meet in a cafe. Be flexible. Start with one of the 4 gospels, introduce them to Jesus! Pick a gospel that you are most comfortable with or that has blessed you recently as your enthusiasm and passion for the text is far more powerful than a perfectly organized Bible Study. Start as you mean to go on, model a good habit of reading the Bible (e.g. pray before and after) it's far easier to continue the way you've started rather than adding things every week. But don't be scared to adapt things if needed and develop.

Know your "audience". You might need to explain that the big numbers mean chapters and the small numbers mean verses. Don't ask them to read the text out loud, they might not be used to that. Keep it simple and accessible, remember, you're introducing your friend to Jesus not scratching every theological itch you may have. You can follow a resource or prepare a simple study yourself (you might get more out of it that way). You could ask a more mature Christian to go through the passage with you before meet with your friend.

Ask open questions, ask comprehension questions of the texts to clarify understanding. Or use a similar structure every time, like these 4 simple questions for example:

1. What do we learn about God or Jesus from these verses?
2. What to learn about ourselves (humanity)?
3. How does this link into the unfolding gospel story in the rest of scripture?
4. *What should my response be to God, others and personally? (* You might not ask the question like this to begin with.)

This is the bit where you do the talking and lead them to OT passages that are prophesies of the text you're studying or that explore a similar theme. Maybe if they have some Bible knowledge already you could ask "does that sound like anything else you've read before?" Allow questions of all kind and remember it's ok to say "I don't know, I haven't thought of that, I'll look into it." If they have things they're burning to ask, let them ask, don't feel you have to power through the Bible Study, be flexible and respond to their needs.

What else? Introduce them to more of the church family in different contexts so that you're not the only Christian they know. Meet them socially too, not just when you read the Bible together (meal with your family, go for a walk, cinema, trip to the beach). Bring them to church and pray, pray, pray!

6. Top Tips When Planning An Event

Many of our events are meal-based. This gives ladies the opportunity to invite friends along to the church building where they can enjoy a relaxed evening and be spoiled for a little while. We have been able to use either the hall or our main church building as numbers have dictated. It's a great way for people who have never been inside the building to feel the warmth of welcome that awaits them. We have had lots of different themes for these evenings, but the aim is always to make the food, the decorations and the ambiance the very best that it can be, so that people will feel that everything possible has been done to make their evening enjoyable and memorable. We do this so that they will be keen to come along again to other church events and special services during the year.

We think it's important to produce attractive, good quality invitations for ladies to give to their friends when they invite them and encourage our ladies only to take an invitation for themselves if they are bringing along a non-church lady. This not only gives us a good indication of numbers to cook for, but helps us in our aim of having 50% of the attendees from a non-church background.

Amazingly, some of our ladies will bring along 4 or 5 neighbours or bowling club friends, but it's important that there are plenty of church ladies available to talk with such groups - otherwise they will sit together in a huddle and not interact with a wider, gospel-focussed discussion. In these instances we encourage another church lady or two to join that party and get to know the guests. We have learned things as we've gone along and 'tweaked' our evenings in order to achieve the best possible gospel-focussed experience.

Some 'top tips' as you prepare:



Theme. It doesn't really matter what the theme of the evening is - it is simply a vehicle by which we can invite people to come along.



Tickets. This helps give an indication of numbers. Allocate the job of designing and printing them to someone who is comfortable and confident in doing that. Say that there will be a speaker. Ask someone to be responsible for allocating tickets. We do not charge for tickets but rely on church ladies to cover the costs. However, if a visitor wants to make a donation towards the meal that they have enjoyed, accept it gratefully and graciously. Some people would feel embarrassed if they thought they were accepting charity and this would put them off coming again.



Decorations. Great effects can be achieved with inexpensive items. Church ladies are very creative with colourful serviettes, Christmas baubles, flowers from their own gardens and much more. Ask around for bunting and bits and pieces that fit in with your theme. You will be amazed what people have stashed away - and what they are able to do with it! Christmas decorations can often remain in place over the whole Christmas period rather than just for one evening.



Welcome. Make sure there are two friendly people at the door to give a warm welcome to guests as they arrive. People won't know where to put their coats, umbrellas etc, or where the toilets are, and all these small things make people feel comfortable and relaxed from the start. Offer a welcome drink so that people can mingle and chat - a hot punch drink is always very much appreciated on a cold, wet winter's night.



Music. This will help achieve a relaxed atmosphere. If you have gifted musicians who can act as bar pianist or instrumentalists who can provide live, background music, that's great! If not, have some recorded music in the background to set the scene.



The Meal. When it comes to serving the meal, someone to act as Maitre D is always helpful. They will keep things well organised and flowing between kitchen and dining area and make sure everyone is served well.



Servers. If you can persuade some of the men of the church to act as waiters, this always goes down well.



Speaker. Choose your speaker wisely. This is a time for an engaging, winsome speaker, not a 45 minute sermon. Give your speaker a clear 'brief' about the purpose of the evening and the makeup of the audience. We have found that it is better to schedule the talk between main course and dessert. If you leave it until the end of the meal there will always be people who will make an excuse to slip away. There are very few who will leave if they haven't had their dessert! It also gives church ladies an opportunity to follow up on what the speaker has said over dessert and coffee.

And finally...



One practical tip I found most helpful when setting up an event, is to put myself in the non-christian / invitee shoes.
I take a step back and ask;
What do I see? What can I hear? What do I smell?
What will I touch? What can I taste?
This helps ensure that both the venue and the event
are engaging all five senses.

Spin-offs. The main purpose of these events is to reach out beyond the church to share Jesus with people who don't know him. However, we have found that there are benefits within the church too. Gospel work along these lines gives people in the fellowship an opportunity to be involved in some way. It is a chance to draw in those who are on the edges of our fellowships by asking them to help. They may have never had the chance to serve in any particular way or thought that their skills would not be wanted or used by the church. Many will have creative skills you never even knew about and will be pleased to design and decorate, others will be prepared to man the dishwasher (no small feat when there are 80+ guests). Others will be able to lay tables beforehand, peel carrots on the day, babysit for other helpers on the night or wash the tablecloths afterwards. There is something everyone can contribute, and this gives us a wonderful opportunity to acknowledge their servant-hearted contribution and thank them for it. 'There's a work for Jesus none but you can do!'

Use of Eventbrite (an event management tool)

Knowing who is coming to your events is a really useful planning tool for some types of events- especially where there is a limit on capacity or you need to plan resources. In the Covid and post-Covid world of events, it has become even more necessary to know who is coming on occasions.

What: Eventbrite is a free to use, online tool to manage bookings, 'tickets' and attendees for both in-person and online events.

Why: Using Eventbrite or a similar attendee management tool helps to keep track of who is booking to come to your event, help you manage capacity or time slots etc, take payments if necessary (but beware of fees), and keep in contact with attendees either for or after the event. You can also take details that you might need to run the event- allergies, kids ages, whether they want to hear more about the church etc. (During Covid-times, this also gives details for any contact tracing needed).

How: You'll need to sign up to a free account online. Create your event, list your tickets, set capacities and when you want 'sales' to end. You'll be given a unique web address- and can use this in your advertising. As people book on you can see and edit the records, and download an Excel document to use as a check in list. If you want people to print out physical tickets you can, or they can remain virtual.

When: This can be used for any event that you might have a capacity limit, time slots, or a resource / planning need where you need to know more information about your attendees.

Find out more:
https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/support/articles/en_US/Multi_Group_How_To/how-to-create-an-event?lg=en_GB or check out You Tube videos for how to guides!

Eventbrite

7. Promotion and Invitations

How do you invite others to an event?

Praying for the event alongside promoting and inviting your community and friends is crucial! Your promotion will be steered by what kind of people you would like to engage with and what demographic they are. If your event is for retired people, there is value in printing physical posters and flyers, with less online advertising. It is important to understand how your community or people-groups find information and digest news.

Inviting Friends.

How do you usually communicate with your friends?

- Face to face is best!
- On the phone.
- Write them a letter or card, and attach a physical invitation or flyer.
- Send a private and personal message on social media (Facebook, Messenger, Twitter or Instagram) and add a digital invitation or information about the event.
- Email them with a personal message and include a link or attachment for the event.



There are a few ways to promote your event...

- Create a physical flyer/postcard to be handed out to friends.
- Create a physical poster to be pinned outside your church, in home windows, in local shops, library and public centres.
- Create a digital invitation (an image on jpg file) that can be attached to an email, be posted on a Facebook group, Instagram, Twitter and other online platforms. Be aware that every digital platform has its own 'language': for example Instagram is visual medium, while Twitter is mostly word based. Do remember to adapt the promotion material to the platform and use hashtags to link with others.
- Create a Facebook event or use Eventbrite.
- Promote your event on your church website.
- Advertise the event on local radio, in local newspapers or local community online forums.
- Flyer the streets.
- If you want to create a buzz for your event, maybe a mascot or a sandwich board might be an option!

- Free gifts relating to the time of the year e.g. mince pies at Christmas on the local high street. An invitation to your upcoming events could be on the napkin, on a cup holder or you can give a flyer with the treat..
- It might be an idea to print a weatherproof banner that big enough to hang outside your church.
- Creative promotion might include;
 - transforming your car into a Christmas vehicle that travels around your area broadcasting carols and inviting people to your carol service.
 - a public mural on a similar theme to your event. The people/artists involved will be interacting with the public passing by, creating interest. (You may need council permission.)
 - Flash-mob the town centre with a song advertising the event.

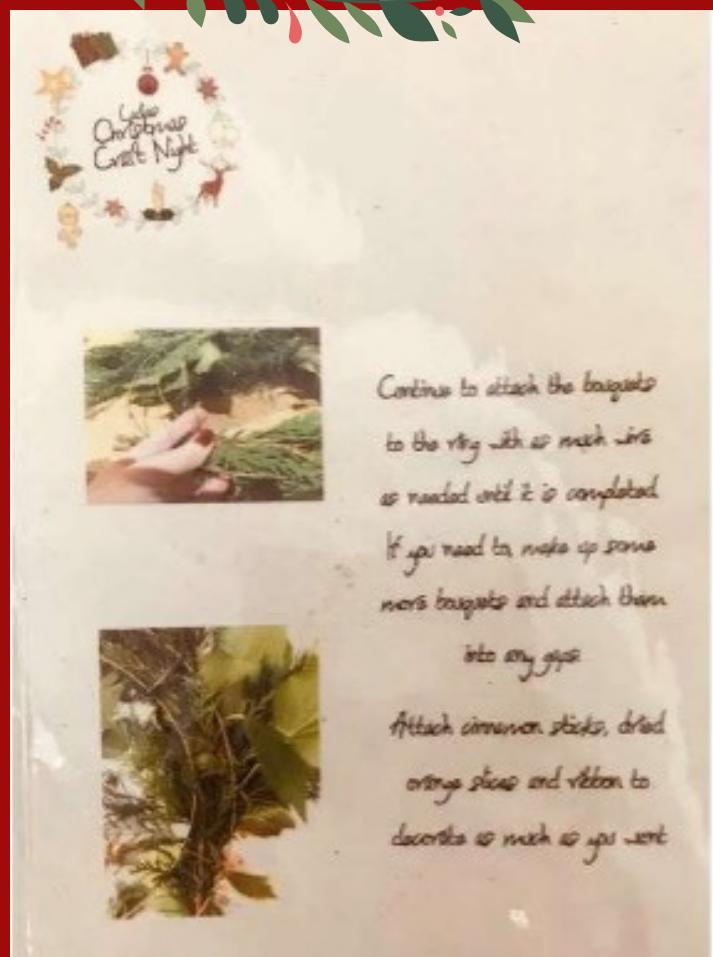
8. Follow Up

Follow Up:

A key question we often forget to ask when planning an event: What happens afterwards? **How do we follow up?** There is real benefit in thinking this through early on.

- How can we build these relationships after the event?
- How can we keep in touch or even deepen friendships to the point where talking about our faith is natural?
- What does the church do as part of its programme that might interest our friend(s)?
- Are there new things the church can do?
- How can we introduce our friend(s) to other Christians?





Creating good design.

Material and content comes from Designing Publicity by Laura Sayers. (www.lauraksayers.com)
Edited and adapted by Lois Adams for WLF 2021

The idea behind what follows is to provide some helpful guidelines for those of you who are designing or responsible for publicity. This document isn't saying that you can't have any freedom with how you design things, **but if designing publicity is something that really stresses you out, and takes you hours to make happen, then I hope this resource will point you in the right direction.**

I see publicity as an appetizer for the event. The design, colour, font, layout, look and feel of your design will communicate something of the event to the viewers. We see the sense in the phrase "don't judge a book by its cover", but that's exactly what we do so often. Publicity is the event's front cover! If you see boring or unclear publicity, would you be interested in attending the event? Would you be more inclined to attend when something looks good, professional, yet welcoming and beautiful?

Design is such a crucial part of our mission as a church. If we strive to make our publicity attractive to non-Christian friends, then it's more likely that they'll come to the event and hear about our creative creator God!



SOME THOUGHTS:

1. "Good design is invisible" according to Dieter Rams. Font should complement the images in a piece of publicity, and the design should lift the information to be the main focus. Therefore, less is more!

2. **Balance:** A piece of design should have a good balance to it. If it's too crowded, too much going on, things are off centre unintentionally, or if text isn't lined up very well it can just look convoluted and confusing.

3. **Design to the right audience:** Try and avoid using a typical sunset and motivational bible verses paired with cute animals. Unfortunately, these play into the Christian stereotype that we're unfashionable and dated, and on a more serious note that our message is without substance. We're proclaiming a great truth, and our publicity shouldn't get in the way of this by being kitsch. An idea: instead of asking your church friends for feedback about your design, ask your non-Christian friends for thoughts! In the end it is them we are trying to reach!

4. **Professional looking** publicity will show that the church is serious about its mission. If our publicity is poorly designed, pixelated, and poorly printed, then what does this say about our enthusiasm for what we believe, let alone for the glorious creator that we claim to reflect and glorify?

5. **Don't break the law!** It's breaking the copyright law to use an artist's work or images without their permission, but it doesn't hurt to ask. Make sure you know the origins of the images you're using. Alternatively, you can ask creative members of your church to create illustrations, patterns, videos or take photos for you to use.

6. **Computer Programs.** Microsoft Word or PowerPoint are not great at helping you design good posters. Adobe Creative Suite, InDesign or Photoshop are the best programs to invest in getting. There are a few free alternatives such as... 1. Canva, (This booklet was designed with Canva!), 2. Gimp or 3. Scribus.

7. To make our ministry more **relevant** to people outside of our churches, we need to be on the ball with what is fashionable in popular culture, not just within Christian culture. Try to notice the design you see on billboards, Facebook ads, album covers, magazine spreads - this is where the top designers are working and where you can take inspiration from relevant publicity.

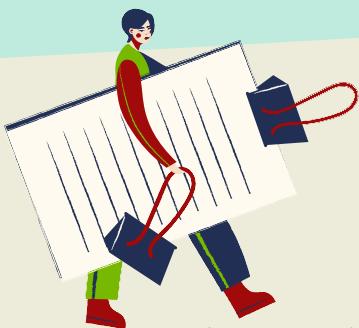
8. **Colour:** Make sure your **colours** are the right ones! You have two options here: **CMYK** or **RGB**. CMYK is best for printing and RGB is the best when you're making a file to be shared on social media channels or a website. (A printed RGB file will often look dull, and a CMYK file used on a screen will often look super neon, so make sure you're using the right colours!)

9. **Saving your files correctly.** Files to be printed should be saved as a PDF. For files to be shared online save as a JPEG or a PNG (PNG often works well when sharing to Facebook to keep the quality consistent).

To find free (without attribution) photos and illustrations etc you can go to...

- Canva; <https://www.canva.com> (design browser)
- Unsplash; <https://unsplash.com> (high quality photos)
- Pexels; <https://www.pexels.com> (photos and videos)
- Google Images but add the filter "Creative Commons licenses".
- Sounds/Music: YouTube Library, FreeSound and Purple Planete.





Taking your digital design to the printers:

- Save your file as a PDF.
- Decide on a good Printer Company: somewhere local and reasonably priced will be best. It means that you can build a relationship with the company over time and support local businesses.
- Decide on the size of your flyer/poster, for example, A6, A5, A4, A3 etc.
- Choosing your paper: GSM stands for grams per square meter and denotes the weight of the paper, so basically the thickness. Around 120gsm is a good thickness for paper and 250gsm or more is good for card. Try to avoid gloss and go for a silk or matt finish. Some companies also do textured paper (gesso) which adds a luxury feel, so it's an idea to use this if it suits your event.
- If the design is in colour and goes right to the edge, then you'll need to set up a 'bleed' (which is 3/5mm around each edge that the design extends onto) so when it's trimmed by the printers you're not left with a white edge on your flyer. Most programs have this option, but easiest to Google how to do this depending on the program you're using. If you have a good relationship with your printer company, they might do this for you!
- Make sure your image is a CMYK colour file: CMYK are the inks used by professional printing companies, so to get the best colour out of a printed design.
- What is DPI? DPI stands for dots per inch, so the more dots per inch you have, the bigger the file and the more detail you will have. An easy way to work is to keep all files that will be printed at 300dpi, and all the files made for the internet at 72dpi. This is important because printed files will look pixelated if their DPI is not high enough, and images will need to be compressed more on the internet if their DPI is too big, resulting in a bad quality image.
- What is Vector? If you are making a logo, I'd highly recommend using Adobe Illustrator as it works with vectors instead of pixels. This means you can stretch a logo as big as you like, so the file won't lose quality as it gets passed around different members of the publicity team.

If you don't have a local Printer, here are some online companies that will do a good job:

- **Printed.com** (Goodish value for money for really good quality printing, and they have a large range of paper to choose from. Good for large and small amounts of printing).
- **Mixam** (Very good value for money and perfect for large runs. Not always the best quality wise but good enough for standard flyers and posters).
- **Awesome Merchandise**. (They can literally print anything you can imagine from bottle openers to a tote bag!)
- **Christian Hoods** (this business dedicated to printing Christian Hoodies and t-shirts!)

FONTS

Typography is probably our worst enemy! Most of the time you're looking for something clear, modern and easy to read, that compliments the image it's paired with.

Guidelines:

- Never use more than three fonts. This can often be one for the title and one for the body of text below it. Third font could be used for your logo or to highlight.
- The fonts should complement each other instead of being too similar.
- Make sure the space between the lines of text is easy to read.
- Making sure the space between each letter is easy to read.

Remember to
ask for help!
We are not
meant to do
it alone!