

THE CENTRE OF CHRISTMAS

For the Team Leader

Questions to ask as you plan this are:

- ❖ Where will we do this? (*Church, park, community hall.*)
- ❖ Who are we hoping to attract to the meeting? (*All community, all our church, wider community e.g. like a carols service.*)
- ❖ How will we attract others to our meeting? (*Advertising, promotion, invitations.*)

When planning elements of the meeting, please ask yourselves:

- ❖ Can everybody do it?
- ❖ Can everybody sit through it? (*Keep each part of the meeting 5-7 minutes long for those with shorter attention spans.*)
- ❖ Can everybody understand it? (*Is the language pitched so everyone has a good chance of understanding what is being said, demonstrated or sung or prayed?*)
- ❖ Can everyone learn from it? (*Are the teaching points presented for a variety of learning styles;*

body, visual kinetic; and are they suited to a range of personality types and levels of introversion/extroversion.)

- ❖ Is everyone connecting with it? (*Are there enough connections to current life and local community, daily issues that people can see the sense in this?*)

PURPOSE:

To remind and encourage everyone that In the midst of the chaos of Christmas, Jesus is the centre.

Key Scripture

Luke 1:5 - Luke 2:20

Preparing for the Service:

Below is a meeting resource to use while children and adults are together in the meeting.

Please do not feel that you need to include everything. Choose the elements that will work for your group, your situation and your time frame.



Questions to ask as you plan this are:

- ❖ Can everybody do it? (optional joining-in is key to this, that people can do it IF they want to).
- ❖ Can everybody sit through it? (keep each part of the meeting 5-7 minutes long for those with shorter attention spans)
- ❖ Can everybody understand it? (is the language pitched so everyone has a good chance of understanding what is being said, demonstrated or sung or prayed?)
- ❖ Can everyone learn from it? (are the teaching points presented for a variety of learning styles; body, visual kinetic; and are they suited to a range of personality types and levels of introversion/extroversion.
- ❖ Is everyone connecting with it? (are there enough connections to current life and local community, daily issues that people can see the sense in this?)

This is a special service that can be led by a team, or all the members of a family, a Junior Soldiers group etc. There are a variety of activities listed to allow for interaction during the service, as well as quiet reflection and response.

Set up and decorate a large Christmas tree. Place the tree in a prominent position. You could also include some large decorations such as an inflatable Santa, reindeer, a sleigh etc. Place a 'manger' in the background of the tree and decorations.

You will need

- ❖ Decorations for the space: Include a large Christmas tree, plenty of decorations and a manger with a baby in it. You might also like to include items such as an inflatable Santa, reindeer, a sleigh etc.

Note: A simple cardboard box painted brown will make an adequate manger. Sit it on top of a second box if you need to raise it higher.

- ❖ Purchase (\$12) and download **Birthday Jesus mini movie – One Time Blind** from www.onetimeblind.com/products/birthday-jesus-movie

OR

Free download <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eOeDW8D6grs>

- ❖ Copies of the Scripture to distribute – Luke2:1-20 Divide the Scripture into 4 or 5 sections and

ask a variety of people to read each section. Try to choose people from a range of age groups.

- ❖ For the Relay Activity
 - ◇ stop watch displayed on projector
 - ◇ equipment to make Christmas decorations
 - ◆ scissors
 - ◆ glue
 - ◆ cardboard
 - ◆ glitter
 - ◆ markers
 - ◆ ribbon
 - ◇ equipment for making cards
 - ◆ cardboard
 - ◆ markers
 - ◆ Christmas stickers or stamps
 - ◇ equipment for making a menu
 - ◆ notepaper
 - ◆ pens
 - ◇ playdough or cookie dough
 - ◇ cookie cutters
 - ◇ equipment for wrapping presents
 - ◆ scissors
 - ◆ sticky tape
 - ◆ ribbon
 - ◆ wrapping paper
 - ◆ a variety of boxes
 - ◇ a copy of instructions for each group
- ❖ For the Sound and Smells activity
 - ◇ download the following sounds from www.soundbible.com
 - ◆ animals chewing
 - ◆ sheep baaing
 - ◆ cows mooing
 - ◆ a baby crying
 - ◇ blindfolds
 - ◇ samples of the following to smell
 - ◆ a sweaty sock
 - ◆ hay
 - ◆ manure (eg dynamic lifter/ fertilizer)
- ❖ For Prayer Activity
 - ◇ print gift tag templates (included) onto cardboard (you will need at least one gift tag per person
 - ◆ markers
 - ◆ glitter
 - ◆ single hole punch
 - ◆ stickers
 - ◆ ribbon

THE CENTRE OF CHRISTMAS – SUGGESTED OUTLINE

Call to worship – Video Clip

Scripture Reading - Luke 2:1-20

Songs

The Busiest Christmas Relay

Link 1

Sights and Sounds of Christmas

Link 2

The Wrap Up

Link 3

Reflection and Response

Benediction

CALL TO WORSHIP

Birthday Jesus mini movie – one time blind 2 minutes

Or

A simple Christmas message – youtube 2 minutes

Welcome

- ❖ Luke 2:1-20

Read by selected representatives scattered around room

Song suggestions

Joy to the world

Oh come, all ye faithful

Jesus be the Centre (Israel Houghton)

Heart of Worship

The Busiest Christmas Relay

Divide everybody into groups of approx. 10 people

Explain: Christmas can be a busy time. I wonder what you have already done to prepare for this Christmas. How long is the list of things you have yet to do? We are going to have a race to see which group can complete their Christmas tasks the fastest. Each group is going to receive a list of tasks.

Your challenge is to:

- ❖ Make 10 Decorations for the tree

- ❖ Write 10 Christmas cards
- ❖ Make up a Christmas lunch menu
- ❖ Make 20 cookies
- ❖ Wrap 5 presents and place them under the tree

We will see which group can complete the most in the five minutes once the countdown starts!

Once the relay has begun, create an atmosphere where the groups feel rushed to get everything on their lists completed ASAP. Continue to add to the stress of getting everything done before the timer goes off.

Ask questions like:

- ❖ How's the gift wrapping going
- ❖ Quick everybody it's time to hurry up
- ❖ Don't forget anything on the Christmas menu
- ❖ Make sure you remember everyone's favourite desserts
- ❖ Don't forget Uncle Bob's Christmas card
- ❖ Have you missed anyone's pressie

Another way to add stress would be to add a crisis to the relay like:

- ❖ A special diet to be included in the menu
- ❖ An unexpected guest who needs a gift etc.

The aim is to have the audience/congregation feel the stress/busyness of the Christmas season as we often celebrate it.

Link 1

Do you think this activity looks like what the lead up to Jesus' birth was actually like? Often as we prepare for Christmas we have everyone rushing around to get things done. There always seem to be more that needs to be done; places to go and people to see. Actually even the lead up to the birth of Jesus was a busy time with lots of stress felt by all involved. Zechariah was terrified when the Angel told him he was about to become a dad as an old man and even made him unable to speak due to his unbelief. Joseph found out his girlfriend was pregnant and he stressed over whether or not to go ahead with the marriage. Then they had to travel a long way to

register their names at Bethlehem for the census. And it would have been extremely busy along the way; so much so that when they got to Bethlehem there was no room anywhere. Imagine going into labour and discovering that the only available room was a stable? Talk about stress!

What would the stable have really been like? It definitely would not have been like we see it in the movies.

Sights and Sounds of Christmas

Let's think about it. What did it sound like in the stable when Jesus was born that first Christmas?

Listen to each of these sounds and try to guess what they are...

- ❖ Animals chewing food
- ❖ Sheep
- ❖ Cows
- ❖ Baby crying

What are the sounds in your house on a typical Christmas day?

- ❖ Christmas carols, laughter, cutlery and crockery clinking, the dishwasher on overdrive...
 - ◇ What about the smells of Christmas?
 - ◇ What smells do you think of when you think of Christmas? Gingerbread, spices, roasting turkey, fresh ocean breezes, pine needles, Grandma's rose perfume...
 - ◇ What did the stable smell like?

I have some samples here of some of the aromas that might have been present in the stable. Would someone like to volunteer to come and try to guess what they are?

Blindfold the volunteer before you reveal each sample for them to smell.

Link 2

Can you think of a time when you have been on a farm or a place where you saw animals? Think about those noises and the smells. When Jesus was born in that stable it wasn't perfect or peaceful.

Your Christmas might be stressful, noisy and smelly. This first Christmas was also stressful, noisy and smelly. The stresses, noises and smells might be different but one thing can be the same. Jesus is right at the centre.

THE WRAP UP

Silently start packing away the Christmas decorations and the tree until only Jesus remains. Occasionally look back at the congregation to keep them engaged. Use exaggerated movements.

Now move the manger to the centre.

Jesus is at the centre of Christmas.

At the beginning we rushed to get everything done and that's often what our Christmas looks like but still Jesus is the centre.

Then we heard the sounds and smelt the smells which may be different to your sounds and smells at Christmas but still Jesus is the centre.

Link 3

I wonder what difference it makes to your Christmas when you remember that Jesus is at the centre. Will you do anything differently this Christmas? Is there something you could add as a reminder that Jesus is at the centre of our day and of our lives?

Reflection and Response

I have a gift tag for each of you...

You can take a few minutes to decorate it.

2 Corinthians 9:15 says, "Thank God for this gift too wonderful for words."

On your gift tag write a note to thank God for the gift of Jesus. For example, "Thank you God, that in the midst of being busy I am reminded of your gift to me, your son, Jesus."

OR

Write your own name on the gift tag as you offer yourself, your time and your attention to Jesus this Christmas.

Take the gift tag with you and tie it on your tree at home as a reminder that Jesus is at the centre of Christmas.

The Bible, God's word, tells us that Jesus is the same yesterday, today and tomorrow. He is always faithful, loving, forgiving and gracious. That first Christmas may have been a different kind of busy to ours, it may have looked and smelt differently to ours today, but the one thing that is the same is also the



most important – Jesus. He is the centre, the true meaning of Christmas the very first year and every year after.

BENEDICTION

Jesus, may the light of your love shine in and through us, this Christmas and always. Amen

The Busiest Christmas Relay

- ❖ Make 10 decorations for the tree
- ❖ Write 10 Christmas cards
- ❖ Make up a Christmas lunch menu
- ❖ Make 20 cookies
- ❖ Wrap 5 presents and place them under the tree
- ❖ DON'T FORGET TO WATCH THE CLOCK!



The Busiest Christmas Relay

- ❖ Make 10 decorations for the tree
- ❖ Write 10 Christmas cards
- ❖ Make up a Christmas lunch menu
- ❖ Make 20 cookies
- ❖ Wrap 5 presents and place them under the tree
- ❖ DON'T FORGET TO WATCH THE CLOCK!



The Busiest Christmas Relay

- ❖ Make 10 decorations for the tree
- ❖ Write 10 Christmas cards
- ❖ Make up a Christmas lunch menu
- ❖ Make 20 cookies
- ❖ Wrap 5 presents and place them under the tree
- ❖ DON'T FORGET TO WATCH THE CLOCK!



The Busiest Christmas Relay

- ❖ Make 10 decorations for the tree
- ❖ Write 10 Christmas cards
- ❖ Make up a Christmas lunch menu
- ❖ Make 20 cookies
- ❖ Wrap 5 presents and place them under the tree
- ❖ DON'T FORGET TO WATCH THE CLOCK!



The Busiest Christmas Relay

- ❖ Make 10 decorations for the tree
- ❖ Write 10 Christmas cards
- ❖ Make up a Christmas lunch menu
- ❖ Make 20 cookies
- ❖ Wrap 5 presents and place them under the tree
- ❖ DON'T FORGET TO WATCH THE CLOCK!



The Busiest Christmas Relay

- ❖ Make 10 decorations for the tree
- ❖ Write 10 Christmas cards
- ❖ Make up a Christmas lunch menu
- ❖ Make 20 cookies
- ❖ Wrap 5 presents and place them under the tree
- ❖ DON'T FORGET TO WATCH THE CLOCK!



