

Christian Festivals

General reflections: 'doing' gatherings are good; communal activity & breaking down insularity is helpful; consider non-church venues; movement ie travelling/pilgrimage useful. On big geographical Teams, consider using cars for travelling eg car pilgrimage leaving from different churches to meet at central point with wing mirrors having identifying ribbons.

Books: Poetry by Malcolm Guite - 'Sounding the Seasons'/'Parable & Paradox', 'The Word in the Wilderness' collections; Ann Lewin 'Watching the Kingfisher'; Janet Morley 'Haphazard by Starlight'/'The Heart's Time' collections; edited by Martin Percy 'Darkness Yielding' [Liturgies, prayers & reflections for Advent, Christmas, Holy Week, Easter] also edited by him 'The Bright Field' [meditations & reflections for Holy Week] & 'Untamed Gospel' [Protests, Poems & Prose for the Christian Year].

Advent: seasonal Candle rather than Advent Carol Service. I'll attach one, Penny.

Advent Calendar 'Windows' within village. Encourage participation from non-church members. Would need advertising, map, guidelines for participants.

Lantern making & procession Light related activities like Angel related activities are useful outreach ground between secular & sacred.

Prayer stations [multi-sensory/all-age] in church on 'light' theme: if you have a local school, encourage them to access these. Prayer Stations also lend themselves to Candlemas focus or Holy Week run up to Easter.

Christmas: Walking Nativity [in a village of under a 100 people]: young couple in costume & donkey & 2 narrators; 5 elderly wise men: retired farmers [give people a job!]; alpacas; Exmoor ponies; local pub landlord was the innkeeper which created much humour; real baby; many angels with battery powered lights all switched on at same 'wow' moment; hurdles containing sheep along the way.

Journeyed through village to arrive in church porch - focus for manger & final tableau. Small planning group beforehand. Walk through the previous week. Very well supported.

Strong points: realism; mixture of involvement; outreach; people drawn in; easily managed: used 'Open the Book' costumes; positive atmosphere; able to continue in pouring rain.

Related ideas: for Carol service, use pre-filmed interviews with people in the community OR a filmed Nativity. Take the Carol Service to a seasonal community hub ie the tree in the square.

Crib service: use 'Knitivity' book to produce figures: hunt the figures...before walking them to the stable.

Christingle Nick Fawcett 'Celebrating Christingle' – use a satirical drama sketch...

Angel Festival: mid-December. Advertise across your Team/Mission Community/through local schools/ecumenically.

Post Remembrance, approach community groups to put together a banner on the theme of angel/angels: provide them with the banner backing [old sheet] & dowling rod at top & bottom re hanging. Ask for banners back by Angel Festival Friday.

Saturday: Drop in family event for 2 hours [£1 in the bucket per family donation?] – choice of 6 angel related crafts inc Angel hunt & angel biscuit icing! What is made can be taken away cf Messy Church. On Saturday, as one of the activities, make final Angel banner. Focus Church of the Team open over weekend so Angel banners [hung around pillars] & angels* can be seen.

* Before the event, appeal through magazines/schools/social media inc village websites, for people's angels. Would they loan them to a particular church for an angel festival? Give date for dropping off & collection & info re Sunday service & open church weekend.

Sunday: preach on Angels. All Age/Village Worship service: have a controlled, open mike spot for people to tell briefly the story attached to the angel they've brought/lent. At end of service, bless all angels to go home for Christmas.

Candlemas

Someone had experienced this festival through an event for schools: banners made beforehand & brought. Plenty of candles used.

Easter

Easter Vigil used at Beer 2017: gather on beach around a brazier. Sing 'As we are gathered...' Explain what the Easter Vigil is. Opening Prayer. Light Paschal candle.

Set off towards church, Paschal candle in front, singing 'We are marching': make lots of noise with instruments eg tambourine, drum, cow bells [!], anything impromptu.

Arriving at dark church, individual candles given out which people light from Paschal candle – also lighting of window sill tea lights. Informal service with piano accompaniment: used Bible readings, chorus 'Peace is flowing like a river', poem, affirmation of faith, peace – all made sign of cross on someone else's palm, renewal of baptismal vows & splashing with water, sing 'Rejoice in the Lord always', Celtic HC – fresh bread, give each other HC & sing 'Let us break bread together', blessing, sing 'Father God, I wonder'...wine & chocolate cake as refreshment.