





CHRISTMAS CHAOS

SPECIAL DAYS

PREPARATION

- + Set up your room with a festive theme
- + Invite members to wear their favourite festive outfits, Christmas jumpers, or maybe headwear that represents a character in the Nativity story
- + Ask a member or guest to share their 'Christmas in a pandemic' story
- + Prepare to use the video [The Christmas Story](#)
- + Organise Christmas refreshments to share

 *Select a festive online background*

 *Arrange delivery of an edible Christmas treat to each member*

Be sensitive in case reflecting on Christmas and the pandemic is a difficult theme for some members.

INTRODUCTION/BACKGROUND

Christmas! A time to celebrate the birthday of Jesus! That's it, essentially. But for some of us it means finding time for extra events, activities, shopping, phone conversations... and so much more.

This worship session reminds us that the story of the Nativity is a busy and chaotic one for all those involved. We're not the only ones who can have too many things on our 'to do' list. The 'pandemic Christmas' reminded us that whatever is going on around us, including all those things we have no control over, we can still encounter the gifts of love, hope and joy that God sent us in the form of his son, baby Jesus.

ACTIVITIES

VIDEO

Watch the video [The Christmas Story](#) by St Paul's Auckland (3 mins 52 secs) maybe as an introduction to this worship session. Get ready to go 'ooh' and 'aaaah', see absolutely fantastic costumes and share great storytelling from the children involved!

Connect



SHARE

Ask a member or guest to share their 'Christmas in a pandemic' story - a personal reflection that reminds us that despite our expectations of how things should be, even if plans must change, we can still engage with the real meaning of Christmas.

CELEBRATE

Enjoy some Christmas treats together after the worship.

BIBLE READING/THOUGHT

'Are you ready?' That little question we are so often asked at Christmas time - it can evoke such strong emotions in us! I wonder what your response to those three little words might be?

Are you one of those super-organised people who purchases their cards and gifts in the January sales and has everything wrapped and cards written in September? Or are you a lastminute.com person, someone who needs a deadline to complete the task? And anyway, bargains are to be had on Christmas Eve, don't you know?! That's when the sales start nowadays - or even before.

Most likely we are all somewhere on a continuum between these two extremes, with our approach to Christmas preparations influenced by our personalities and external events beyond our control.

Christmas during a pandemic certainly challenged our best laid plans. There were families exchanging gifts at motorway services, people managing to beat the upcoming national lockdown, and many families and friends kept apart ... socially distanced Christmas greetings exchanged, online carol services, Zoom family chats. We probably have our own stories to tell of different Christmas memories created during the Covid pandemic. Some of these memories will make us smile, others we will recall with sadness.

Which makes us wonder ... why couldn't things have been a bit better organised for the birth of Jesus when it was prophesied by Isaiah and Micah several hundred years ahead of time?

'For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace' (Isaiah 9:6).

'But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times' (Micah 5:2).





In fact, the Old Testament contains over 300 prophecies, so certainly enough notice had been given!

And yet:

- * Mary had to deal with her virgin pregnancy.
- * Joseph had to deal with Mary's virgin pregnancy.
- * They both had to set off to Bethlehem (some 80 miles away from Nazareth) to file a census return seemingly at short notice, with no vacancies on Booking.com!
- * They had to take refuge in a cowshed, deal with visits from several sets of strange visitors, while exhausted from the 'home birth' experience minus the midwives!
- * They had to smile gratefully on being given a strange bunch of baby gifts (OK, they were probably delighted with the gold).
- * They had to deal with vivid and frightening nightmares.
- * They had to run away in the middle of the night to another country (a journey of 40 miles this time) to avoid Herod the terrible.
- * Then they had to stay away from home and family for about three years!

Wow! That is a disorganised and chaotic version of Christmas!

And into this chaotic Christmas, Jesus was born bringing peace to earth. While Bethlehem was bursting at the seams with visitors from all over, peace, hope and love were born in the form of a baby, with an invitation to us all to get to know this child, this saviour of the world.

So, are you ready? In the middle of this Christmas time, in the midst of chaos and busyness, are you ready to meet Jesus Christ, Emmanuel, meaning God with us? Are you ready to believe in him as the Son of God, who conquered death and wants to bring us a new experience of life - a life in all its fulness lived with God?

Are you ready?



PRAYER

Father, as we journey towards the day when we celebrate the birth of your son Jesus, we pray that you will turn our hearts toward you this Christmas time.

Help us, even in the midst of the hustle and bustle of the season, to spend time with you to celebrate the gifts of hope, peace and love that you sent to us on that first Christmas.

Thank you, Father, for your immeasurable gift. In Jesus' precious name, we pray. AMEN.

SONGS

- ♪ SASB 118 [‘O little town of Bethlehem’](#)
- ♪ SASB 126 ‘The first Nowell’ [traditional](#) or [acapella](#) version
- ♪ SASB 133 [‘Wonderful Counsellor’](#)
- ♪ SASB 113 ‘Joy to the world!’ [traditional](#) or [gospel](#) version

WEBSITE AND CONTACT DETAILS

- Connect Website: www.salvationarmy.org.uk/connect
- Family Ministries Website: www.salvationarmy.org.uk/families
- Email: familyministries@salvationarmy.org.uk
- Facebook: @sarmyfm
- Twitter: @ukifamily
- Instagram: safamily_ministries



Family Ministries

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