

Single friendly Church

HELPING CHURCHES TO INCLUDE SINGLE ADULTS

INCLUDING SINGLE PEOPLE AT CHRISTMAS



CHRISTMAS CAN BE A DIFFICULT TIME

In a recent survey, **70% of single people** said they found at least some aspects of Christmas hard. **43%** said the week between Christmas and New Year was a difficult and lonely time for them.

How can your church make the festive season joyful for the single people in your community?

01. FIND OUT WHO WILL BE ON THEIR OWN

64% of single people said their church doesn't do anything for those spending Christmas Day alone. When churches do, it can make a huge difference,

Lots of people don't have someone to spend Christmas with and it's often through no fault of their own. Find out who will be alone over Christmas. Some may feel awkward to share this, and few will feel comfortable inviting themselves to someone else's gathering. It's important to reach out and ask.



02. INVITE SOMEONE TO JOIN YOU

This can be suggested from the front, or discreetly mentioned to those in a position to offer hospitality. Some churches host a community lunch, or connect people officially to ensure no one is left out. You could also connect a group of people on their own to spend the day together.

Don't forget the widowed, single parents without their children for Christmas, married people whose spouses are in care. Not everyone will want an invitation - some will have plans already or prefer a quiet Christmas at home.



"One year I was facing Christmas on my own, but I didn't want to invite myself to anyone's family celebration. However, when a friend told people at church that I was going to be alone, I got several invitations. I had a lovely day with a family from church."

03. BE INCLUSIVE WHEN PLANNING SERVICES

Christmas can be a painful time for many for different reasons. Some single people find the focus on families and children difficult, or feel alone in Christmas services when others are sat with their extended families. It's important to acknowledge the pain of Christmas in the prayers and the talk. Perhaps offer an opportunity to light a candle for someone or something people are grieving for.



Look out for those arriving on their own and give them a warm welcome. If you share the Peace, encourage people to greet someone outside their own family first before turning to loved ones.

04. OPENING UP CHRISTMAS IN TALKS



It is tempting to focus on family themes at Christmas and draw comparisons with Mary and the baby Jesus. Consider opening up the topic and taking a new approach.

Single people enjoy engaging with the spiritual themes of Christmas. A simple focus on the beauty of what Christmas actually means can have a profound impact for all.

You could also focus on the theme of uncertainty in the Christmas story, or on welcoming in the stranger. Or on the anticipation of Bible characters outside of the holy family - like Simeon and Anna - who found joy and fulfilment in Jesus' birth.

05. HAVE A SOCIAL ACTIVITY OVER THE HOLIDAYS

Often people will have plans for Christmas Day, but the week between Christmas and New Year can be a lonely time. The stopping of regular services and activities can leave a gap and take away an important point of connection.

Consider having a mid-week social activity, like a Boxing Day walk, games night or a coffee morning with Christmas cake. This doesn't have to be organised by the leadership - appoint others to take ownership. It's good to empower people to be part of their own solution.



'I'm lucky I have family who include me on Christmas Day, but I often find church and life quite lonely around the festive period. As someone who doesn't have a car, I'm most blessed when people offer me a lift to services. I also appreciate being invited round for a meal or drink in the run up to Christmas.'

PRAYER POINTS FOR CHURCHES

- Pray for those who don't know how they will be spending Christmas, for the stress and uncertainty that this can bring.
- Pray for those who are feeling the loss of loved ones this Christmas, those mourning relationship breakdowns, and those coming to terms with the possibility that they may not be able to have children.
- Give thanks for the opportunity people have to catch up with old friends at Christmas.
- Praise God that people can find family, acceptance and love in church communities at Christmas. Pray for the deepening of friendships over this time.
- Pray for those who feel isolated in their churches and are struggling to build connections. Pray for comfort over the Christmas period and for a breakthrough in new friendships in the New Year.
- Give thanks for the work and sacrifice individuals do to help the poorest in our society at Christmas.
- Pray for everyone experiencing financial hardship at Christmas and the pressures it can bring.
- Pray for single parents at this time who may feel the pressure to produce all aspects of Christmas by themselves, or who may be spending Christmas without their children.
- Pray for all those end up in refuges over Christmas, or who are afraid to go home and spend extended time with their spouse or family.
- Pray for those who experience loneliness over the Christmas holidays.
- Pray for people who feel huge pressure to bring a holiday or partner home for Christmas, for understanding and acceptance amongst family, and for hope and comfort for those longing for a romantic relationship.
- Pray for those currently going through divorce or separation over the Christmas season, and may be spending their first Christmas alone.
- Pray for those whose family or partner have dementia or other neurological conditions and may not recognise them over Christmas.
- Pray especially for single church leaders at Christmas, where there is huge pressure to run Christmas services and activities, and some may not have family or friends waiting for them at home.

