




THE POWER OF 12 DAYS:

WHY YOUR
CHURCH NEEDS A

Christmas Outreach

CAMPAIGN

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Some days, the world outside seems pretty dark. It doesn't take much time on social media or watching the news to recognize that everything seems broken. You probably see it every day in your neighborhood.

But as Christmas comes near, we're reminded that there's hope. As Isaiah prophesied centuries before the birth of Jesus, a great light has come into the world (Isaiah 9:2), but most of the people in our communities can't see it.

That's what the 12 Days of Christmas is all about. Your church has an opportunity this Christmas season to reflect the light of Jesus to your community.

The 12 Days of Christmas is a 12-day outreach campaign in which your church does an outreach activity a day for a dozen days leading up to your Christmas services. The idea is simple: As your community sees your church as the hands and feet of Jesus, you'll shine the light of the gospel into the darkest places of your neighborhood and beyond.

WHY CHRISTMAS IS THE RIGHT TIME

When many people outside our churches think of Christmas, it isn't the baby and the manger that come to mind. It's likely Santa Claus and maybe the mysterious Christmas spirit that tends to emphasize giving.

Yet this pervasive "spirit of giving" offers us a unique opportunity for our churches. While the secular focus may be on exchanging gifts and holiday cheer, hearts are more open to acts of kindness and generosity during the Christmas season. That means the holiday season provides churches with a special opportunity to demonstrate Jesus' love through acts of service in the community.

Christmas and Easter are the two times when people are most likely to go to church and engage in spiritual conversations. According to Lifeway Research, more than 3 of 5 Americans attend church during the Christmas season. And among those who don't attend worship services, 57 percent of respondents say they'd attend if someone asked them.

By harnessing the culture's emphasis on giving during the season, you can engage your community in ways that will reverberate for generations. People in your community who wouldn't step inside your church at any other time of the year will do so during the Christmas season.

Perhaps most importantly, those accustomed to seeing only darkness in the world around them will be drawn to the true light of the Christmas season.



THE IMPACT OF A 12-DAY OUTREACH

The power of a 12-day outreach campaign comes in how it builds anticipation inside and outside of your church. As people participate in an activity, they look forward to what's next. For example, say you're starting with the tree lighting. You can use that activity to excite your community about what's coming next—whether it's the food drive, Christmas crafts event, etc.

In fact, you'll likely find some of your most passionate volunteers for the later activities of your "12 Days" will be those you met during the early activities.

Each day will build on the last, leading to a cumulative effect that peaks on Christmas Eve, a service that nearly half of pastors identify as the most attended of the year. This strategic approach not only increases visibility but also fosters deeper connections with those who might otherwise not engage with your church.



GETTING STARTED WITH YOUR 12 DAYS OF CHRISTMAS

With Christmas just around the corner, the time to get started on this special outreach campaign is today. This guide will show you how to do it. Plus, you'll get outreach ideas you can put into practice no matter how large or where your church is located.

Are you ready for the best Christmas you've ever had?



Laying THE Groundwork

For your 12 Days of Christmas campaign to impact your community the way you want, you'll want to get started as soon as possible. Preparation will be critical for a well-run campaign.

PRAYING FOR YOUR CAMPAIGN

It's important to remember that you're doing more than organizing 12 outreach activities. You're trying to make a spiritual impact.

Before you do anything else (even before picking your outreach activities), organize a prayer team and make prayer a big part of your upcoming campaign. Seek God's wisdom on what the right outreach activities will be for your community.

Consider asking your prayer team to put together a prayer calendar listing daily ways the rest of the church can pray for the campaign's activities in the weeks before its launch.

Organize a prayer walk through the locations where your outreaches will take place. Pray for the people you'll be engaging and the volunteers who will serve. Ask God to soften hearts to the gospel message as you serve your neighbors and invite them to your Christmas services.

PLANNING YOUR OUTREACH ACTIVITIES

This guide includes plans for 12 activities and summaries of five more ideas, but they are just a start as you brainstorm ideas. Your community and church are unique, and your outreach efforts during the Christmas season should fit your particular context.

Here's how to get started.

- **Gather a brainstorming team.**
You'll always do better with a group of people planning these kinds of activities. Include as diverse a group of people as possible
(age, socio-economic status, length of time in the community, etc.).
- **Start with the list in this guide.**
Go through what's here and note which ones would work in your context. Think of the needs in your community and the skill sets in your church.
- **Add some new ideas.**
Brainstorm new ideas *(using similar criteria as before)* until you have 12.
(See the brainstorming worksheet at the end of this guide.)
- **Talk to some people outside of the church.**
Remember, you want to engage people who don't already attend your church. Ensure you run your list of ideas by community members who understand the needs. You'll want to get the perspective of people who aren't already sitting in your church each Sunday.

Once you develop your list of projects, think about the order you want to do them. Some projects will work better on weekends, so you must work around that. But it's also important to order the projects in a progression that will build momentum. When possible, put activities where you'll go out into the community before ones where you'll ask them to come to you *(like concerts)*.

The page is framed by a decorative border of green leaves, white berries, and red berries. Two red and white striped candy canes are positioned diagonally, one in the top right and one in the bottom left. The background is dark blue with faint, large numbers (2, 3, 6, 7, 10, 12) visible.

FINDING VOLUNTEERS

Volunteers are the lifeblood of your campaign. Regardless of what projects you'll launch, you'll need much help.

The easiest way to get started is to ask specific groups in your church to sponsor or organize each activity. For example, ask your Sunday School classes or specific ministries to spearhead a project.

Or find individuals to lead up each project and use your church's most effective communication tools (announcements, email, bulletin, social media, etc.) to get volunteers involved in specific projects.

GETTING THE WORD OUT

You'll want to spend a significant amount of time thinking through how you will communicate your church's ministry opportunities during the 12 Days of Christmas. Strategic thinking is key when trying to connect with individuals outside of the church and beyond your typical communication channels. Build on these four communications tactics.

- **Identify your target audience.**

No church can connect with everyone, so it's important to pinpoint the groups that are most likely to engage with your outreach efforts. Understanding who your ideal audience is helps you tailor your social media ads and other content to reach them effectively. This doesn't mean excluding others just that you'll focus your efforts where they're likely to make the biggest impact.

Digital tools like [MissionInsite](#) can help you get to know your neighbors better, which will equip you to build a profile of your target audience.

- **Focus on external communications channels.**

It's natural to think first about your internal church channels, but that won't help you reach new people. Instead of sharing the events on your Facebook or Twitter feeds, consider targeted ads that will reach new people who aren't already subscribed to your feed. Instead of just putting a note in your church bulletin, consider a local newspaper or radio ad.

- **Collaborate with local organizations.**

Chances are, you have some local partners, especially nonprofits, that would be more than willing to help you get the word out. Focus on nonprofits that are meeting the same kinds of needs as your projects and/or those focused on your specific target audience. Many of these nonprofits may be interested in co-hosting the activity with you, which will not only help you with communication but also provide volunteers for the activities themselves.

- **Leverage word-of-mouth promotions.**

Your congregants will be your best advertisements for these outreach events. Get them a list of your activities (*preferably in a calendar event*) as soon as possible, and encourage them to tell others. Help them see your vision for the 12 Days of Christmas as an outreach into the community.

If appropriate for the specific event, provide tangible ways to help your congregants invite others, such as printed invitations or shareable digital content.

Depending upon your project, you might also have nearby businesses to let you put up a flyer on the activity.

Give yourself plenty of time for communication. Getting the word out is critical to a successful outreach campaign.



ADAPTING IDEAS FOR YOUR CONTEXT

Your church will want to tailor the outreach activities for your specific ministry contexts. Your church's size and the makeup of your community will be important factors to consider. For example, if you're in a rural area where most people live far away from one another, a caroling activity will work differently out of necessity. You could consider either focusing it on a nearby community center or hosting a caroling service at your church.

You may also want to scale up or down the activity to fit your church's size and volunteer force. Large churches might consider hosting a citywide Christmas concert, while smaller churches might decide to host a holiday story time at their nearby public library.



COMMUNITY TREE LIGHTING CEREMONY

Invite your community to decorate a festive Christmas tree at a public, highly visible location (which could be on your campus) in the community. The event will bring people together for an evening of fun and holiday cheer, introducing them to your community. It culminates in a moment of “tree lighting” and the singing of a few Christmas carols.

HOW TO DO IT:

- Choose a public location.
- Find (or purchase) a tree.
- Pick a date.
- Promote the event through social media and community flyers.
- Prepare a short Christmas devotional to share before the tree lighting.
- Serve hot cocoa.

VOLUNTEER ROLES:

- **Event coordinator:**
Oversees and plans the activity
- **Hospitality team:**
Creates a warm and festive atmosphere and provides hot cocoa.
- **Publicity coordinator:**
Gets the word out about the event via social media and other avenues.

MATERIALS NEEDED:

- ✓ Christmas tree
- ✓ Lights
- ✓ Sound systems
- ✓ Refreshments
- ✓ Promotional materials

2 CHRISTMAS FOOD DRIVE

Organize a Christmas food drive to help local families with their food needs and show them that your church cares for them. Consider gathering holiday-meal-specific food or collecting staples to help families through the season. Ask your local food bank which they need more of.

HOW TO DO IT:

- Partner with a local food bank that needs the food and get a list of food items needed.
- Decide upon collection dates and choose drop-off locations.
- Promote the drive through familiar church-wide channels — bulletin, announcements, social media, etc.-and also outside of the church.
- Ask volunteers to organize and deliver the collected items.

VOLUNTEER ROLES:

- **Coordinator:**
Manages partnerships and logistics.
- **Collection team:**
Sets up and manages drop-off locations.
- **Sorting team:**
Sorts and delivers food items to the food pantry or local families in need.

MATERIALS NEEDED:

- ✓ Collection bins
- ✓ Promotional materials
- ✓ Transportation for bins and for delivering food

3 CRAFTS NIGHT FOR KIDS

Christmas is a great time to get kids involved in seasonal crafts. Teach the kids to make holiday decorations and cards. Not only does this provide something fun that your church members can do to connect with kids, but it gives parents a place to leave their kids while they go Christmas shopping.

HOW TO DO IT:

- Choose a date and location within the church.
- Decide upon the activities you will have the children work on.
- Gather supplies for the crafts by buying or collecting them from congregants.
- Get the word out to your community through social media.
- If you have a connection with your local school, see if you can promote the event there.
- Create simple instructions that children can use for the crafts.
- Plan a short telling of the Christmas story for the end.

VOLUNTEER ROLES:

- **Craft instructors:**
Guide kids through the activities.
- **Setup/cleanup crew:**
Arrange the space and clean up afterward.
- **Storytelling:**
Shares the Christmas story.

MATERIALS NEEDED:

- ✓ Craft supplies
(dependent upon crafts chosen)
- ✓ Tables
- ✓ Chairs
- ✓ Sound system for storytelling
(dependent on the number of children present)

4 DRIVE-BY PRAYER BOOTH

Set up a drive-by prayer booth where your congregants can pray for people without leaving their cars. This will provide a simple yet powerful way for your neighbors to connect with you as they discover how much your church cares about whatever is troubling them.

HOW TO DO IT:

- Choose a highly visible spot where drivers can easily get in and out. *(Try to find a spot near sidewalks in case of snow.)*
- Put signs up to guide cars to the booth *(and back on the road afterward)*.
- Use online platforms and local community groups to bring attention to your booth ahead of time.
- Train your volunteers how to pray with participants.
- Provide invitations to your Christmas services.

VOLUNTEER ROLES:

- **Prayer Team:**
Pray with visitors.
- **Traffic coordinators:**
Direct cars to the booth.
- **Setup/cleanup crew:**
Gets the booth up and going and cleans everything up afterward.

Note: Remember that the weather can be chilly in many locations in the weeks before Christmas. Consider some inside options for the booth, such as inside a shopping mall. If you do host the booth outside, make the shifts short and include an effective protective shelter and heaters where your volunteers are working.

MATERIALS NEEDED:

- ✓ Signs
- ✓ Invitations to Christmas services
- ✓ Portable heaters if it's cold
- ✓ Tent for shelter

5 PARENTS' NIGHT OUT FOR SHOPPING

Give parents in your community a free night out to finish up on Christmas shopping (or have a date night!). Prepare fun games, crafts, snacks, and a short Bible story for the kids. Invite families back to the church for your Christmas service at the end of the evening.

HOW TO DO IT:

- Set a date and find a safe place for the kids' activities.
- Recruit volunteers to teach and supervise the children.
(Your Vacation Bible School teachers are a great place to start.)
- Make sure all volunteers have gone through a thorough background check.
- Promote the event to the community. Encourage parents in your church to share invitations to the event with other parents.
- Plan the activities for the children. Consider re-using activities from your most recent Vacation Bible School.
- Put together healthy snacks.
- Ensure you have a plan for a safe check-in/check-out process.
- Hand out invitations for the Christmas service as families check out.
- Consider showing a movie if you are low on childcare volunteers.

VOLUNTEER ROLES:

- **Children's leaders:**
Supervise and care for the children.
- **Check-In/Check-Out Team:**
Manages a secure check-in/check-out process.
- **Snack coordinator:**
Leads a team to prepare the snacks for children.

MATERIALS NEEDED:

- ✓ Games
- ✓ Crafts
- ✓ Snacks
- ✓ Church invitations
- ✓ Movie projector *(optional)*

6 SENIOR CITIZEN CHRISTMAS LUNCHEON

Many senior citizens struggle with loneliness during the holiday season. Provide a free opportunity to get together and enjoy one another's company.

HOW TO DO IT:

- Choose a date and find a venue.
(Consider hosting it at a senior apartment building or nursing home.)
- Plan a festive menu and recruit volunteers to prepare and serve the meal.
- Promote the event through senior centers and via social media.
- Arrange for live music or entertainment.
- Prepare small gifts for attendees.

VOLUNTEER ROLES:

- **Cooks:**
Prepare and serve the meal.
- **Entertainment Team:**
Provides music or entertainment.
- **Greeters:**
Welcome and assist attendees.

MATERIALS NEEDED:

- ✓ Meal ingredients
- ✓ Decorations
- ✓ Small gifts
- ✓ Sound system

7 SERVICE PROJECT DAY

Plan a community service day where church members come together to serve others. This could involve a large group tackling one significant project or smaller teams spreading out across the community to work on various tasks.

HOW TO DO IT:

- Brainstorm different service options in the community. Consider connecting with local community groups and nonprofits who might need help.
- Encourage your congregants to be on the lookout for projects in their neighborhood.
- Schedule the day.
- Recruit volunteers.
- Get identifiable (*and warm*) clothing your volunteers can wear to show the community who they'll represent.
(Long-sleeve t-shirts, sweatshirts, and sock caps are all possibilities.)
- Collect the tools needed for the planned projects.
- Organize teams and assign them to various projects throughout the community.
- Gather at the church for a shared lunch or at the end of the day for a shared dinner.
- Hand out invitations to the Christmas service to people you serve throughout the day.

VOLUNTEER ROLES:

- **Project Leaders:**
Oversee specific service activities.
- **Volunteers:**
Participate in the service projects.
- **Supply Coordinators:**
Gather and distribute needed tools and materials.

MATERIALS NEEDED:

- ✓ Tools
- ✓ Gloves
- ✓ Trash bags
- ✓ Christmas service invitations



CHRISTMAS MOVIE NIGHT

Invite your community to a fun, family-friendly holiday movie night at your church. Have snacks and maybe an intermission where you have some fun games. As people leave, invite them to return for the Christmas service.

HOW TO DO IT:

- Pick a popular or classic Christmas movie.
- Secure a space with a large screen (*or obtain one*) and plenty of seating.
- Promote the event in your community, clarifying that the event is family-friendly.
- Prepare snacks, such as popcorn and drinks.
- Encourage guests to bring cozy blankets.
- Consider preparing some fun games/activities for an intermission.
- Invite people to the church for Christmas services.

VOLUNTEER ROLES:

- **Event Coordinator:**
Organizes the movie night.
- **Hospitality Team:**
Serves snacks and drinks.
- **Setup/Cleanup Crew:**
Prepares and tidies the space.

MATERIALS NEEDED:

- ✓ Projector
- ✓ Screen
- ✓ Seats
- ✓ Snacks



FAMILY GINGERBREAD HOUSE COMPETITION

Organize a family competition to see who can build the best gingerbread house. The fun event will allow your church to engage the community and creatively introduce people to your church.

HOW TO DO IT:

- Set a date and secure a place to host the event.
- Gather gingerbread house kits (*or allow families to bring their own*).
- Promote the event to local families.
Encourage congregants to invite other families they know.
- Establish the contests (*best, most creative, largest, etc.*) and gather some simple prizes for each.
- Recruit some volunteer judges.
- Prepare a short Christmas message for the event.
- Hand out invitations for the families to attend the Christmas services.

VOLUNTEER ROLES:

- **Event Organizer:**
Oversees the competition.
- **Judges:**
Evaluate the gingerbread houses.
- **Hospitality Team:**
Welcomes participants and serves refreshments.

MATERIALS NEEDED:

- ✓ Gingerbread kits
- ✓ Tables
- ✓ Chairs
- ✓ Decorations
- ✓ Prizes

10 CHRISTMAS CONCERT

Leverage the holiday season's tradition of great music by hosting a concert of your church's choir, local musicians, or a guest host. Focus the concert around familiar Christmas songs or pick some new classics. Promote the concert to your local community and invite guests back to your church for your Christmas service.

HOW TO DO IT:

- Decide who will perform at the concert. If necessary, book performers.
- Ensure you have proper sound equipment and stage setup. Recruit volunteers to develop the stage.
- Promote the concert to your community through social media, flyers, and, if possible, local media.
- Distribute tickets so you know how many people to expect.
- Mobilize volunteers to decorate the venue to create a festive atmosphere.
- Print simple programs with a concert schedule.
- Provide refreshments for attendees and information on your upcoming Christmas service.

VOLUNTEER ROLES:

- **Concert coordinator:**
Manages performers and logistics.
- **Ticket Desk Team:**
Collects tickets when guests arrive.
- **Greeting Team:**
Welcomes guests and hands out programs.
- **Sound Team:**
Helps with audio and technical needs.
- **Hospitality Team:**
Organizes refreshments and distributes them.

MATERIALS NEEDED:

- ✓ Sound equipment
- ✓ Decorations
- ✓ Programs
- ✓ Tickets
- ✓ Refreshments

11 ADOPT-A-FAMILY GIFT PROGRAM

Serve local families who are struggling through the Christmas season. Ask church members to adopt families in need and collect gifts for them. Then, organize your members to distribute the gifts.

HOW TO DO IT:

- Work with local social services to identify families in need.
- Place a Christmas tree in your church's lobby with names of needy families hanging on the branches. Ask members to take a name and purchase gifts for the family.
- Set a deadline for the gift collection.
- Host a gift-wrapping party where members can gather to share Christmas snacks and wrap the gifts together. Or ask congregants to wrap the gifts before bringing them to a collection event.
- Pick a day where you'll distribute the gifts to families.
- Include an invitation to your church's Christmas service in each gift.

VOLUNTEER ROLES:

- **Program Coordinator:**
Manages family assignments and logistics.
- **Gift Wrappers:**
Wrap collected gifts.
- **Delivery Team:**
Distributes gifts to families.

MATERIALS NEEDED:

- ✓ Gift wrapping supplies
- ✓ Collection boxes
- ✓ Delivery vehicles

12 CHRISTMAS CAROLING NIGHT

Share the Christmas spirit this holiday season by arranging for a group of carolers from your church to visit local neighborhoods, senior centers, and other places to sing festive songs.

HOW TO DO IT:

- Pick the neighborhoods where you want to go caroling.
- Recruit singers and practice popular Christmas carols.
- Plan your caroling route and schedule for the evening.
- Print lyrics for participants.
- Hand out invitations for your Christmas service as you carol.
- Host a time of hot cocoa, homemade cookies, and fellowship for the carolers at the end of the evening.

VOLUNTEER ROLES:

- **Caroling Leader:**
Organizes and leads the singing.
- **Hospitality Team:**
Serves refreshments at the end of the evening.

MATERIALS NEEDED:

- ✓ Lyric sheets
- ✓ Warm clothing
- ✓ Refreshments
- ✓ Route map

BONUS IDEAS

Every church's context is different. The 12 ideas that we provided in the previous pages won't fit in every church. That's why we're providing five bonus ideas to consider if you want something different. Of course, these are just ideas for you to adjust as you see fit in your own ministry context.

Christmas Card Writing Campaign:

Organize a campaign to write Christmas cards to local nursing homes—and deliver them in person! Spread Christmas joy and the love of Jesus to some of the most isolated people in your community. One of the best parts of this activity is that you need little to do—some pens, Christmas cards, and a group of volunteers to write greetings on the cards.

Pop-Up Nativity Scenes:

Set up live nativity scenes in public places around the community. Each scene can tell a different part of the nativity story— Gabriel visiting Mary to announce Jesus' coming birth, the journey to Bethlehem, Jesus' birth, the visit of the Magi, etc. Create scenes invoking questions your church can answer at the Christmas service.

Christmas Cookie Delivery:

Bake and deliver Christmas cookies to local first responders and essential workers as a thank-you for their service. Include thank-you notes and invitations to your Christmas services in the package.

Christmas Care Packages for the Homeless:

Brighten the holiday season for the homeless in your community by providing some necessities like warm clothing, toiletries, and non-perishable snacks. Add information about how the homeless can get help for their day-to-day needs for shelter and food. Include a Christmas card and an invitation to your Christmas services and where they can find a Christmas meal in your community. Mobilize a group of volunteers to take these into the community, where you can also pray with recipients.

Christmas Toy Drive:

Work with local businesses and nonprofits to set up collection bins for new toys people in the community can donate to families in need. Connect with your community's social services to find families in need. Or partner with other local organizations for a regular community toy drive.

Don't forget that the best source of community ministry ideas is in your community itself. Ask local leaders about some gaps your church may be able to fill during one of these 12 days.



ARE YOU READY FOR YOUR CHURCH'S BEST CHRISTMAS?

Every year, your church gets an opportunity to engage people throughout your community who are hungry to hear about the real meaning of Christmas. As mentioned earlier, Christmas and Easter are the most effective times for churches to bring new people into their congregations.

However, the impact of these outreach efforts shouldn't end when the Christmas lights go back into the shed and all the decorations are put up in the attic. Your outreach activities aren't just opportunities to help people discover the love of Jesus during the nativity season; they are important opportunities to connect them to the longtime discipleship, care, and support of your church. The seeds planted during this Christmas season can flourish into lives transformed by the gospel's power and your church's care.

At ACS Technologies, we're here to help you with tools designed to improve your community engagement, introduce people to your church, and develop long-term relationships with them.

We'd love to show you how we can help you make this the best Christmas ever and the beginning of a new season of growth for your faith family. For more information on how we can partner with you in ministry, visit [acstechnologies.com](https://www.acstechnologies.com).