**11 Ways to Make Christmas Your Best Outreach of the Year**

Read Time: 6 Minutes

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Most People Love Christmas! |**By Carey Nieuwhof**

*Take advantage of the most celebrated time of the year! Make a plan and build the church invite into your outreach to the community.*

Any idea what the best outreach opportunity of the year at your church might be?

You might think it’s an event you do, or perhaps it’s Easter. But whether Christmas has historically been your best opportunity to reach unchurched people or not, I believe it could be.

**It Only Happens Once a Year These Days**

As our culture becomes [more and more post-Christian](https://careynieuwhof.com/episode24/), we’re seeing far fewer times when the holidays of the church and the holidays of culture sync. I remember hearing a Toronto DJ refer to Easter as “the first long weekend of summer” (in Canada, Good Friday is a holiday, and schools still take Easter Monday off…a relic from Colonial days). Good Friday and Easter were completely lost on him. It was simply time off. Christmas is completely different.

Our culture still loves Christmas. Sure, the motives are commercial. But Christmas is the only time of year when you’ll hear people belt out explicitly Christian songs, like Charles Wesley’s “Hark! The Herald Angels Sing”:

*Veiled in flesh the Godhead see*  
*Hail the incarnate Deity*  
*Pleased with us in flesh to dwell*  
*Jesus, our Emmanuel*

If you follow a lot of Christians on social media leading up to Christmas, you probably have noticed how many people lament over the culture’s disregard of Christ.

Well, you can see the obstacle. Or you can see the opportunity. I choose to see the opportunity. There are *so many connection points* with our culture you’ll miss if you only see the glass as half empty.

This is no time for the church to be more cynical than the world, which still remembers something is different at Christmas, even if they’re not exactly sure what it is.

Stop complaining about the world. Reach it instead.

As the general population thinks less about the Christian faith, Christmas provides a unique opportunity to reach people who no longer ordinarily attend church.

What’s surprising is that many churches don’t really leverage Christmas to make the impact it could.

At [Connexus Church](https://connexuschurch.com/), where I serve, our Christmas service wins hands-down every year for both overall attendance AND attendance by unchurched people. Although from a theological viewpoint, Christmas will never be bigger than Easter, when we think of it in practical terms, our Christmas outreach is always bigger than Easter simply because the culture is paying more attention.

Our culture pauses for Christmas in a way it pauses for little else in the year.

TV and film celebrate Christmas in all its expressions. Almost everyone decorates their homes, businesses, and cities.

On December 24th and 25th, the Western world comes as close to stopping as it ever does.

I’m not sure there’s any better time than Christmas to connect with those of your friends and neighbors who rarely, if ever, go to church.

Here are 11 ways to make Christmas your best outreach of the year.

**1. Design an event for your community, not for your members.**

So, what’s the biggest mistake many churches make each Christmas?

Simple. Too many churches hold a quiet Christmas Eve or Christmas Day service for members and leave it at that.

Others will do little to nothing special.

That makes Christmas the biggest missed opportunity of the year.

Unchurched people want to celebrate Christmas. Why can’t your church help them?

Here’s a hint: if you design your services with the community in mind, your members will love it, too. Especially if their friends come and it changes their lives.

**2. Brand the event around the community, not your church.**

One of the best decisions we’ve made is to take our church’s name off the main branding for our Christmas services.

We simply use the names of the cities we’re in. So, for Barrie, Ontario, we’re Christmas in Barrie. In Orillia, it’s Christmas Eve in Orillia, etc. Sure, we let people know it’s hosted by a church, but people are looking for a place to celebrate, and we want them to know we can host them and their family at an event designed for the city.

We also expanded our Christmas outreach into cities that are within an hour of each other (which makes specific theming more difficult); one year, we used Christmas Eve in the City as a larger brand.

**3. Build a special website.**

If someone has to click through 15 pages of your website to find your Christmas services, they’ll probably give up. And even if you put it on the home page of your website, it’s still a *church* website.

We started building custom sites a few years ago for our Christmas services and have been thrilled with the results.

Again, people have Christmas on their mind, and when the site looks like Christmas and there are free tickets available, it’s easier for people to say “I’m in.”

Sites like this don’t have to be expensive. Get a teenager in your church to design one. Or, for a thousand dollars or so, you can have a basic site put together.

Find an easy to remember URL (like ChristmasEveInTheCity.com or ChristmasInYourTown.com). Makes your site easy to find, with a local emphasis, then make it shareable.

**4. Experiment with multiple service times.**

Not everyone can make it to your “one” service. We have done eight services over two days (the 23rd and 24th) in four cities.

Yes, those are long workdays for staff and volunteers, but it’s worth it. The investment you make in your Christmas service could reap a harvest all year long.

We always offer more than one service time, because the reality is that different families have different needs. Young families seem to prefer earlier services so they can get their kids to bed early or have dinner together. Retail workers need a later service.

At our broadcast location, our services typically run at 1:00, 3:00, 5:00 and 7:00 p.m. At our three other locations, we picked the middle to later service times.

The reason? Providing multiple service times gives families lots of opportunities to attend and to invite their friends.

**5. Stretch yourself and experiment.**

To be honest, pulling off Christmas services in four cities stretched our team. Expanding into new areas is a good way to test out new venues and new communities in which you might one day have church locations.

Sometimes stretching yourself calls out the very best in people. It challenges them to invite others, and it can bring your church into communities in brand new ways during a season in which people are already looking for events to attend.

Sounds like a great combination to me.

**6. Give your congregation invitation tools.**

Did you know that 82% of people would come to church if a trusted friend invited them?

Yet in a typical year, only 2% of Christians invite a friend to church. Heartbreaking.

Create some full-color cards with details on them. Encourage people to give the cards to their friends.

One year, we tied candy canes to Instagram-like cards to make them easier to hand out to friends. Another year, we made business-sized cards, along with full-sized posters. The posters popped up all over our cities in places like Starbucks, hockey arenas, community centers, and more.

It’s easier to invite a friend to something like Christmas than to a regular Sunday morning.

**7. Use social media.**

Sure, maybe you don’t have the bandwidth to build fresh websites. Just do it for free, using social media. Create a Facebook event or promoted posts. Use all your social media channels and get the word out.

Encourage your people to share with their friends. They are your number one source when it comes to promotion because they’re already invested and engaged.

One year, we had a Photo Booth at our campuses to create some fun Instagram moments, with dressed up kids and people holding a “Join us for Christmas Eve” signs.

**8. Distribute (free) tickets.**

Why not ticket your Christmas services? *Free* tickets, of course, but tickets help create demand.

They have also helped us manage fire code. Eventbrite is an inexpensive and easy solution.

Plus, having tickets drive decisions and commitments to attend.

**9. Love your community.**

We try to give double the amount of money we normally give to our community partners, like the local food bank, right before Christmas.

We also participate in local Christmas parades and community events in ways that show our community that we’re for them and that God is *for them*.

Love makes a pretty irresistible force when it’s unleashed on a city. And generosity makes an impression on unchurched people.

**10. Invite them back.**

Every year, without hopefully sounding like a commercial, we invite people back for January.

They get a card explaining the new series and dates, times, and locations.

We play the trailer for our January series during the services, even though the trailer isn’t “Christmassy.” Because our January series deals with a “felt need” (e.g., people don’t like their jobs, or they find life overwhelming), it creates a huge buzz, and many guests return in January simply because they see the trailer.

I know inviting people to church sounds basic, but you’re dealing with unchurched people. Think about it. You would never go to a party unless you knew you were invited.

Unchurched people don’t know they’re invited unless you invite them. So, invite them.

**11. Plan a call to action.**

God’s grace is sovereign. We’ve had people commit their lives to Christ during volunteer events and during a series about tithing. God can do anything.

But you need to do your part. Don’t let people walk away bored or with just a big “warm fuzzy.” Challenge them. People will leave mostly unchanged unless you create a different expectation.

**New Lives in the New Year**

Almost every year, we give people an opportunity to surrender their lives to Jesus… and it’s amazing how many people do.

When we invite them back and offer them steps to take in the new year, Christmas starts a journey for them that often ends with a life-changing surrender to Christ.

The time is now! Don’t wait!

**ABOUT THE AUTHOR**



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Carey Nieuwhof is a best-selling leadership author, speaker, podcaster, former attorney, and church planter. He hosts one of today’s most influential leadership podcasts, and his online content is accessed by leaders over 1.5 million times a month. He speaks to leaders around the world about leadership, change, and personal growth.