

CHRISTMAS

Anticipation is a large part of Christmas fun for kids. In early December, begin to emphasize Christmas in your club. Plan Christmas games and adapt regular circle games to highlight the season. Decorate the clubrooms. Make sure the Christmas account is told clearly at least once during December

Decorating Ideas

Decorate your clubroom with wreaths, stars, bells and candy canes. Create an environment, which says “Jesus’ coming to earth is very important!” Clubbers enjoy helping leaders, so decorate together either as a pre-club activity or during another designated time.

With clubbers, set up a Christmas tree in your clubroom or church hallway. Each clubber can bring one decoration (which he or she will take home after Christmas) to hang on the tree.

Decorate a Christmas tree for a senior citizen in the church or community. During one afternoon or evening, travel together to his or her home, decorate the tree, and sing Christmas carols. Ask a clubber to read the Christmas story from the Bible (this should be practiced in advance). Clubbers can bring cookies and drinks to share.

If your church decorating committee is willing, let volunteer clubbers assist in decorating the church for Christmas. Clubbers can set up a manger scene, hang wreaths, or trim and decorate a tree. Invite parents to help, either as a special weekend event or during a club meeting.

Greeting Cards

Each team chooses a member of the church staff for whom it will make a poster-board Christmas card. The card should be signed by all clubbers. If possible, let clubbers hang the card on the staff member’s office door or on a bulletin board.

Your club makes a giant-sized Christmas greeting such as “Merry Christmas to everybody from the Awana T&T clubbers” to hang on its clubroom door. Have all clubbers sign their names.

Leaders send greetings to each clubber’s parents. Thank them for their support and cooperation in sending their son or daughter to club. Enclose an invitation to your church Christmas services, listing the dates and times.

Leaders send clubbers Christmas cards with notes and fliers announcing exciting January events.

Design and have printed a calendar featuring a picture collage of clubbers in action. These calendars make nice Christmas greetings to clubbers, parents and Awana supporters. The calendars also become prayer reminders.

Carols

Many clubbers don't know the traditional Christmas carols. Select three or four of your favorites to teach them. Check that they accurately present the gospel, and then sing those carols each week in December. Display the words on a screen. During Council Time, share with the clubbers the background of how and *why* the carols were written.

The last club night before Christmas, go caroling to the families living in the immediate vicinity of your church. Before you leave a home, present a Christmas greeting from your club and an invitation to attend your church Christmas services.

Wreath

Make a Christmas wreath with a wire coat hanger and a box of 150 sandwich-sized plastic bags. Bend the coat hanger into a circle. Wrap one or two bags around the hook and secure ends with cellophane tape. Tie each bag around the wire with a knot in the middle, so the two ends of the bag are even. Fluff out the ends.

When you've used all 150 bags and fluffed them out, spread them evenly over the wire. Decorate the wreath with small bows, pieces of holly or other Christmas decorations.

The wreath will take approximately an hour to finish. Clubbers can work on it as a pre-session activity each week in December or at a special team party. To reduce club expenses, ask each clubber to furnish his or her own coat hanger and box of sandwich bags.

Snowman

Bake cupcakes in two sizes –regular-sized for a base and smaller for the snowman's body. To make the snowman, place the small cupcake on top of the large cupcake. Cover with white frosting. Use a large marshmallow for the head. For the snowman's hat, use a black gumdrop. Use bits of gumdrop or other small candies for his eyes and mouth.

Snowmen can be eaten as a treat or brought home.

Achievement Records

Cut a Christmas tree from a large sheet of green paper (heavy paper tablecloth works well). Hang the tree on a wall in your clubroom. For each section passed in December, clubbers make one construction-paper ornament to decorate the tree. Clubbers write their name on their ornaments.

The clubber with the most ornaments at the end of December wins the contest. For a team contest, each team can use a different color for its ornaments.

Leaders cut a Christmas tree from dark green construction paper for each clubber. For each section passed in December, a clubber earns a star for his or her tree. Stars can also be awarded for club attendance during December. The clubber with the most stars wins a Christmas gift or treat.

Scavenger Hunt

During a Christmas party, send each team and its leaders to a different area within the neighborhood. Teams try to collect as many items as possible from the following list. Set a time when all teams must return to the church. Award a prize to all members of the team that collects the most items before time runs out.

Piece of fruitcake Italian Christmas light
Candy cane Nut still in the shell
Christmas cookie Bell (any kind, made out of any material)
Blue Christmas light bulb Strand of silver tinsel
Christmas card Sheet of Christmas wrapping paper
Broken ornament Twig of Scotch pine
Red or green sock Piece of mistletoe
Piece of red ribbon Twig of holly
Red candle

Candy Hunt

Hide wrapped Christmas candies around the clubroom before clubbers arrive. Play Christmas music on a piano or tape recorder. When the music starts, clubbers gather as much candy as they can find. When the music stops, clubbers stop hunting. Anyone who collects candy after the music stops forfeits all the candy he or she has found. Start and stop the music several times until nearly all the candy has been found. The clubber (or team) with the most candy wins. If leaders have collected forfeited candy, they should redistribute it after the winner is announced, making sure all clubbers have a few pieces.

Christmas Is for Giving

Emphasize to clubbers the importance of giving.

Older clubbers plan and run a Christmas party for younger clubbers (or another group) in the church.

Clubbers shovel snow from driveways and sidewalks for senior citizens.

Invite your Awana missionaries (or another church missionaries) to club. Give him or her a Christmas Shower of nonperishable food items or office materials and supplies. Ask the missionary to give the Council Time message.

Clubbers bring stocking stuffers (inexpensive gifts) for children of needy families.

Clubbers' parents are given an opportunity to buy Christian books. Contact a local Christian bookstore and ask permission to sell books on consignment. Send fliers well in advance to clubbers' parents. The fliers should publicize the books by name and content and list the date of the sale. The week before the sale, send a reminder to parents so they can browse and shop when they bring kids to club or after the meeting. The bookstore may be willing to provide a salesperson for the book table. Be sure to check with church leaders concerning church policy on buying and selling in the church.

Sharing Christmas with Others

Plan a family Christmas party early in December to which clubbers invite their parents. Start with a potluck supper, then play Christmas games, sing Christmas carols, and show a Christmas film. Plan a Christmas tea for girls and their moms early in December before the rush begins. Sing carols and give devotions on the Christmas account. Keep refreshments simple — nut breads, holiday salads, coffee and punch.

Organize a clubber choir and sing Christmas carols for senior citizens. Practice the songs in advance. Prepare the clubbers for the visit by telling them about the hospital, nursing home or retirement center you will be visiting. Remind clubbers to be friendly; warn them not to stare at the residents of the home. Bring gifts of homemade cookies or fudge (without nuts).

Christmas Crafts

One club night during December, ask clubbers to arrive a half-hour early to make a Christmas craft. Clubbers should go to the game room when they finish their crafts.

If your leaders aren't skilled in crafts, enlist the help of volunteers from your church to plan and direct a Christmas craft. Here are a few ideas.

Foam ornaments decorated with sequins

Christmas pictures mounted on wooden plaque covered with protective finish

Christmas candles in small glasses decorated with glitter

Macramé plant hangers decorated in Christmas colors

Wooden candleholders which clubbers sand and shellac

Foam Christmas trees or wreaths decorated with wrapped hard candy Christmas cards

Christmas pictures framed with yarn-wrapped cardboard frames

Cookie Bake

Ask Awana moms to help at a club meeting or on a Saturday afternoon. (You may want to prepare the dough in advance.) Ask moms to roll out dough and help clubbers cut out and

decorate cookies. When cookies are baked, have clubbers box and wrap them. Cookies may be given to shut-ins, people the clubbers visit when caroling, or the church staff. Give each clubber a few cookies to take home. Cost may be covered by clubbers bringing double dues.

Gift Exchange

Have each clubber bring an inexpensive wrapped gift to club. As clubbers arrive, their gifts are placed on a table. When club is almost over, have all clubbers sit in a circle. Leaders give one gift to each clubber. Begin playing Christmas music. Clubbers pass their gifts to the clubber on their left. They continue passing gifts until the music stops. Clubbers who wish may leave the circle and unwrap their gift. Other clubbers remain in the circle and repeat the process. After four times, all clubbers remaining in the circle must keep the gifts they're holding.

It's very important to set a price range for gifts and insist that everyone stays within that range. Specify that clubbers are to bring gifts for their own age group.

Christmas Pre-club Activity

Behind each team game line, tape a large piece of white or brown paper on the wall so clubbers can draw on it. Provide crayons or felt-tipped markers for each team. Before club begins, each team draws one aspect of the Christmas story. For example:

Red team – Mary, Joseph and the donkey on their way to Bethlehem

Blue team – Angel telling the news of Jesus' birth to the shepherds

Green team – Mary, Joseph and baby Jesus in the stable

Yellow team – Wise men visiting Jesus

Announce this activity a week in advance to allow teams a few minutes during Handbook Time to plan their mural. Since the mural is time-consuming, it could be a pre-club activity during each of the four weeks prior to Christmas. When the murals are complete, hang them on a prominent wall for church members to enjoy.

Christmas Party Games

Christmas Seals – Hide Christmas seals and gift tags all around the game room. When the whistle blows, clubbers collect seals and tags for two minutes. The team with the most seals and tags wins.

Christmas Puzzles – Cut pictures from Christmas cards into jigsaw puzzles. Be sure each puzzle has the same number of pieces of approximately the same size. Give each team its puzzle pieces in an envelope. Have each team huddle in a circle. When the whistle blows, team members put their puzzle together. The first team finished wins. If you want to play a second round, put the puzzle pieces back in the envelopes and pass them to another team.

Card Curve – Place a large box in the center of the Game Square. Give each team 10 Christmas cards, marked on the backs with its color. When the whistle blows, team members line up at a designated point several feet away from the box. Each player takes a turn attempting to toss a card into the box. The team with the most cards in the box wins.

Words-a-Plenty – Give each team leader a pencil and a sheet of paper. When the whistle blows, each team begins making words from the letters in “Christmas: As clubbers call out words, the team leader writes them on the paper. Letters may be used in each word only once. Examples include “stir” and “tar”. After four minutes, the team with the most words wins.

Filling the Christmas Stocking – Give the first member of each team a large Christmas stocking. In the center of the Game Square, place a box containing many small miscellaneous items. When the whistle blows, the first player from each team runs to the box, grabs one item and puts it in the stocking. The player then runs back to the starting pin and hands the stocking to the second player. When the last player takes a turn, he or she races into the center for the pin or beanbag.

Christmas Wrap – Leaders enclose wrapped Christmas candies in four packages using five layers of wrapping paper and ribbons. Teams line up for a five- man relay, with the first players holding the packages. When the whistle blows, the first player on each team unwraps the first layer of paper and ribbon, runs one lap around the circle and hands the package to the second player. Action is repeated until the fifth player runs a lap. He or she then runs into the center for the pin or beanbag. At the end of the game, leaders can distribute the candy to their team.

Christmas Tree Puzzle

Copy the puzzle on page 19 for clubbers to take home. Award team points to clubbers who return the completed puzzle the following week.

Circle words you often hear during the Christmas season. You can find them reading front wards, backwards, up and down.

Christmas Bible Message Ideas

Use Imagination – Lead clubbers in imagining themselves as shepherds on the first Christmas: the stillness of the night, the angel’s announcement and the shepherds’ decision to go and see the Christ-child. Or encourage clubbers to use their imaginations as you tell of the wise men seeking the new King.

Teach from Murals – Use the pre-club murals (described earlier) as the basis for four Council Times.

Tell of the angel's appearance on separate occasions to both Mary and Joseph with the news that God's Son would be born of the Virgin Mary. Discuss Mary and Joseph's trip to Bethlehem and their search for a place where the baby Jesus could be born.

Tell of the angel's announcement to the shepherds and their worship of the newborn King.

Tell of Mary, Joseph and the Baby in the stable. Even before God created the world, it was God's plan for Jesus to come to this earth to be born of the Virgin Mary and become the sacrifice for our sins.

Tell about God's miraculous provision of the star to guide the wise men and their worship of Christ.

Nativity Scene – Tell the Christmas account using a nativity scene. As you refer to each of the figures, move them to dramatize the action of the story. Explain that God gave Jesus as the greatest gift to the world. If there were no first Christmas, Christ couldn't have died for our sins. Because of His death and resurrection, God now offers salvation to all people everywhere. Christ is the most important gift we can ever receive!

Think of other original, effective ways to present the Christmas story in Council Time. Use slides, filmstrips, videos or flannel graph. Or perhaps leaders and clubbers will present a skit of why we celebrate Christmas.