



Come as you are

YOUR CHURCH ACTIVITY PACK FOR CHRISTMAS 2021

Ideas for simple activities suitable for all ages, that will help your church congregation reflect on and communicate a message of welcome and love to everyone this Christmas.

#comeasyouare



@churchurbanfund

**CHURCH
URBAN
FUND** 

Join us by decorating you church doors, windows or pews with golden stars and the words.....



This Christmas shine a light into your community and invite everyone to Come As You Are. You can take part as a church community, as a family, social group or individual.

Follow the steps in this activity pack to decorate your church with handmade stars and then gather the congregation for a special blessing (page 5-6) at the threshold.

Bless these doors, lit with stars, and all who walk through them.

The golden star

Jesus, our Saviour, was revealed to the Magi by the guidance of a star.

This golden star represents our hope for a better future, where everyone experiences the love and support they deserve. Let's use this Christmas to seek and serve Jesus in everyone we meet.

"We saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him."

Matthew 2:2



Your presence

At the Church Urban Fund we believe that churches and faith-based organisations have a special role to play in addressing complex needs in our communities. Use this activity pack to start thinking about the ways your church can be seen and known for good.



Create your stars


**Come as
you are**

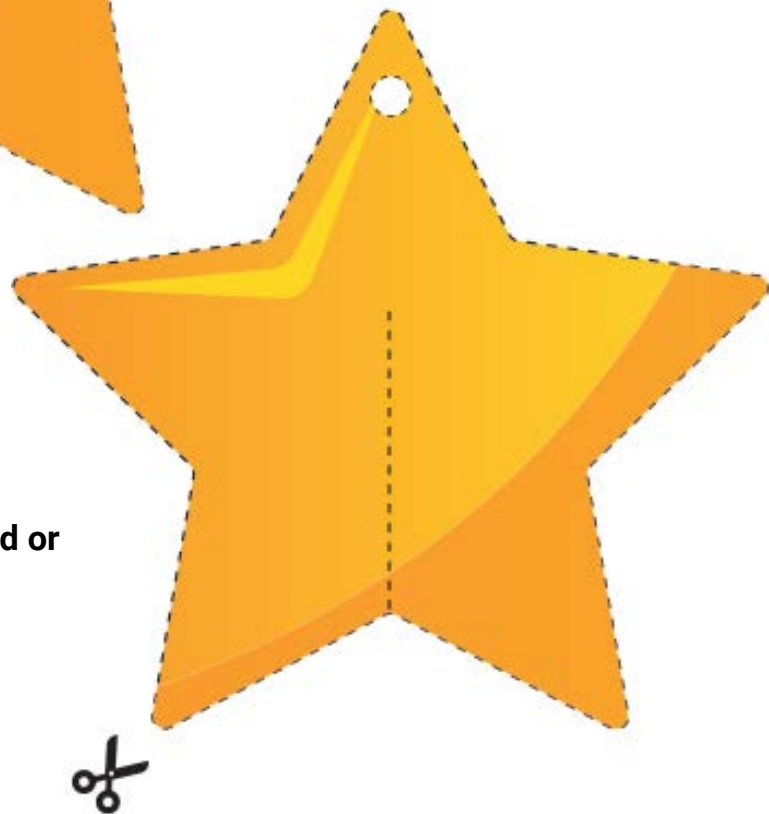


You will need:

Our template and A4 paper
A hole punch
Ribbon/string
Pens

Extras:

Decorate your star, you can use
coloured pencils, glitter, tinsel,
anything that you like!



**3D, baked, glittery, beaded, recycled or
even knitted...**

**Why not look online for more star
themed craft ideas and add to your
constellation!**

You can write a prayer on your star

Here are a few prayer points you can consider:

- The impact of the Covid-19 crisis on people in vulnerable circumstances.
- Give thanks for all those working and volunteering this Christmas season.
- The safety of people experiencing homelessness.



How to display your stars

Use your star decoration – and make many more! – to shine a light into your local community. You'll be joining many others and can take part as a church community, as a family, social group or individual.

Decorate your door

Show everyone in your community that you are open, present and ready to fully welcome them this Christmas by decorating your church door with golden stars.

- Take a photo and share it on your social media (**#comeasyouare**) to spread the message further and reach more people in need.
- Not on social media? Email us a photo at **hello@cuf.org.uk**



Make a display

- Make a special display inside your church, or encourage your congregation to do the same at home. It's amazing how much awareness can be raised through simple actions.
- Involve the whole congregation – decorating stars can be a great Messy Church activity!
- Cut out some extra stars and encourage visitors to write a prayer on one to add to your display.

Connect with your community

Use your stars to connect to local businesses and groups

- What are the main community centres, businesses or venues in your community? Share your message with them and encourage them to join you.
- Find out more about how to connect with local networks by using the **Presence** session at **www.growing-good.org.uk**



Gather at the church door for a simple service of blessing



You can use this short order of service or simply gather to say the prayer of blessing on the following page.

Welcome

This blessing service is inspired by the Church Urban Fund's Come As You Are campaign, and our desire to be an open, welcoming and active presence in our local community.

At Christmas, the mystery of the Incarnation inspires us to open our hearts and open our doors for the good of others. Jesus, our Saviour, denied simple hospitality at His birth, now welcomes all to His table and bids us to do the same.

Take a moment to reflect on the people you meet in church and in the community who need support. You may wish to invite everyone to write a prayer on their star and attach it to your display.

Reading

Luke 2:1, 4-7

In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. Joseph went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

This reading reminds us that Jesus, the Lord of life, was denied simple hospitality at His birth. And we are challenged that this same Jesus now welcomes all to his table and bids us do the same, to extend welcome and generosity and hospitality to friend and stranger alike.

Song - O Holy Night

O holy night! the stars are brightly shining;
It is the night of the dear Saviour's birth.
Long lay the world in sin and error pining,
Till he appeared and the soul felt its worth.
A thrill of hope--the weary world rejoices,
For yonder breaks a new and glorious morn!
Fall on your knees! O hear the angel voices!
O night divine, O night when Christ was born!
O night, O holy night, O night, O night divine!

Led by the light of faith serenely beaming,
With glowing hearts by his cradle we stand.
So led by light of a star so sweetly gleaming,
Here came the Wise Men from Orient land.
The King of kings lay thus in lowly manger,
In all our trials born to be our Friend.
He knows our need, he guardeth us from danger.
Behold your King, before him lowly bend!
Behold your King, before him lowly bend!



Collection

During the carol, or at the end of the service, you can allow people time to offer a collection towards the work of the Church Urban Fund. Alternatively, you can share the link for people to donate directly online: www.cuf.org.uk/church-christmas

The blessing

Loving God,

Bless these doors, lit with stars, and all who walk through them.

You revealed your Son, our Saviour, by the guidance of a star.

May we seek and serve, in everyone we meet, that same Christ Jesus.

Help us to reflect your love in our actions, that all who come to this place find a warm welcome, loving support, and Jesus living amongst us.

Amen

Fellowship

Spend time together over refreshments or in fellowship and prayer, considering how you can be open, welcoming and actively present in your local community. How can you keep the light you have celebrated today shining throughout the whole year?

You may even like to prepare mince pies and hot drinks, inviting people from your local community to join you.

Faith-based presence in local communities

Local churches are playing an essential role in offering support and friendship to people experiencing homelessness and rough sleeping.

Surviving in times of crisis is about staying well – mentally, physically and spiritually. But without a safe and stable place to live, illness and depression become almost impossible to avoid.

200,000 people experiencing
severe homelessness

726 lives lost every year

Unknown numbers of **"hidden
homelessness"**

But being fully welcomed into relationships with others can significantly reduce this risk and help us recover. That's why personal and consistent care, like that provided by our Positive Pathways volunteers, really does change lives. Without the partnership of local churches, volunteers are increasingly difficult to find, train and support.



Viktor struggled with homelessness at a young age. During the worst times, he survived by sleeping on the streets and suffered intense loneliness and depression.

"On the one hand, you are lonely and struggling with things like depression. And on the other hand, you've got no food, no resources... You start thinking no one can help you and it makes it very hard, mentally, to survive."

**Your generous collection
this Christmas could help
restore hope and home.**

Church Urban Fund is a national social action mobiliser working with and through the Church of England to help build connected, hopeful and flourishing communities.

CHURCH URBAN FUND

Thank you for standing
with us this Christmas.

Find out more about how
you can connect social
action, discipleship and
growth at your church:
www.growing-good.org.uk

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