

### 'Treats & Traditions'

This is an idea for an evening social for adults and offers an opportunity to reflect on the season and the festival in the Christian calendar. Recollections of childhood and family memories, traditions and treats.

This is a multi-sensory approach to getting conversations going and thinking about ways to help families with or without young children to prepare for the season.



Think about the sights and sounds, smells and tastes of food, traditions etc at this time of year. Decorate your venue - use candles and twinkly lights, mulled wine and mince pies for Christmas feeling. Play Christmas carol singing in background. What do families do to mark the occasion or count the days? - Jesse tree? Advent Calendars? (secular and faith based) Are there simple craft ideas to share? How do families prepare or mark the time leading up to the event? Churchgoing? Family parties? Funny quirky traditions in families? Favourite food, TV programmes, routines? Who do they visit at Christmas time? Is Father Christmas part of their tradition?

Offer seasonal nibbles and bring and share ideas and things you make or have done over the years with young children. Conversations include a mixture of secular and Christian based traditions to talk about, an opportunity for explaining the Christian roots to symbolism and the underlying Christian message.

Offer an icebreaker to get the conversations going in small groups or as one whole group depending on numbers attending. Write questions on slips of paper and pull out of a box or link with the seasonal theme... have questions in crackers, or inside Christmas boxes or a card Christmas pudding!



You may wish to have a five minute sharing/reflections time by one of your leaders re Christmas or from an invited guest. If you have mums gathering for this event, perhaps reflect on how Mary treasured these thoughts and memories in her heart as the Christmas events unfolded. Ponder on the nativity scene and events.

Link the waiting time of pregnancy to the symbolism of waiting and preparing time of Advent. Discuss the term 'Advent'. Bring examples of Christmas story books for children... ones you have enjoyed with your own young children.

What traditions are associated with decorating the tree and home, filling stockings, church going at Christmas (recognising traditions stemming from Pagan and Christmas symbolism.) There are also lots of traditions associated with different cultures and countries. Learn more from others about how they celebrate Christmas. You may be surprised as different traditions are revealed.. perhaps close to home or across different European countries and beyond!

Timing... for an evening event, try early December before the party season gets going. Or late November as Advent is just about to start. Try 7.30-9.30 pm which creates a sense that people aren't out too late.

The evening you choose depends on your own knowledge of the mums you know. Friday nights can be tricky because of that end of the week feeling but only you know your group. Why not ask them? We have offered some on Monday evenings but we have to take what's available because we hire the village hall. Make sure your event doesn't clash with some other commitment they may have or something else going on locally - parents evening, party or school concert!

Baby sitting and fatigue is an issue if you have young children. Maybe you can offer baby sitting support if possible if your church has this set up. Offer baby sitting support if possible if your church has this set up.

**PRAY** beforehand for sensitivity in conversations and enjoyment for those who come. You will need to carefully facilitate the conversations and add little Christian snippets along the way. Pray for a balance in nurturing conversations that honour the Christian tradition and respect others in your listening.

Enjoy yourselves! This is not meant to be heavy theological discussion!

This sort of event recognises the spirituality beyond church/Christian language and tradition and can offer the first steps towards understanding where people are coming from in their beliefs and deeper searching for meaning in life.

