

# 10 Ways to Reach Unchurched People at Christmas

By Carey Nieuwhof on November 2, 2016 in [Leading Ideas](#)

**Pastor Carey Nieuwhof says unchurched people want to celebrate Christmas, so there is no better time to connect with friends and neighbors who rarely, if ever, go to church. He offers ten ways your church can be involved in the unique opportunity to reach people at Christmas.**

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Christmas provides a unique opportunity to reach people who no longer ordinarily attend church. What's surprising is that many churches don't really engage the Christmas celebration to make the impact it could. Over the years at our church, the Christmas services win hands-down for both overall attendance and attendance by unchurched people. Although, theologically, Christmas will never be bigger than Easter, practically, our Christmas outreach is always bigger than Easter simply because the culture is paying attention.

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Many Christians lament the culture's disregard of Christ at Christmas, but I choose to see Christmas as an opportunity. 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. Our culture pauses for Christmas in a way it pauses for little else throughout the year. TV and film celebrate Christmas in all of its expressions. Almost everyone decorates for it. At Christmas, the Western world comes as close to stopping as it ever does. I'm not sure there's a better time to connect with friends and neighbors who rarely, if ever, go to church.

The biggest mistake many churches make each Christmas is to hold a quiet Christmas Eve or Christmas Day service for members and leave it at that. That makes Christmas the biggest missed opportunity of the year. Unchurched people want to celebrate Christmas. Here are ten ways your church can help them.

## **1. Hold multiple services**

Not everyone can make it to your one service. Last year, we did five services over two days, December 23 and 24. Yes, those are long work days for staff and volunteers, but you can reap a harvest all year long from that investment.

## **2. Theme the event around the community, not around your church**

For a few years now, we've called our Christmas Eve Services "Christmas Eve in Barrie" or "Christmas Eve in Orillia" (the cities in which we serve). Why? My theory is that's how unchurched people think. They'll be asking where they can celebrate Christmas in their city. Why shouldn't your church be the one to help them figure that out? Chances are the URLs for ChristmasInYOURCITY.com are still available. Buy them today.

## **3. Hand out invitation cards**

Make full color cards with details for people to hand to their friends. Last year we tied candy canes to the Instagram-like cards to make them easier to hand out to friends. It's easier to invite a friend to something like Christmas than to a regular Sunday service.

#### **4. Make posters**

A few years ago we experimented with creating really beautiful posters advertising our Christmas Eve services. They popped up all over our cities in places like Starbucks, hockey arenas, community centers, and more.

#### **5. Build a special Christmas website**

Don't just buy the URL address for your city; build a special site. Our team built two new websites last year for our two locations that are devoted only to Christmas Eve using our personalized URL addresses.

#### **6. Use social media**

If you don't have the bandwidth to build fresh websites, do it for free using social media. Create a Facebook event or promoted posts. Use all your social media channels to get the word out. Encourage members to share with their friends. Last year we did a Photo Booth to create some fun Instagram moments with dressed up kids and people holding "Join us for Christmas Eve" signs.

#### **7. Sell (free) tickets**

Tickets, even free tickets, help create demand. They have also helped us manage fire code regulations. [Eventbrite](#) is an inexpensive and easy solution. Having tickets helps drive decisions and commitments to attending.

#### **8. Love your community**

Each year we focus on giving to our community through local food banks, raising money for local partner charities, and serving friends and family. It's a way of not only giving back, but of capturing a community's attention at a key time. A few years ago, our efforts made the front page of the local paper. Generosity makes an impression on unchurched people.

#### **9. Invite them back**

Every year, without sounding like a commercial (we hope), we invite people back for January. They get a card explaining the new sermon series and dates, times, and locations. We don't usually have services the Sunday after Christmas, so we let them know that too. But we tell everyone they're invited for the first Sunday in January. I know sending an invitation can sound basic, but you're dealing with unchurched people. Unchurched people don't know they're invited unless you invite them. So invite them.

#### **10. Plan a call to action**

God's grace is sovereign so God can do anything. But you need to do your part. Don't let people walk away bored or with a big warm fuzzy. Challenge them. Almost every year, we give people an opportunity to surrender their lives to Jesus, and it's amazing how many people do. For others, Christmas starts a journey for them that often ends with surrendering their lives to Christ.

#### **About the Author**

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