



On your marks

Here is an idea for a Christmas presentation that can involve a number of people - children and adults - as they help the congregation to explore what Christmas is really about.

Get set

You will need the nine letters of the word '*Christmas*' written on separate pieces of A4 (A3?) card. It would be good if each letter were also decorated in some way, while still remaining clearly visible and legible.

Why not use differently coloured tinsel, wrapping paper, holly etc. to highlight and bring out each letter in a festive way?

Each letter card should also be numbered on the reverse, clear enough for the holder to see - only numbers 1 to 8, as the second 's' does not need to be numbered.

Once you have the letter cards ready, one further step would be to wrap each one in Christmas paper to create 9 'presents'.

Go!

1 If you have wrapped the letter cards, then begin the presentation by inviting children to come out and unwrap a present each, revealing the nine letters randomly. Begin to wonder what on earth this present is all about and how the letters are connected, leading eventually to someone recognising that they spell the word Christmas. The emerging letters may of course already begin to spell something else first, however this will only add to the fun and in fact leads into the activity coming. Alternatively, just simply hand out the letters randomly from the front.

2 You have now unwrapped the word Christmas, but this of course means so many different things to people. Now, by calling out the appropriate numbers linked to the letters, ask the card holders to come forward and arrange themselves so as to spell the following words. (Remember when you are calling the numbers out, the children and adults should be standing so that the congregation can read the words left to right.)

3 Here are words you can spell linked to a comment, on which you can elaborate as leader:

- CRAM - there's such a lot to do now that Christmas is so close
- CHARM - there are such a lot of cosy, family traditions linked to this time of year
- CASH - Christmas seems to cost more and more each time it comes round
- TRASH - the same old TV programmes turn up again
- SHAM - sadly we often have end up putting on a front and pretending to be nice to people we haven't seen for ages - even our relations!



- SMART - it's a time for dressing up for those Christmas parties
- CRASH - and also a time just to sit on the sofa and sleep!
- HITS - listening to music and wondering what will be the Christmas number one
- TRIM - or rather trimmings - all the extras that go with the special Christmas meal

4 But we know that Christmas is really more than all this. Amongst all these things, what is it that we are really unwrapping this Christmas? There are some more words hidden here, which might help:

- CHARTS - not the Christmas top-twenty but the charts studied once upon a time by some wise people far away in the east
- STAR - and who discovered a new star, which they followed carefully. It led them to....
- HIM - the baby Jesus, lying in a manger

5 Christians believe that this is the real marvel and miracle of Christmas but for most people Christmas is spelt like this:

(Arrange the following letters to come out and stand together):

C H R S T S

So what is missing? The three letters left over should then come out, right to the very front and arrange themselves to spell:

I AM

Might you too forget to unwrap Jesus this Christmas?