

CHRISTMAS
CELEBRATE WITH YOUR SENSES



Making Good Sense At Christmas

Crackling fires, whispered prayers, sweet aromas, familiar carols, favorite cookies and rooms full of laughter. No matter where you live, you're bound to find at least one Christmas, season-identifying factor in the short list above.

But what do the senses have to do with worship? Well, there is a reason that people love to go to Christmas parties. Melodic sounds, sweet smells, yummy foods and rich laughter all seem to characterize gatherings of friends and family. Biblically, God initiated worship "feast" times that seem historically to have been seasons of tremendous festivity. These feasts celebrated the mighty acts of God, and emblazoned them on the memory by enlisting all five senses in worship. Sometimes Advent and Christmas services in many churches feel less like a great worship feast and more like... a bad party. Try some of these sense-ordered ideas in your worship planning this season:

Touch Christmas

Have a traditional candle-lighting service, where each person (even the children) holds an inexpensive, drip-less candle (these can be purchased in any church supply store). Starting with total darkness in the room, light an initial candle, and pass a flame (representing the Light that came into the world) around the room. It is delightful to watch children's faces as the entire room becomes lit from one small flame, and is a very tactile memory for years to come. Or, give an inexpensive, but textured "Christmas Thoughts On Worship" card – one that folds and can sit in the center of their family table – to all those in the congregation.

Taste Christmas

Celebrate the touch and taste act of communion by candlelight, or less formally, have cookies and punch available before your Christmas Eve service. Some churches throw full-out parties, recognizing them as a part of their community's worship journey, complete with live music, food and entertainment.

Smell Christmas

A few hours before the service, light fragrant Christmas candles throughout the sanctuary or gathering place. The hanging of winter greens such as pine branches or cedar garlands can bring a wonderful smell to an otherwise stuffy room.

See Christmas

The use of images, icons and fabric work can be much appreciated worship elements during services, giving the eyes something to meditate on during worship or the message. Consider commissioning a visual artist to make a piece throughout the year that can serve as an annual visual tradition for your ongoing Christmas worship gatherings.

Hear Christmas

Welcoming bells, mini-choirs caroling at the entrance, and live background music before or after a service can inspire a celebrative spirit within the gathering. Consider moving the band to use all "acoustic" instruments, or integrate classical stringed instruments, bringing uniqueness and simplicity to the worship set.