

Carol service kit

Lighting candles together can be a powerful moment to share with people, especially in the winter, when light is scarce. Links to Church, Christmas and 'Jesus: the light of the world' are very useful here too.

This kit will guide you in running the candle lighting, and help people reflect on ending hunger together. People will also be able to reflect on the part they can play in helping food banks offer kindness, a cup of tea and a compassionate conversation to everyone they support.

What's in your carol service kit

1. **Activity and Health and Safety tips**
2. **Suggested running order** (songs, carols prayers, and Bible readings you can include in a carol service)
3. **Wax guards and candles**

Disclaimer:

This pack and activity involves naked flames and hot wax. The wax guards in this pack are designed to help catch wax dripping from the candles when lit. They are not designed to stop the spread of fire. They are not fire-proof. Care must be taken when using these candles. We provide some health and safety tips below, but please also have a look at Ecclesiastical's Candlelit Service guidance if you want more information.

How did it go?

We would love to hear how your carol services with these materials go! Please share your stories and any photos (provided you have the right permission to share them) with us at churches@trussell.org.uk

Activity tips

- The candles in your kit are thin enough to fit into the wax guards. Pop these around the candles beforehand, and leave enough space to hold the candle under the guard.
- How will you hand out the candles? When people arrive, or as part of the event itself, or during an instrumental piece or carol?
- You'll need a way to light the first candle(s) - matches or a lighter.
- People are then invited to pass the light by holding the wick of their candle in the flame of their neighbours' candles. This can be a gentle, precious moment people can share.
- Think about your space and where you will start the lighting.
- What will people do when their candles are lit? Can they hold a hymn sheet at the same time, or can you project words for a carol at this point, or have the choir or music group sing for everyone?
- How will you introduce it? The light spreading could represent a few different things:
 - God's love being shared between people and in the community.
 - Meeting God in the people we meet, and who live around us.
 - The warmth that a cup of tea and compassionate conversation can bring, how this kindness can ripple through people, relationships and our community, and its potential to change the world.
 - The message of Jesus' birth can be spread and bring hope and justice to our world.
 - Everyone has a part to play in spreading the light; we need everyone to help end hunger together.
- Who will be holding the first candle/light to begin with?
 - A child (a nice link to the baby Jesus and Christmas, but take extra care! Have an adult supporting them to do this)?
 - Food bank staff or volunteers?
 - People with Lived Experience of poverty or financial hardship?
- The wax guard opens to reveal a message and a link for people to watch a film about the power that a cup of tea and compassionate conversations can have in food banks. How can you weave this into your service? Invite people to take these wax guards and open them at home.
- How will you encourage support for your food bank on the day of the carols service itself? Can you invite people to bring a food donation with them?

Health and safety

- Conduct a risk assessment for your group, room and service.
- Have a first aider and first aid kit ready.
- Do the activity standing up (for people who are able to stand) to reduce risk of wax and embers / ash falling on people or clothes. Have extra heat proof layers ready for people who can't stand to drape over their legs.
- Have fire blankets handy in case of emergency. Fire blankets are a better defence than a bucket of water. You can wrap someone up or shield them with a fire blanket.
- Keep a distance between people for safe handling of candles.
- Know where the fire extinguishers are.
- Have a clear escape route for all planned out.
- A metal bucket with sand for extinguished candles is helpful.
- Being aware of any drapes, gowns, or children in dress-up clothing that could be flammable or get in the way of candles.
- Have heat-proof containers (baking dishes or similar) to hold the candles after they are extinguished.
- Remind people to be careful with the naked flames and hot wax, especially as they move slightly from side to side to pass on the flame to their neighbours.
- Remind people that over time the candle flame will burn down the candle and get closer to the wax guard and people's hands – especially the people who start the lighting and whose candles have burnt the longest. Plan how long you will have the candles lit for and keep an eye on the first candle's height to reduce chance of the flame getting too close to people's hands.
- Remind people to hold the candles upright, so the hot wax drips onto the guard, not the floor or clothing.
- Think about how you will collect the candles once they are extinguished, as you'll be inviting people to take the wax guards home with them. E.g. have stewards at the end of rows of people, with the heat-proof container to collect the candles.
- Remind parents and carers to take extra care for their children, and share holding candles with younger children.
- Are there any other considerations you need to make for the room you're in, like hangings nearby, the flooring and fire escapes?

Carol Service suggested running order

Opening Carol: O come all ye faithful

Welcome everyone, introduce the focus on kindness, the local food bank and ending hunger together

Opening prayer

Loving God,

*you invite us to come and meet you...
... in the child in the manger,
... but also in the people we might call 'strangers'.*

*As we gather, sing and pray together today,
Guide our hearts to discover you again, to enter into the story of your birth among us, and
rejoice with the visitors to the stable.*

In Jesus' Name,

Amen.

Carol: Angels from the realms of glory

Reading: Isaiah 9:2, 6-7 A child will be born

Local contribution: School choir performance? Story from food bank of campaigning, participation or setting the scene of how this winter has been.

Instrumental: prepare candles

Choir/music group carol: Silent Night

Candle lighting

Reading: John 1 v 1-14

Collect candles, but congregation keep wax guards

Address:

Suggest a theme of God being with us, among us, dwelling with us. As God came to be with us, God invites us to be with one another, forming community in which we can all belong and support one another. We all need community and to feel like we belong, the food bank plays a large part in this for so many people. Link the passing of the flames of the candles gently, to the way we can share love and kindness, a cup of tea and compassionate conversation with people, and the positive effect this can have. What can we do to help? Donate, give our time to the food bank? Can we respond as a church in 2025 and work more closely with the food bank sessions to welcome and support people?

Invite people to take wax guards home, to open and read the message inside

Instrumental: invite donations for the food bank

Prayers for our community and world (invite food bank to contribute to these)

Carol: Hark the herald angels sing

Closing Prayer:

Father God,

as we have read, heard and sung, we recognise you in the child Jesus and wonder at the joy this brings to all people.

Guide our hearts this Christmas time and into next year, to do what we can to share this wonder to make this joy, belonging and welcome real for everyone we share our community with

Amen

Carol: Joy to the world or Ding dong merrily on high (something rousing to end on!)

**How silently, how silently,
The wondrous gift is given**

Trussell
Ending hunger together

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 [trussell.org.uk/
church-welcome](https://trussell.org.uk/church-welcome)

Scan the QR code to hear how a cup of tea and a compassionate conversation can make all the difference.

Kindness is a gift we all need,
and a gift we can all offer.

Will you play your part?

Wax guard visual