

Running A Great Holiday Programme



Whether you are planning a half day or a whole day Holiday Programme the following pages will give you useful tips and ideas on how to make your Holiday Programme fun and safe for everyone. At Coastal Unity Parish we have been running full day Holiday Programmes for children 5 years to 12 years for over 2 years now with great success but there are key elements that help make that success a reality. Our programmes run from 8:30am to 4:30pm the second week of the holidays. All of our Holiday Programmes are Christ Centered, but we do have to allow for the fact that 75% of the children in our area do not even regularly attend a church service so we do put the “God Talk” at a lower level. We will also walk you through one of our most popular Holiday Programmes “Midwinter Christmas” and show you some activities we do with the children.

No matter if you plan a half day or whole you will need to make sure certain things are set up ahead of time to ensure that your programme runs as smoothly as possible. Some are the base for a safe and healthy programme. These include:

ENOUGH STAFF: Ratio must be at least one adult for every 10 child over the age of 5. Remember no one is too old to help if they are willing. Some of the folk we have helping come in just to read stories or serve snacks and it’s an amazing help during our busy Holiday Programme day! Youth over 13 years are fantastic helpers also!

A GOOD FIRST AID KIT: Make sure you have at least 2 people that have their first aid certificates and that they are up to date. Also it is crucial to have a full first aid kit on hand for any emergencies that might arise. First aid kits can be acquired from St. Johns or NZ Safety.

A GOOD THEME: A good theme is what you have as a base for your programme. From this theme you will be able to set up activities, games and special guest. A good theme will set the tone for everything you do so be careful to pick one that has a lot of ideas and activities to go along with it. (Examples – Circus, Ecology, Mid-Winter Christmas, Jesus is my Superhero etc.)

PAPERWORK: You need good paperwork such as schedules for activities, sign in sheets, permission forms, instructions for crafts and games. Make sure all parents fill out a permission form with information about their doctor and dentist in case of emergency. They should also include all pertinent medical information i.e. allergies etc. All staff working with children should have a police background check done not only for the safety of the children but for their own safety. Examples will be given at the back of this packet.

MEETINGS AHEAD OF TIME: It is important to plan ahead. We begin planning for each Holiday Programme as soon as the last one has finished. This gives us plenty of time to prepare and find activities and games to go with the theme. It also gives you an opportunity to pray with your team and form a solid group of people who are of one mind in working for the good of the children.

Our most popular Holiday Programme so far has been our “Mid-Winter Christmas” programme. The following is how we set this programme up and we hope you will get helpful ideas from what we include here:

Mid-Winter Christmas:

Mid-Winter Christmas is one of our most popular Holiday Programmes. It is typically done in the June-July Holiday period. We base the theme on two things Jesus Birth/ Santa. I know many will wonder about including Santa but we felt that Santa was an important part of children’s imagination and if done right with Christ still at the centre it would work out wonderfully and it has! 😊

Begin by planning out what you want for your Mid-Winter Christmas programme. What activities will you have, how will you schedule them? Let me just say the one of the greatest resources you will find for your ideas is the internet. You will find crafts, games and other activities for any theme you plan there! I have included a Schedule (1) that shows how we break up our day and we have found that these tend to work best. Don’t schedule an activity (except for outdoor play) for more than about 20 minutes as the children will get tired of the activity quite easily after 20 minutes. Always make sure you have intervals of “free play” so that the children will interact in a non-structured time. I usually plan 3 “free play times” a day for transition purposes. One at the beginning while children arrive and its sign in time, one after lunch while those still eating can finish up properly and one at the end of the day when children’s parents/ guardians are arriving to pick them up at different times.

You may also note that on the schedule provided we transition from activity to activity with a story. This is a great way to settle everyone down for the next activity and by going to the library you can get up to 30 items to take out and use for the programme. (i.e. books, tapes, movies). We match everything from the library to the theme and also have some books on hand for the older ones to just read if they wish for some quiet time. The tapes come in handy for music/dance time or just for certain games. (i.e. musical chairs, music freeze) We will explore more in depth each activity after this section.

Remember a schedule is just a general idea of how things will go you are always able to change the schedule a bit if necessary.

Holiday Programme Schedule

8:30 -9:30	FREE PLAY AND SIGN IN
9:30-9:45	DANCE AND MUSIC
9:45-10:00	STORY
10:00-10:15	MORNING SNACK
10:15-11:00	MORNING CRAFT (includes clean up)
11:00-11:45	OUTDOOR/INDOOR GAMES AND ACTIVITIES
11:45-12:00	CLEAN UP AND STORY
12:00-12:30	LUNCH
12:30-1:00	FREEPLAY
1:00-1:45	OUTDOOR GAMES AND ACTIVITIES (INDOORS IF WEATHER IS BAD)
1:45-2:00	CLEAN UP AND STORY
2:00-2:15	AFTERNOON SNACK
2:15-3:00	AFTERNOON CRAFT (includes clean up)
3:00-3:15	Story
3:15-4:00	FREE PLAY/GAMES/INDOOR OR OUTDOOR
4:00-4:10	CLEAN UP
4:10-4:30	FREE PLAY TILL HOME TIME

This schedule may change depending on length of craft or activity but this is the base schedule for the whole week except Friday when we will be having a party from 2pm till home time.

Let's take each part of the schedule as we go through the day:

First we will look at "Free Play". I know this sounds like an easy task since the children do all the playing but you do need to make sure of a few simple things.

Make sure you that you have enough staff on hand to oversee the free play time. Children given the chance to have free play can a bit rowdy at times and it's for the safety of everyone that you have plenty of staff on hand to ensure safe play.

We tend to section off the hall in free play areas. One are might be for dress up and dolls, one for legos and building and another for jump ropes and ball play. We always try to set up one free play creative area where children may draw and colour. Often we have music quietly playing in the background during free play and place it near where the quieter activities are going on. (i.e. art, reading)

Morning Snack should always be healthy and we always try to make it follow the theme. For Mid-Winter Christmas we often found snacks that were Christmas themed and sometime used the craft time to have the children help make their own snacks! (This is great fun for them if planned correctly) We had gingerbread men, made our own chocolates, marshmallow snow men snacks and more. We provide two snacks a day but I only plan one snack a day for the children to help with and that does not occur every day. We encourage older churchgoers to help the programme by providing a snack for one day to help take the load off the workers who are there for the whole day. (I have attached a few snack ideas)

Dance and Music are always set according to the theme so for Mid-Winter Christmas we had many children's Christmas music cd's to play. Have some of the older children help out up front to guide the younger ones through the motions of songs or even to make up motions for the other children to follow. Often we will just have free dance where the children can make up their own motions or dances. It's a great time in the morning to get the wiggles out before a quite craft time! Find dancing games like freeze dance or musical chairs also to use during this time.



Story Time: Our transition time with books from home or the library. You can even ask at the beginning of the week if any children have favourite books they would like to bring along for you to read or for other children to read. Try to keep the books you read to the theme of Christmas and I always make sure one book a day is read about Jesus' birth. You have to keep the stories rather short.

Keeping the older children's interest can be a wee bit hard, especially boys but I found that if you told them you were going to quiz them at the end of the week on the stories with a prize to the winner that usually helped a great deal. At the end of the week have a quiz with one question from each story to the older ones and see who remembers the most!



Morning Craft is my favourite time! It is great to see all the children join in and being creative in their own way. Again I found the easiest way to find themed craft projects is, to go onto the internet where there are literally thousands of ideas to use or to adapt to what you want to do. Set up your tables so that you can easily help with all the children. We usually find a "U" shape to work best for most crafts but sometimes we just find the floor the best place to do our creative art!

Having things set out ahead of time for each craft for the day helps the volunteers easily find what they need to set out for the children. Provide a detailed explanation of each craft and a one finished product for them to see how it will turn out. I often enjoy sitting with the children and doing the craft along with them which sparks a bit of conversation and provides an adult at the table to help the youngest ones also.

We tried breaking groups up into ages with simple crafts for younger and harder crafts for the older children but to our surprise we found that many of the older children did not have the skills to accomplish simple craft tasks any more than the younger ones. So then we began to mix the groups for craft and those older children with many craft skills could help with those who were unable to catch on right away.

Make sure you have a way to put the child's name on every project they do! At the end of the week when they leave you don't want tears if they can't find exactly which Christmas tree or angel is theirs.

You will always get children who are finished way ahead of other children and to counteract this we just set up an extra table with quiet activities to do or we engaged them to help in early clean up so that we could transition to the next activity quicker. (They often were anxious to help as they knew the next activities were games!)

Our first day craft is always simple in the morning giving the children various photocopied pages with angels, stars, tree ornaments and more for them to colour in and cut out. After they are done we blue-tack them to the windows and walls to begin our Christmas decorating! (See samples)

We gradually work through the week with our decoration crafts including a huge manger scene and a real (artificial) Christmas tree with lights for their ornaments they make. I have included various ideas you may use for your craft project or you may even find some of your own to use!

Games whether indoor or outdoor are always a challenge to find that suit all the age groups you encompass. We found over time that making some games group or relay games and mixing the age groups so older children could help with younger worked the best. You also need to provide separate games at times for the groups by age to keep everyone happy and interested, but for the most part they all tend to enjoy games even mixed with the youngest and oldest children. Games too can follow your theme. You can invest in various books about children's games but I find that the easiest and cheapest resource as with many things is to just go onto the internet and look up children's games. If you look up specifically children's Christmas games it will direct you to the games you need for this specific theme. (I have attached samples of games)

Special Visitors come at times during story times or at the end of the week party. For Mid-Winter Christmas we have Santa come to our end of the week party with a bag full of small gifts for each child and a story. Santa always takes time to speak to the children about Jesus' birth and how even he, Santa, knows that Jesus is the King of Kings and even Santa prays to Jesus and celebrates Jesus' birth! It's a wonderful time for the children to learn the importance of the season and still be able to keep their childhood imagination intact!

End of the week party: During our Mid-Winter celebration we always have an end of the week party when Santa comes bearing gifts. Volunteers, parents, guardians and even the children make food for the party. Special older children who have been chosen help to decorate the chair for Santa. The older children who are not doing Santa's chair are set a task of doing a huge manger mural for Santa to see. The younger children help by making the last of our decorations for the hall. (Construction paper chains etc.). It's a busy day with lots of fun as the children wait anxiously for Santa to arrive in the afternoon.

Santa arrives and all the children sit and listen to Santa's story about Jesus, the greatest gift! Then Santa calls out each child's name to give them a gift. After all the gifts are handed out Santa is brought the first plate of goodies and then the children enjoy the celebration food. Parents and guardians are invited to the party and really enjoy the time to sit and converse about the week and all the fun things that have happened with the children. Since many of our parents and children are not regular church attendees I always keep in mind that my conversations with them about God are quite important as it might just be the only conversations about God they hear often.

If you follow any of these simple ideas you will have an enjoyable Holiday Programme. The Mid-Winter Christmas theme is just one of many we have used and we are inventing new themes all the time for the children to enjoy!



Snack Ideas:

Gingerbread Men

Need: Gingerbread Men (baked)

Icing sugar white

M&M's

String red licorice

Bake gingerbread men ahead of time to save time. Make sure you have one ginger man for each child plus some extras as you will be making these the last day of your programme for the afternoon party.

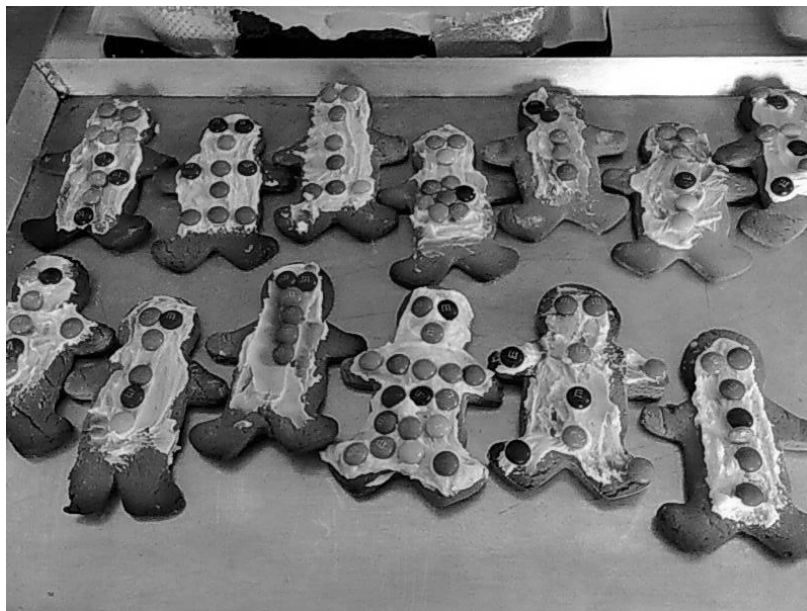
On the tables place 2-3 bowls of icing sugar and 2-3 bowls of M&M's. Let the children know they may eat a few M&M's after they have completed their gingerbread man.

Give each child one small string of licorice.

With a small teaspoon back let the children spread on the icing sugar then direct them to place the M&M's on for eyes, nose and buttons. Use the red licorice for the mouth.

This is a simplified version and you may wish to add other things for decorations.

When done place the gingerbread men back onto the cookie sheet till the afternoon party time



Another creation for our party snack was having the older children learn to make their own chocolate candy treats! We bought candy moulds from Spotlight with Christmas themes. We melted chocolate over a pan of water to make sure not to burn the chocolate. The older children can melt some of the chocolate and then pour into the moulds. After pouring into the moulds they should be placed into the refrigerator to harden for the party in the afternoon!



You will find many other wonderful ideas for snacks in your cookbook or the internet. Be creative with the snack ideas but always be aware of allergies in some children.



Craft Idea:

Reindeer candy cups

You will need:

Plastic cups (preferably brown or gold which you can get from Spotlight).

Beady eyes

Puff balls in red for noses

Brown Pipe Cleaners

Glue

Hole Puncher

Wrapped Candy

Give each child one cup, 4 pipe cleaners, two beady eyes and one puff nose. Make sure each table has enough glue to pass around for each child.

You can either ahead of time or if you have many hole punchers you can have the children punch holes near the top on either side of the cup spaced evenly. These will be the holes to put the antlers in once they are made.

Have each child then glue on the eyes and nose to the cup (which should be open side up)

Take the 4 pipe cleaners and twist them into antlers.



Styrofoam Snowman:

Need:

Styrofoam Cups

Styrofoam balls

Beady Eyes

Puff Nose red, black or orange

Mini Popsicle sticks

Glue

Small Christmas cloth cut in square or triangle

Felt Tip Pens

Take the mini Popsicle stick and push it into the Styrofoam ball then push the other half of the stick into the bottom of the Styrofoam cup. This should securely place the ball onto the cup forming the head and body of your snowman.

Now use glue place on the eyes, nose and hat to the Styrofoam ball. If your material is in a square fold it to be a triangle. You may find other way to make the hat with felt or other material, which is fine, be creative!

Once you have those placed on take the felt tip pen and make the buttons on the Styrofoam cup. (Snowman's body) and write the Childs name at the base.

They will dry in time to take home but while they are drying they will look like a lined up army of snowmen!



You will find many more crafts on the internet and in books either from the library or those you can purchase. For the internet just type in Children's Christmas Crafts and thousands of ideas will come up!

Lunch!

One of the unique ways we save money for the church and for the families is we do all of our Holiday Programmes as “Pack your own Lunch” programmes. This means every day each child brings a packed lunch as they might for school and that way we don’t have to cook or provide the lunch for them. This not only saves money and time but also it means the children don’t have to turn their noses up at food they would not like to eat that you might make. Having said this we always have food on hand for those children that might forget their lunch or also those who may not be able to afford a packed lunch. No one ever goes hungry!

Games:

Games are always the most fun part of any Holiday Programme not only for the children but also for the adults! You can find so many places to find games and again I will lead you to the internet with its vast wealth of ideas for games that are fun, safe and many are made just for themes! We were able to find many games the children enjoyed that went along with our Christmas theme but we also engaged the older children with one or two being picked each day to be game leaders. This meant they also had to come up with one or two games they thought everyone would like to play and it was their responsibility to teach and lead those games. Everyone enjoyed the game time and often the best games were asked for again and again!

Candy Cane Relay Race

Rudolph Dash: How To Play: Have child put Vaseline on their nose and then put the red circles on their nose. A relay race to the finish with each new person adding their red nose. If nose falls, go back to bowl and add more Vaseline and reapply nose.

We laughed so hard at this game and all the teams had a hilarious time! We mixed the age groups for fairness but the older ones were very encouraging and enjoyed helping the younger children!

Fill the Christmas stocking

Supplies:

Stocking, spoon and bowl for each team. Wrapped candy.

How To Play: Divide into teams. Have children line up at one end of the room. At the other end, hang a Christmas stocking for each team. Place a bowl of candy and a spoon in front of each team. Each child takes a turn taking a candy from the bowl with the spoon. They then carry the candy on the spoon to the stocking and drop the candy in the stocking. Race back to the next person in line, give them the spoon. First team to fill the stocking wins!

Christmas Scramble

Supplies:

Index cards

Paper bags.

How To Play: Choose a Christmas word such as: Christmas, Candy Cane, Santa Claus, Reindeer.... Write the letters of the word on individual index cards. Do this two times, making two sets. Put each set in a brown paper bag.

Divide children into teams. Give each team a bag. The first team to decipher what the word in the bag is wins. A variation of the game would be to divide into teams with the same number of children as there are letters in the word. Each child gets a letter and they must hold onto the card and stand in the proper order to spell the word for all to see.

This was a great game and all the teams had mixed ages to make it fair but everyone had a fantastic time!

Pin the Star on the Christmas tree, Pin the nose on Rudolph or even Pin the nose on Santa....

All great games and all you need to do is make a large picture for the wall and provide the ornaments or noses for the children to place on while blindfolded. A great take-off on pin the tail on the donkey. We used tape on the backing so that there were no pins involved to make it safer. The children were really excited about this game and laughed a lot!

This is our basic programme but we had many more crafts and games which you too can find on the internet and other places! Enjoy your Holiday Programmes and more importantly enjoy the children that attend your programmes!! If you have any questions feel free to call me anytime!

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<u>Name</u>	<u>Age</u>	<u>Address</u>	<u>Parent Name</u>	<u>Phone #</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>T</u>	<u>W</u>	<u>TH</u>	<u>F</u>

Sign In Sheet/Coast Unity Children's Programme