



Host a
*Christmas
Coffee*
this Season

Start Guide

The Christmas season is a wonderful time to share the love of Christ with others. One way to do this is by hosting a Christmas Coffee.

A Christmas Coffee provides an opportunity to meet your neighbors, co-workers, friends, or family by inviting them into your home for an informal Christmas celebration. It can be a starting point for new relationships, or a chance to cultivate existing ones. Just as importantly, it's an opportunity to connect with others in a context where conversation about Jesus isn't odd, but natural to the occasion.

HOW DOES A CHRISTMAS COFFEE WORK?

You can call it whatever you want, but a Christmas Coffee is simply a friendly Christmas celebration aimed at building friendships and sharing the true meaning of Christmas with those near to us. They are generally hosted between Thanksgiving and Christmas and can be as unique as the people who host them. A coffee can take the form of a couple's night out in your home, a family caroling night, a neighborhood women's evening dessert or Saturday morning breakfast, a time to welcome international students into your home, or a cocoa for your child and his or her friends. The event can be as simple or elaborate as fits your style.

There's no one way to host a Christmas coffee, but this guide is designed to help you get started and guide you along the way.

PLANNING

Here are some important considerations as you plan your Christmas coffee.

Prayer. Commit to praying for your Christmas coffee, and specifically for the people you are inviting, on a regular basis. Ask God to guide your preparations, show you who to invite, enable those invited to come, and most importantly, for his Spirit to be preparing hearts to see his love and hear the gospel.

Time and location. Try to select a day, time, and location that works both for you and for the people you are going to invite. You may want to team up with a fellow Christian in your neighborhood or workplace to work together on your event, or perhaps a few people from your church home group.

Level of formality. Your coffee can be as formal or as informal as the people you host. Whether in a home or apartment, an office or a clubhouse, and whether you use paper Christmas plates or your finest china, attempt to make your guests feel comfortable and special. Festive decorations and/or background music (carols) creates a cheerful and restful atmosphere. It's also a good idea to have some name tags on hand as people will be meeting each other for the first time.

Menu. Plan your menu according to the type of gathering you want. It could be a morning or an afternoon coffee with Christmas cookies and goodies, a brunch, a noon luncheon, or an evening dessert. If possible, do many of your preparations ahead of time to relieve last minute pressure.

Christmas Focus. Since the occasion for the event is Christmas, you should decide how and to what extent you will draw attention to real meaning of Christmas, Jesus Christ. You might take a moment to read the Christmas story from Luke. You might

offer a toast, commenting on the significance of Christ coming to earth to save his people from their sins. Your children might prepare a Christmas song to sing, or you or your co-host might prepare some brief comments about Christ and Christmas. Perhaps someone can share their personal testimony. In some cases, you may simply focus on getting acquainted with your guests, creating an atmosphere that will enable you to share the gospel at a later date.

Think ahead of time about the general format of your event. A large part of the time is informal conversation over Christmas goodies. You'll want to have some planned questions to get the conversation started (see "During Your Christmas Coffee" below). You might also consider singing Christmas Carols or playing a game. And be sure to decide at what point in the evening you will draw attention to Christ and Christmas.

Invitations. Try to invite your guests at least 7-14 days in advance of your event. It is usually best to use a printed or hand-written invitation. In some cases, an initial phone call would be appropriate to set the date, followed by a written invitation. Include a RSVP on the invitation so you can get an idea of the number of people to expect.

In a neighborhood or apartment complex, consider delivering your invitations personally by hand. When they receive the invitation personally, you will be able to introduce yourself and take an initial step toward friendship. They will also learn where you live and understand that you are inviting them to a gathering of neighbors. In an office setting, this personal approach to the invitation may also be appreciated by your potential guests.

If you choose to mail your invitations make sure to mail them early enough so that they will be received at least one week before your coffee. Remember that if the invitations arrive too early your guests may forget the date.

Here are some items we suggest including in your invitation:

1. A warm invitation, such as, “We are delighted to invite you to a Neighborhood Christmas Breakfast!”
2. The date, time, and location.
3. Your home phone and email for the RSVP.
4. If you are planning to share Christ as part of the program, a clear indication that there will be some reflections on the significance of Christmas (this is important in order to prevent anyone from being unexpectedly offended).

You can find a **sample invitation** on the back of this guide, and there is a **template available on our website** that you can print and write in your information.

DURING YOUR CHRISTMAS COFFEE

As guests arrive, offer them something to drink (e.g., coffee, cider, cocoa, tea, juice, or punch). Encourage them to wear a name tag, and be sure to introduce guests even if they are neighbors or co-workers. Don't assume they know each other.

After a time of informal conversation, pull everyone together for introductions and group conversation. Some ice-breaker questions or topics for conversation you might consider:

- Different Christmas traditions
- Favorite Christmas memories
- Special Christmas plans this season
- How long have you lived in the neighborhood or been in the company?
- Hopes for the New Year

While the whole group is together, take the opportunity to draw attention to the real meaning of Christmas—Jesus Christ. This won't be a surprise if you've clearly indicated it on the invitation (see above).

For instance, after everyone shares about their favorite Christmas traditions, you might say, “One of our traditions each Christmas is to read the original Christmas story from the book of Luke in the Bible, and I thought I might share that with you tonight. . . .”

It’s a good idea to keep it brief and natural, but clear and meaningful. Remember, this is one of the few contexts in which conversation about Jesus is natural to the holiday occasion.

After this, you might play a game, sing Christmas carols, or return to informal conversation. Be sure to thank everyone for coming and sharing the Christmas holiday together.

It’s a good idea to have information about Westgate’s Advent services on hand, if people show interest (flyers are available in the foyer). You may or may not decide to hand them out, depending on the context and nature of your event.

FOLLOW UP

The most important follow up from your event is prayer. Pray for your friends/family to be hungry to know God.

Now that you’ve shared an experience with your neighbors or colleagues, keep your eyes open for future opportunities to connect. A chance to help rake leaves or shovel snow. Invite a family or colleague over for dinner. Consider a follow-up event in the future, perhaps a neighborhood Super Bowl party, or summer block party. Look for further opportunities to build relationships, love your neighbors, invite them to church, and share Christ.

You might also consider inviting them to our *Life Explored* study that we will be hosting on Friday nights during Lent. *Life Explored* is an evangelistic study designed to help people explore God and his greatest gift—salvation through Christ. More information will be available soon.

QUESTIONS

If you have questions or would like suggestions on how to plan your Christmas Coffee, contact:

- Pastor Brandon (PastorBrandon@westgate-church.org)
- Natasha Hope (tash@hopeisi.com)



You're Invited

**We're getting the neighbors together
to celebrate Christmas, and we'd
love to have you join us!**

Date: **Tuesday, December 13th**
Time: **7:00 pm**
Where: **The Leverings—(Address).**

Come enjoy cookies, hot chocolate, coffee, and good conversation. Please don't feel obligated to bring dessert, unless there is a family favorite that you would like to share.

RSVP: (Email)
or (Phone)

Hope you can join us!
— *Brandon & Carissa Levering*

Sample Invitation