

PROJECT LEADER RESOURCE

CELEBRATION SUNDAY



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Celebration Sunday is for your church family to join together and rejoice about what God has done through your shoebox-packing efforts, regardless of whether or not you reached your goal.

Suggested Agenda:

15–20 minutes

• **Rejoice**

- 1 minute—*Welcome* and *Shoebox Number Reveal* scripts.

• **Reaffirm**

- 2- to 4-minute video (Choose from a selection at samaritans-purse.org.uk/occ-videos).
- 1 minute—*Impact* script.

• **Pray**

- 10 minutes— Bring shoeboxes up to the platform area. Invite members of the group to come up, lay hands on the boxes, and pray for them.
- Pray specifically for each of the upcoming stops a shoebox makes on its journey to its destination. Use *Impact* script as a reference.
- 1 minute—Close with *Wrap-Up* script.

Set up:

- Print off *Welcome*, *Shoebox Number Reveal*, *Impact*, and *Wrap-Up* scripts.
- Have video and audio technology available and ready to play videos.

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Decoration Ideas:

- Blow up red, green, white or silver balloons to decorate your church. Give one out to each child who packed a shoebox.
- Set up an Operation Christmas Child-themed Christmas tree using shoebox items and [Operation Christmas Child logos](#).
- Hang up a world map, country flags or some [Operation Christmas Child bunting](#).

Bonus Ideas:

- Decorate your church for Christmas that week.
- Celebrate with a 'bring and share' lunch, featuring dishes from around the world.
- Have children sing *Jesus Loves Me* in multiple languages to the congregation.
- Younger children in the service may enjoy making Christmas cards or completing an ['Let's Be Friends'](#) sheet to add to their shoebox.
- Have teens read the Spiritual Impact Stories attached.

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Welcome Script:

Welcome everyone! Several weeks ago we started our shoebox-packing season. Now after *[shopping trips, crafting parties, packing parties, other events]*, we gather again to celebrate what we've been able to achieve together with God's help.

Shoebox Number Reveal Script:

I am so excited to tell you that as of today we have packed _____ *[number of]* shoeboxes. That is a lot of boxes! And I want to personally express my appreciation to each one of you who gave, packed, or prayed.

OR

We wanted to let you know in a fun way how many shoeboxes we received so, *[enjoy this photo montage, or insert another fun idea here]*.

Impact Script:

These shoeboxes are headed out from *[your location]* and many of them will be sent to places of unimaginable poverty and darkness. The enemy does not want these boxes filled with the love and joy of Jesus to reach their destination. He doesn't want us to pray for these children. But we have an opportunity to go before these shoeboxes in prayer, walking beside them every step of the way until they reach the hands of a child. We are going to take the next few minutes to pray over these shoeboxes. Join us in praying for them as they travel to the collection centre, continue on to the processing centers for inspection, head to the ports for shipping, go through customs, are transported in country, and finally, arrive in communities to share the love of Jesus. Pray as well for the heart of the child that will receive each shoebox, and the pastors or teachers that will be sharing the Gospel at each outreach event. Pray that the light of hope will shine and illuminate the darkness.

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Wrap-Up Script:

We are so blessed to be a part of a simple project that has such a great impact. This year, Samaritan's Purse will deliver millions of Operation Christmas Child shoebox gifts. We are a small part of this huge effort, but we know that God cares individually about each child. God knows each child by name. He knows their heart's desires. He already knows which shoebox they will receive and the spiritual journey it will start. As we leave here today, please don't stop praying for these children. Pray that God will multiply our efforts and that one day, when we join the multitudes from every nation around the throne of God, some will be there because of our simple shoeboxes.

*Be sure to share pictures of your event with us at Operation Christmas Child using the hashtag **#ipackshoeboxes**.*

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Spiritual Impact Stories:

Macedonia

In Macedonia, one church partner recently held an event reaching out to children in local marginalised communities. Among the children was Elena*, a little girl who was 6 years old and blind. She was fortunate to be able to attend a school, but many of the other children who attended the event did not have the same opportunity. Elena sat patiently and waited for the event to begin. An air of excitement grew as one by one the children were each given a shoebox gift. When Elena received hers, her fingers started to explore the contents eagerly. To her great joy, she found a Barbie doll inside and her face lit up as she beamed with delight. But Elena also had another reason to smile, as local partners shared with her the joy of the Christmas story, how much God loves her and how Jesus wants to be her friend. A member of the Operation Christmas Child National Leader Team for Macedonia was so touched by meeting this little girl that he plans to take his own daughters to visit her at the school.

*Name changed for security

Liberia

A child in Montserrado was excluded from school one day because his parents couldn't afford a scientific calculator. They were very poor and unemployed. When shoeboxes were distributed in their town, he received a gift with a brand new scientific calculator. He had been praying for this for months. When he saw it, he was so glad and thanked his friends for inviting him to the outreach event. He was so happy. He kept saying to his friends: "truly God answers prayers".

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Ukraine

Vlada is 12 years old and lives in Ukraine with her Grandmother. Her mother lives nearby but is unable to care for her as she struggles with alcoholism. Vlada was delighted to receive a green and red shoebox. She lit up with joy when she opened it, hugging the teddy bear inside. Excited, she continued to explore her shoebox and discovered a calculator, notebook, and sunglasses. Next to her teddy bear, the best part was a note from 21-year-old Taylor. "I will frame my letter," Vlada said.

That day Vlada also received another special gift as local church partners shared with her how much God loves her and how He sent us the greatest gift of all – Jesus. Vlada is keen to discover more about Jesus for herself and said, "This inspired me to read the Bible more."

Estonia

When local church partners met Orlo he was lying on a hospital bed, visibly weak and disengaged. As they shared God's love with Orlo he began to explore the shoebox gift which had been so lovingly packed by a donor in the UK. Orlo was delighted with the toys, the hat – which he put on immediately – and the colourful pens, pencils and paper. By the end of the visit he was smiling and waving. A moment of joy to help him on the road to recovery and the lasting good news of the greatest gift of all – Jesus.

Moldova

The teenage years can be a challenging time for many young people, but Natalia faces more challenges than most.

Growing up in a remote village in Moldova, Natalia lives with her father Vasilli, mother Clava and elder brother Arin. Their house is comfortable but basic, with no running water and limited space, meaning their lounge doubles as a bedroom. They are grateful to have some internal heating but this can be intermittent and when the heating fails they rely on a log burner to keep warm in the colder months.

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A year ago, Natalia's mother Clava became seriously ill and fell into a coma.

Natalia recalls, 'It was very difficult in my family. My mum was at the hospital in a coma. I felt very lonely at school.'

One day a friend invited her to attend a special event at a nearby church and she was excited to accept their invitation.

'I'd always wanted to go to church, but I didn't know how to approach it,' she explained.

At the event Natalia was overjoyed to receive a shoebox gift. Her favourite item was an eye-catching Christmas card with a beautiful angel on the front. She loved exploring the many gifts inside her shoebox and was particularly happy to receive brand new hairbands and school supplies.

At the outreach event Natalia heard how much God loved her and how He gave The Greatest Gift of all – Jesus. She was intrigued and keen to learn more. When the local church partners invited her to take part in a follow up bible study programme called The Greatest Journey, in order to discover more about Jesus, she was delighted to go along.

She enjoyed the fun, interactive sessions and spending time with her new friends. During one session the group learned about prayer. Natalia began praying for her mother and their lives began to change.

She recounts, 'We went and prayed for my mother in hospital. We cried as we were praying for her bad health situation... My mother was healed and today she joins us at church too. We have prayer times together and read the bible together every evening.'