



Christmas through the ages

Learning at
the Churches
Conservation
Trust

Family Activities

- Victorian Christmas Crackers
- Recycled Ribbon Trees
- Bell Ringing
- St Nicholas Colouring Sheet



DISCOVER
with Gizmo the Gargoyle



Christmas through the ages

Family Activities

Overview:

These four activities were created for Sandwich Christmas Light Switch On 2025, but they will make great additions to any Christmas event. They require varying degrees of effort and mix creativity and history.

Activity 1: Victorian Christmas Crackers (Low Cost/ High Effort)

Overview: Visitors learn the origin of Christmas Crackers and then make their own from toilet rolls and wrapping paper.

Age range: 4+ (Be aware that young children can choke on small objects and so should be closely supervised).

Materials:

- Christmas Crackers instructions
- Toilet rolls
 - These can be found second hand on eBay.
- Wrapping paper
 - Thicker wrapping paper will make the crackers more robust.
- Glue
- Scissors
- Cracker Snaps
- Paper Hats
 - Cracker snaps and paper hats can be found from multiple online retailers.
- Examples of Christmas Jokes
- Pens
- Paper
- Toys or sweets.

See the instructions for how to make the crackers!

THIS DOCUMENT SHOULD BE USED IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE FAMILY ACTIVITY ORGANISER'S MANUAL.

Activity 2: Recycled Ribbon Trees (Low Cost/ Low Effort)

Overview: Visitors learn the history of Christmas Trees and decorate sticks. If possible, families can go outside and try and find their own sticks and twigs. Feel free to add more to the sticks using glue or tape. This activity is all about reusing resources.

Age range: 2+ (Be aware that young children could poke themselves with sticks and should be closely supervised).

Materials:

- Recycled ribbon tree instructions.
- Twigs
- Scrap pieces of ribbon or fabric
- Scissors
- Tape or glue
- Other craft materials

Activity 3: Bell Ringing (High Cost/ Low Effort)

Overview: Visitors work together to play songs on handbells and then guess what song they're playing. You can cut out and laminate the arrows found in the bell ringing document and use these to conduct.

Age range: 2+

- Bell Ringing Document
- Pack of 8 handbells:
 - [8 Note Diatonic Hand Bells Set | Percussion Instruments | TTS](#)

Activity 4: St Nicholas Gift Hunt Colouring Page (Low Cost/ Low Effort)

Overview: Visitors learn then story of St Nicholas, colour in and sort the toys.

Age range: 3+

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Hazards to add to your risk assessment: PLEASE CONSULT THE LEARNING EVENT ORGANISER'S MANUAL FOR FULL LIST OF POSSIBLE HAZARDS.

Hazards Identified	Risk (How people may be harmed)	Precautions / Control measures	Residual Risk	Further precautions necessary
Pens/ Pencils/ Colouring Pens and Pencils	Poking to eyes, ears, nose, mouth etc.	Children not to be left unattended and asked to be respectful and sensible with the resources. Broken pencils replaced immediately.	L	Do not leave children unattended signage.
Small Objects: (Toys for inside crackers etc)	Choking hazard.	Children not to be left unattended and asked to be respectful and sensible with the resources.	M	Do not leave children unattended signage.
Allergic Reaction to Sweets for inside crackers.	Allergic Reaction to treats for inside crackers.	Organiser to ask adult visitors if they or any of the children in their care have allergies. Children to be accompanied so they do not have the chance to eat food without guardian's consent.	M	Do not leave children unattended signage.
Glue	Children try to eat glue.	Children not to be left unattended and asked to be respectful and sensible with the resources.	L	Do not leave children unattended signage.
Scissors	Cuts from scissors	All scissors should be child safety scissors. Young children should be accompanied whilst using scissors.	L	Do not leave children unattended signage.
Bells	Hitting other children with bell.	Children not to be left unattended and asked to be respectful and sensible with the resources.	L	Do not leave children unattended signage.
Twigs	Poking to eyes, ears, nose, mouth etc.	Children not to be left unattended and asked to be careful with twigs/sticks.	M	Do not leave children unattended signage.

**THIS DOCUMENT SHOULD BE USED IN CONJUNCTION WITH
THE FAMILY ACTIVITY ORGANISER'S MANUAL.**

Mascots:


The Churches Conservation Trust has six learning mascots each with their own colour and area of interest! These activities include 'Discover with Gizmo the Gargoyle' and 'Make Noise with Ogee the Owl'



Gizmo the Gargoyle is head of the pack! He loves history and, being made of stone, he is old enough to have experienced much of it. Gizmo uses his binoculars and magnifying glass to see the features of the church up close.

DISCOVER
with Gizmo the Gargoyle

CHURCHES CONSERVATION TRUST



Ogee the Owl loves to sing, dance and act! She uses her loud voice to express her thoughts and feelings. Her favorite thing about churches is how the walls amplify sounds. Ogee likes to watch drama performances from her home high up in the tower.

MAKE NOISE
with Ogee the Owl

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Christmas Crackers

Did you know crackers were invented by a sweet maker in the 1840s as a way to sell more sweets?

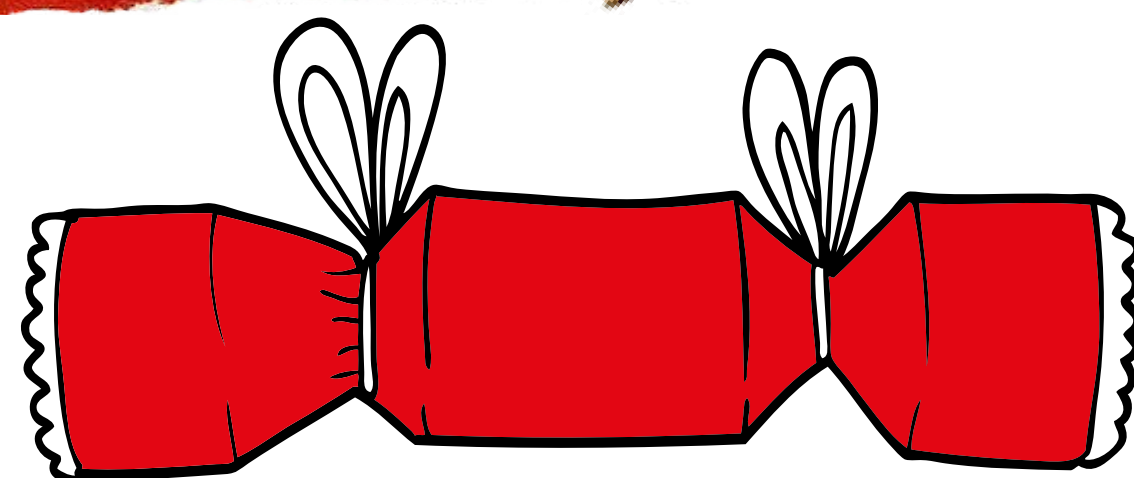
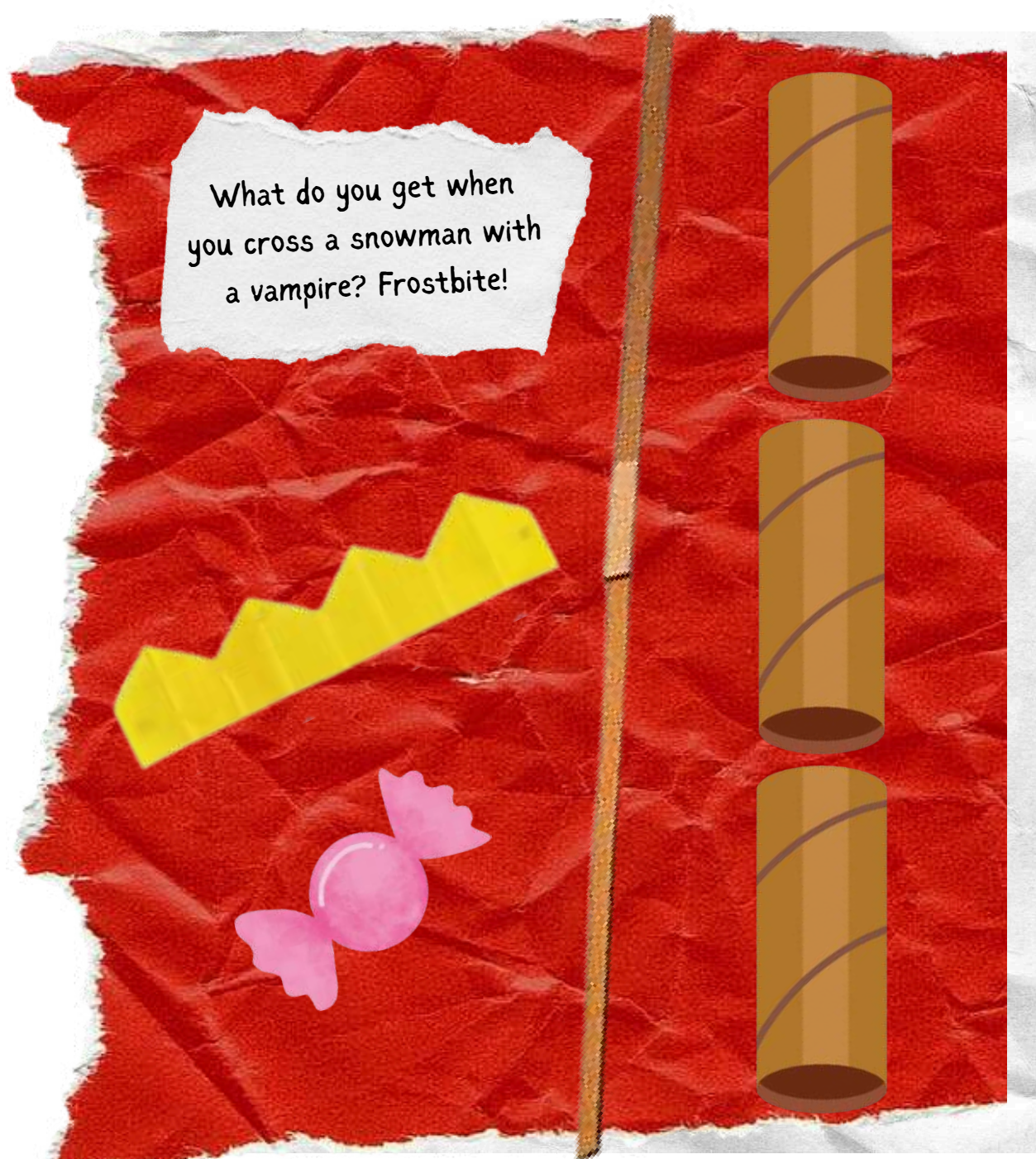
Tom Smith was a sweet maker in Victorian London who wrapped his sweets in pretty twisted paper packaging with a motto inside. He was inspired to add the "bang" when he heard the crackle of a log he had just put on the fire. The sweets and mottos were eventually replaced by the small gifts, paper hats, and jokes we see today.

Can you make your own Christmas cracker?

You will need:

- 3 x toilet rolls
- Wrapping Paper
- Glue
- Scissors
- Snap
- Paper hat
- Joke/ Motto
- Small strip of paper
- Pen
- Toy/Sweet

1. Choose or makeup a joke or motto and write it on a small strip of paper. Put this to the side.
2. Lay the toilet rolls out on the wrapping paper.
3. Put a small glob of glue on the snap and stick it to the inside of the middle toilet roll. Ensure that some of the snap extends into each of the other rolls.
4. Glue the edge of the wrapping paper and roll around the toilet rolls. Stick the other edge down. This is now your cracker! Cut the cracker from the rest of the wrapping paper.
5. Tie a piece of string around one end of the middle roll and take both other rolls out.
6. Feed the joke/motto, paper hat and toy/sweet into the remaining roll through the open end.
7. Tie a piece of string around the other end of the toilet roll.
8. Find someone to pull your cracker with!



Recycled Ribbon Trees

Did you know that bringing trees into the home during winter can be traced back to ancient times?

Ancient Egyptians hung palm leaves in temples to please the God Ra and Ancient Romans dressed their temples with evergreens for the festival of Saturnalia. The tradition of decorating trees for Christmas started in Germany in the 1500s. Legend says Martin Luther first lit his tree with candles after being inspired by starlight shining through the branches.

Can you create your own tree with recycled materials?

You will need:

- A twig,
- Scrap pieces of ribbon or fabric,
- Scissors.

1. Tie a piece of ribbon near the base of the twig so that there is some length on either side.
2. Leave a small space and then tie another piece of ribbon onto the twig.
3. Repeat this until you have used all of the ribbon.
4. Trim the ribbons to create a tree shape – the ribbons should be shorter at the top than at the bottom!
5. Tie a loop of wool or ribbon around the top of the twig so you can hang it up.





Have a go at playing the hand bells

Ring up the scale, then back down



Find out more about
the Churches
Conservation Trust: visitchurches.org.uk

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experience on
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MAKE
NOISE
with Ogee the Owl



Have a go at playing the hand bells

Can you guess the tune?



MAKE
NOISE
with Ogee the Owl





Have a go at playing the hand bells

Can you guess the tune?



1ST Time



2nd Time



MAKE NOISE with Ogee the Owl

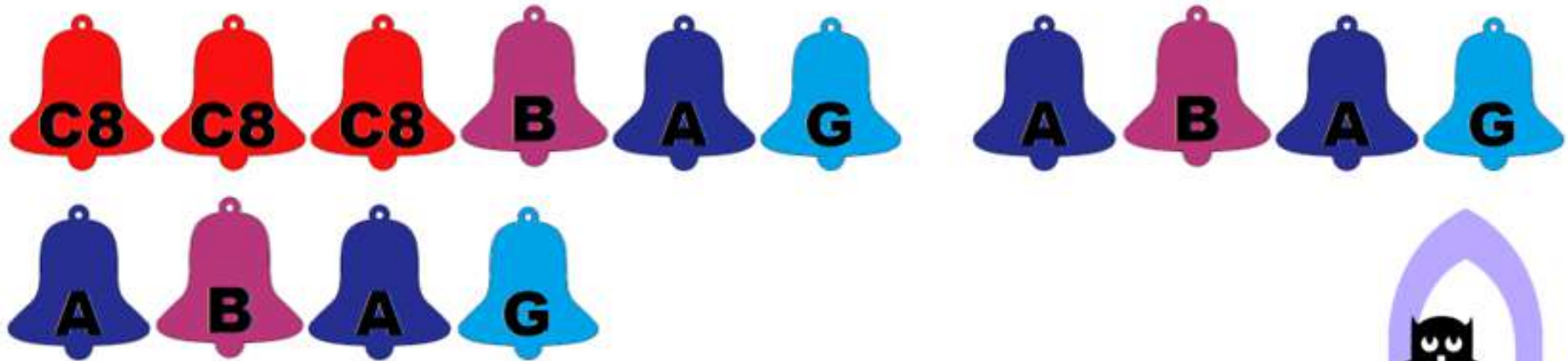
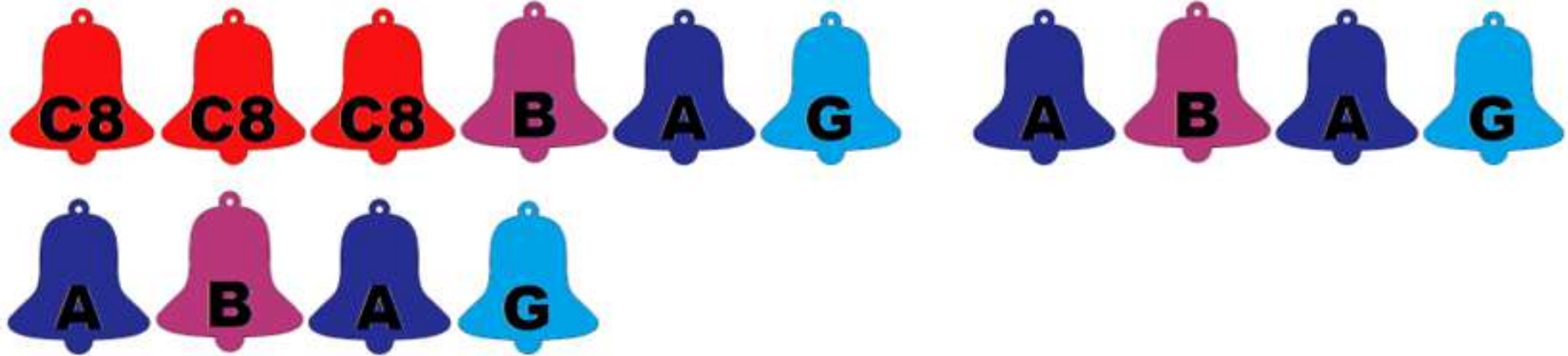


Have a go at playing the hand bells

Can you guess the tune?



MAKE
NOISE
with Ogee the Owl





Have a go at playing the hand bells

Can you guess the tune?




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Have a go at playing the hand bells

Can you guess the tune?

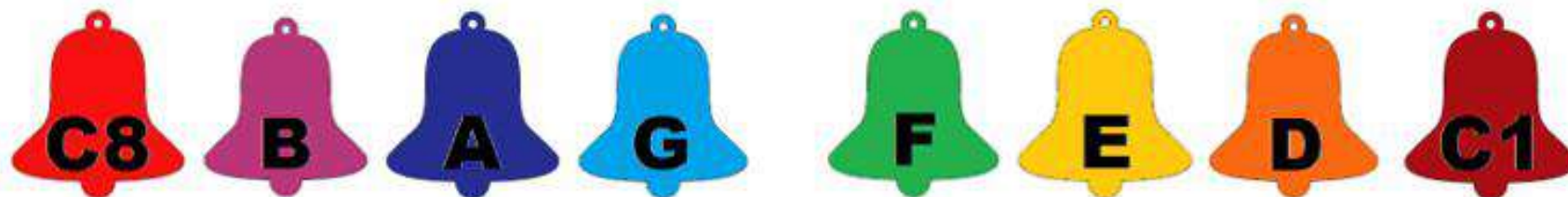


Repeat (with  to end)

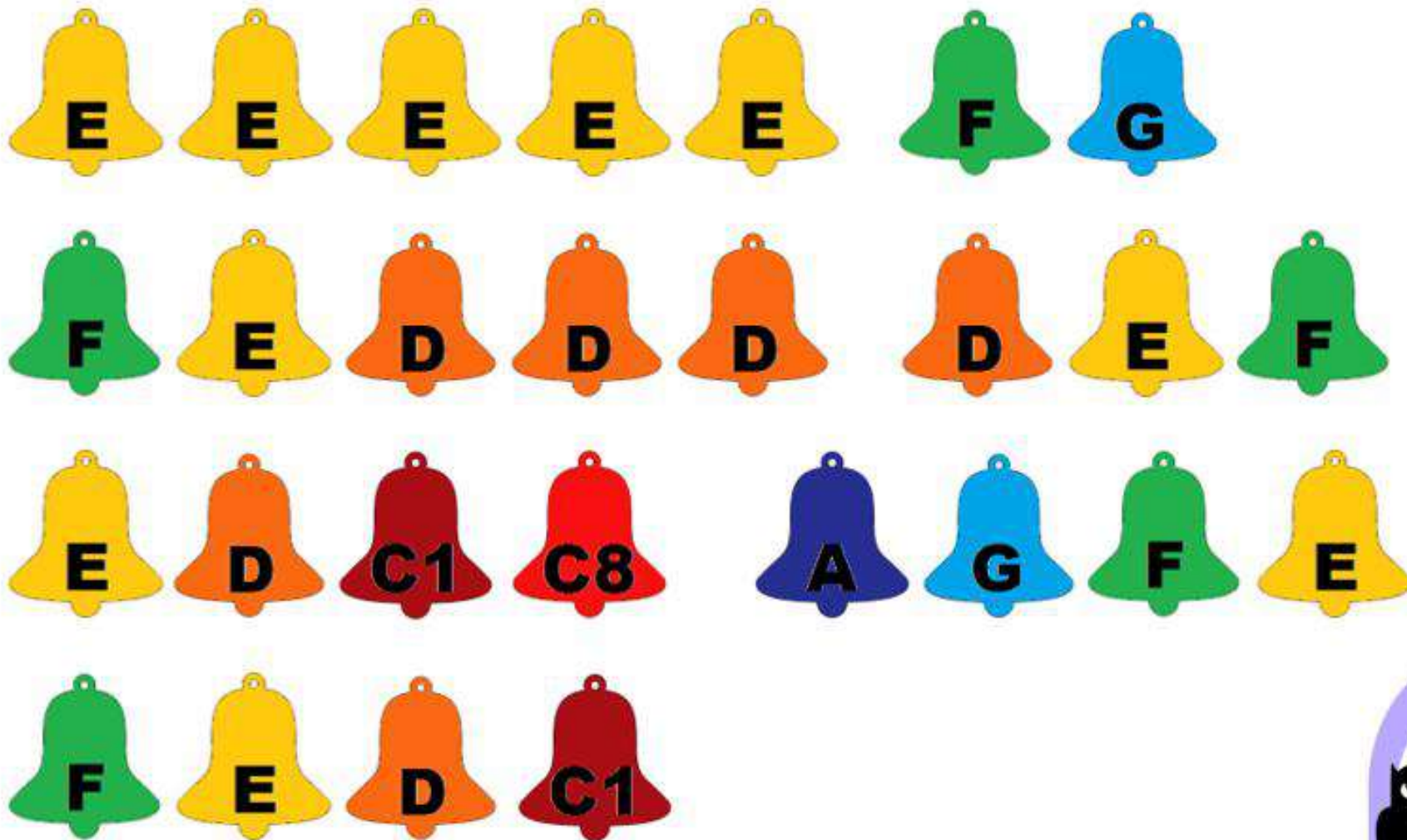
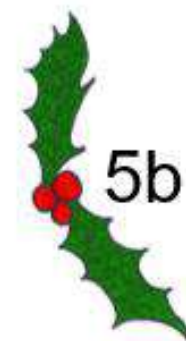


Have a go at playing the hand bells

Can you guess the tune?



MAKE
NOISE
with Ogee the Owl



MAKE
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with Ogee the Owl.

Song List

Un-numbered – Star Wars

1 – Jingle Bells

2 – Little Donkey

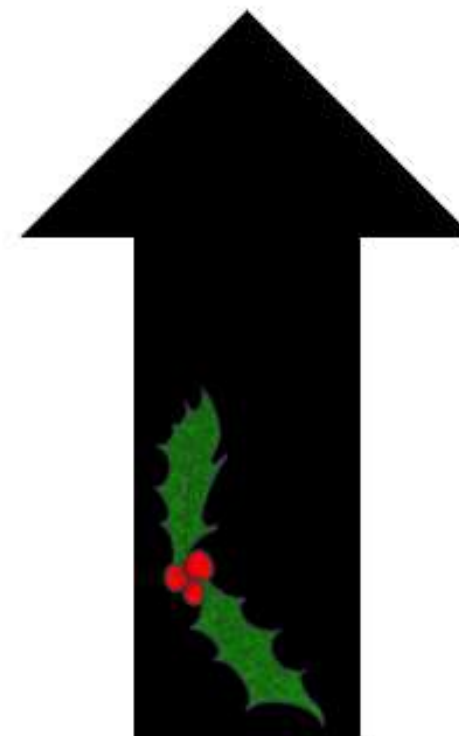
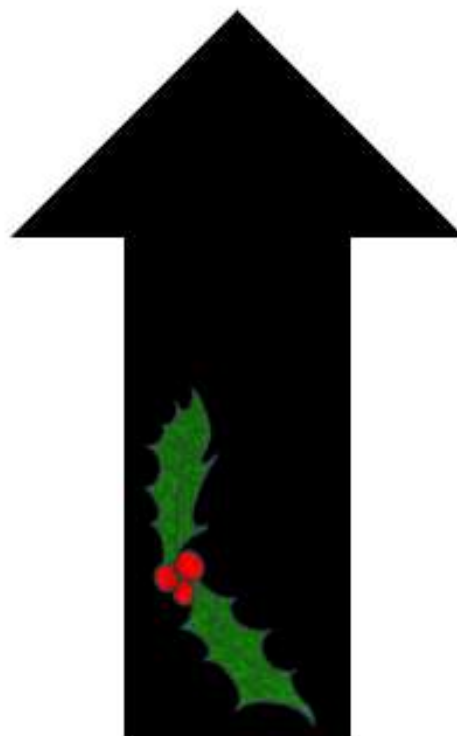
3 – Rudolph the Red Nosed Reindeer

4 – Gloria Chorus

5 – Joy to the World



'Conductor's' Pointers
Cut out and laminate



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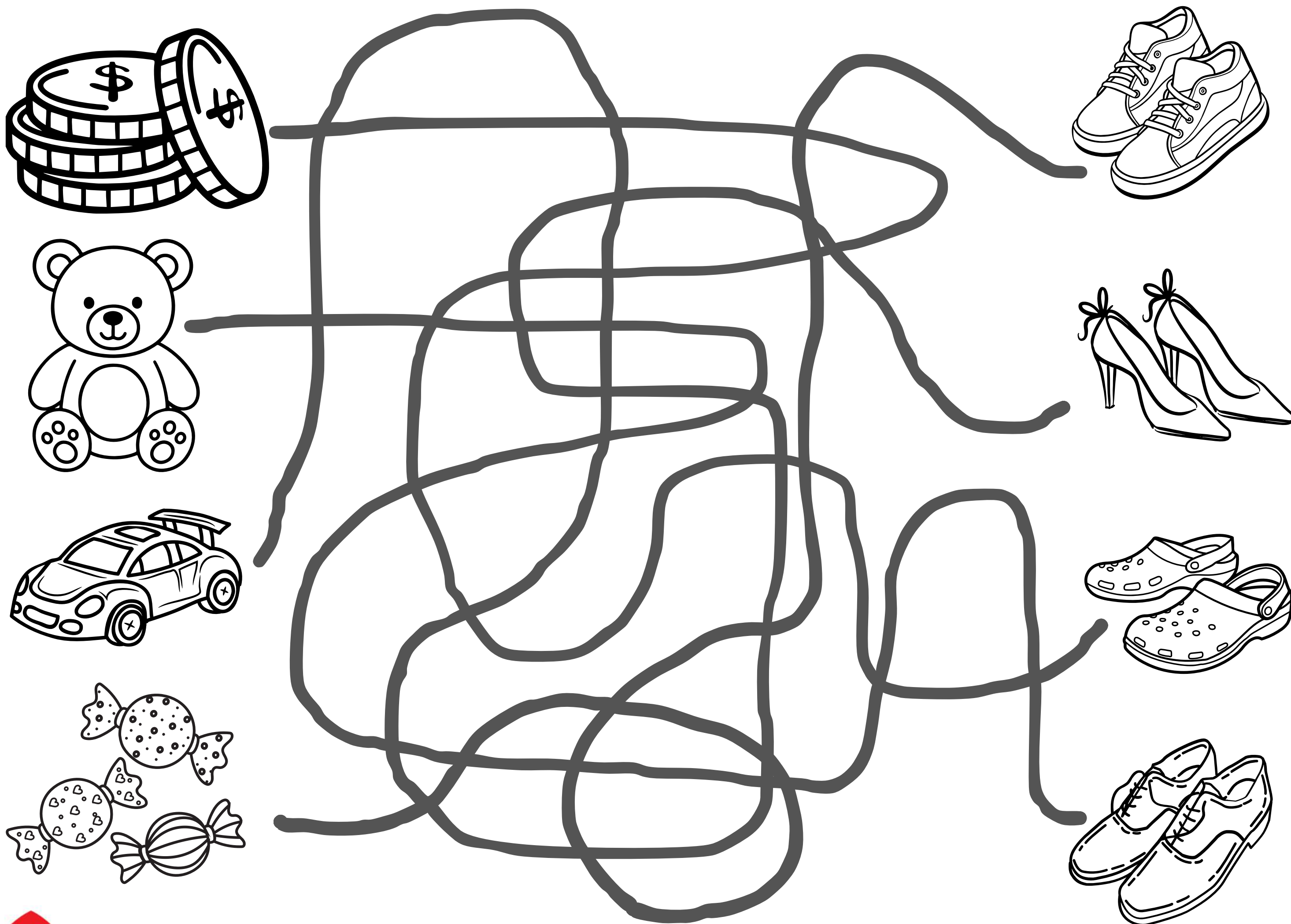
St Nicholas Gift Hunt

Did you know that before Father Christmas or Santa Claus, there was another bearded man who left gifts in the night?

St Nicholas was a kind and generous man who lived in Turkey 1700 years ago! He was born to a very rich family, but sadly his parents died when he was very young. St Nicholas used all their money to help the sick and poor. He would often give gifts in secret by hiding coins, sweets and toys in people's shoes whilst they slept! Many people in places like Germany, the Netherlands, Slovenia and Poland still leave shoes out for St Nicholas every year on the 5th of December.



Can you help St. Nicholas by colouring in the pictures and following the lines to deliver the gifts to the correct shoes?



Find out more about the Churches Conservation Trust: visitchurches.org.uk

Share your experience on social media:

