Operation Christmas Child

Shoebox Celebration Sunday

www.samaritans-purse.org.uk
Celebration Sunday is a great time for your church family to join together to give thanks for what God has done through your shoebox packing. It’s also a way of reaching out into the community by inviting other children, adults, local businesses - anyone who has been involved in the campaign to come and celebrate the efforts of everyone involved and to send the shoeboxes on their way.

Boxes from the UK are going to 14 countries in Eastern Europe, Central Asia and Africa this year (Albania, Belarus, Bosnia, Central Asia, Latvia, Liberia, Lithuania, Macedonia, Romania, Serbia, Swaziland, Middle East, Ukraine, Zambia).

Here is a suggested outline of how a celebration service could be held.

**Recommended for:** Entire congregation & guests of all ages.

**Agenda:** 15-20 minutes

**Rejoice:**

1 minute

Welcome and Shoebox Number Reveal Scripts

**Reaffirm & Encourage:**

3-5 minutes

Show a 2 to 4 minute video (Choose one of these or find more online at www.samaritans-purse.org.uk/occvideos)

- ‘Hope returns to Liberia’ - 2016 Campaign Film
- ‘Journey of a Shoebox’
- ‘Hanging in the Balances’

**Pray:**

10 minutes

- Have children or church members bring shoeboxes to the front of the church. Invite the congregation to come up and pray for the boxes.
- Pray specifically for each of the upcoming stops a shoebox makes on its journey to its destination. Use Impact Script as a reference.
- Pray for our in-country partners who will be distributing the shoeboxes.
- Use the Responsive Prayer or Shoebox Sending Prayers as options.

**Close:**

1 minute

Close with Wrap-Up Script
Set up:
- Print off Welcome, Shoebox Number Reveal, Impact, Wrap-Up Scripts and Prayers.
- Have video and audio technology available and be ready to play videos.
- Print off Spiritual Impact Stories.

Decoration Ideas:
- Blow up green, red and white balloons to decorate your church. Give one out to each child who packed a shoebox.
- Set up an Operation Christmas Child themed Christmas tree. Decorate the tree using Operation Christmas Child boy/girl labels.
- Hang up a world map or country flags for all the countries that shoeboxes are delivered to.

Bonus Ideas:
- Decorate your church for Christmas that week.
- Have the children sing a special song to the congregation.
- Order the new OCC CD ‘12 songs for children for Christmas’ to play/learn songs at www.samaritans-purse.org.uk/spring-harvest-cd-leaflet/
- Have other church members read out Spiritual Impact Stories which can be downloaded from the website.
- Younger children in the service may enjoy completing the Colouring Pages or All About Me sheet that can go into shoeboxes. These can be downloaded on our website.
Welcome Script:
Welcome everyone! Several weeks ago we started our shoebox packing season. Now after [shopping trips, crafting parties, packing parties, other events etc.], we gather again to celebrate what we’ve been able to achieve together with God’s help.

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! I want to personally express my appreciation to each one of you who gave, packed, prayed or took part in this activity in some other way.

Impact Script:
These shoeboxes are headed out from [your location] and many of them will be sent to places of unimaginable poverty and darkness. 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 Centres for checking and cartoning, 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 have an opportunity to share the love of God at each outreach event. Pray that the light of hope will shine and illuminate the darkness.

Wrap-Up Script:
We are so blessed to be a part of a simple project that has such a great impact. This year the Samaritan’s Purse UK goal is to send 1 million shoebox gifts. We are a small part of a huge, global 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.

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

Dear Lord,

We thank you for the fun of making these shoeboxes. We have had fun choosing the stuff we love to give to other children; from hot wheels to dolls, colouring pens to bracelets and of course sweets.

**Together:** We send these boxes with our love.

We pray you will help church leaders in faraway countries with strange names like Belarus and Macedonia; that you will help them find the children who most need the joy of receiving a shoebox this Christmas.

**Together:** We send these boxes with our love.

We pray the children will love the shoebox gifts and also want to go along to kids clubs at churches to hear about Jesus and make him their friend who saves them and looks after them.

**Together:** We send these boxes with our love.

Father God we thank you for sending your son Jesus at the first Christmas. We give these shoeboxes to celebrate the gift of Jesus who brings hope and joy to us and our world.

**Together:** We send these boxes with our love.

*Amen*