

# “It’s Beginning to Smell a Lot Like Christmas”

(A lesson for Advent)  
For The Episcopal Diocese of Atlanta  
By Katie McRee

## Key verses:

2 Corinthians 2:14-17

## Objectives:

- Remembering the people in our lives who have the aroma of Christ and remind us of the nature of God.
- Thinking about ways that we can remind people about Christ and to prepare during the Advent season.

**The Set up:** Minimal (there is an impressive shopping list, but setup is easy)

## The Plan:

- Hook: A Smelling Journey (10-mins): smelling different items that remind us of being somewhere else.
- Book: The Aroma of Christ (10 mins): Considering different ways of representing Christ.
- Look: Who is Equal to Such a Task? (5- 10 mins): Telling stories of people who remind us of Christ
- Took: Go forth, smelling of Christ (10-15 mins): Making orange pomanders to take home as reminder to be the aroma of Christ during the Advent/Christmas season

## The Supplies:

- Bibles
- A variety of things that have distinct smells and immediately transport you to another place. Here are some ideas:
  - o Sunscreen- the beach
  - o Buttery popcorn- the movie theatre
  - o Old crayons- preschool art class
  - o Dirty diaper and baby powder- a nursery
  - o Rubbing alcohol- the doctor’s office
  - o A dirty hamster cage- a pet store
  - o A hotdog- a baseball game
  - o gym bag filled w/ dirty gym clothes and a good dose of ax body spray- a locker room
  - o bug spray- a camping trip
  - o a piece of Christmas tree- Christmas day
  - o Anything else you would like!
- Blindfolds, one per kid, OR a strong commitment to keeping your eyes closed!!!
- notecards and pens (optional)
- Oranges
- rubberbands
- Cloves
- Cinnamon
- Ribbon
- nails/tacks

## (Open in prayer, announcements, and any other start of gathering traditions)

### **A Smelling Journey** (Hook, 10 mins)

You will be hosting a smelling journey, allowing them to smell different things that will instantly transport them to another place.

- Explain that you are going to take them on a journey, with their noses being the guide. All they have to do is wear their blindfold (or keep their eyes closed) and you will come around, waving smells under their noses. They shouldn't say anything or respond in any audible way until asked to do so.
- Go through each of your items, one at a time, passing each thing under each person's nose.
  - You may have to keep some items out of the room until you are ready to use them so that they don't smell them too early. (I'm thinking specifically of the popcorn.)
  - Remind them to not respond until you ask them to.
  - After each item, ask them a question that will clarify where they been transported. For example: Where are you? Or What are you doing? You are NOT trying to get them to identify what they are smelling, but instead, what they have been reminded of as a result of that smell.
- After you have gone through all of the items, allow them to remove their blindfolds and process however you would like. Did they like that? Did they have a hard time identifying the smells?
- Talk about how the sense of smell and memory: (excerpts taken from [fifthsense.org](http://fifthsense.org)):

*The sense of smell is closely linked with memory, probably more so than any of our other senses. Those with full olfactory function may be able to think of smells that evoke particular memories; the scent of an orchard in blossom conjuring up recollections of a childhood picnic, for example. This can often happen spontaneously, with a smell acting as a trigger in recalling a long-forgotten event or experience.*

*In addition to being the sense most closely linked to memory, smell is also highly emotive. The perfume industry is built around this connection, with perfumers developing fragrances that seek to convey a vast array of emotions and feelings; from desire to power, vitality to relaxation.*

*Given that our sense of smell clearly plays an important part in our psychological make-up, in addition to it being one of the five ways in which we connect with the world around us, its absence can have a profound impact. Going back to the points made about the strong connection between smell and memory, it can be seen that losing one's sense of smell can result in the loss of an important sentimental pathway to memories.*

## **The Aroma of Christ** (Book, 10 mins)

In this section, we are wondering how we are reminding people of Christ.

- Before we get to the verses about how smell is connected to Christ, let's look at some other ways that the church (all Christians) have been associated with God/Christ.
- Have them break into pairs or groups of three.
- Give each of the pairs/groups one (or more) of the verses below and, according to the verse, have them fill in the blank to this statement:

“We are the \_\_\_\_\_ of God/Christ”

- You can have them write the statements on notecards if you would like, but it is not necessary, unless your group is small enough that each pair will have to do several
- Here are the verses:

- 1 Corinthians 3:16 (answer: temple)
- Ephesians 2:22 (answer: dwelling)
- Ephesians 2:19 (answer: household)
- Matthew 5:16 (answer: light)
- Revelation 21:9 (answer: bride)
- 1 Peter 5:2 (answer: flock)
- 1 Corinthians 12:27 (answer: body)
- 1 Corinthians 3:9 (answer: field)
- 2 Corinthians 3:3 (answer: letter)

- Give them no more than 3 minutes to complete this task- it shouldn't take long!
- Go around the groups and let them share with the larger group the name that they found for us. Spend about 10 seconds on each one talking about the connotations of that title.
- Now tell everyone to look up 2 Corinthians 2:14-15 and choose someone to read out loud. Here are the verses for your reference:

*But thanks be to God, who always leads us as captives in Christ's triumphal procession and uses us to spread the aroma of the knowledge of him everywhere. 15 For we are to God the pleasing aroma of Christ among those who are being saved and those who are perishing. 16 To the one we are an aroma that brings death; to the other, an aroma that brings life. And who is equal to such a task? 17 Unlike so many, we do not peddle the word of God for profit. On the contrary, in Christ we speak before God with sincerity, as those sent from God.*

### Discussion Questions:

- If we were going to use these verses to fill in the statement that we just used for the other verses, what would the word be?
- What does that mean- to be the aroma of Christ?
- How is being the aroma of Christ connect to what we learned about smell being strongly connected to memory?
- How can one person be an aroma of death and an aroma of life all at the same time?
- What is meant by, “who is equal to such a task?”

### Transitional Statement:

That question of, “who is equal to such a task?” is interesting because it feels like Paul is acknowledging that the task is really, really difficult! As Christians, the hope is that we would all have an aura about us that reminds people of Christ, but that can be a huge struggle. But we probably all know a few people who can’t help but give off a scent of Jesus. Let’s talk about those people...

### **Who is Equal to Such a Task?** (Hook, 5- 10 mins)

Telling stories of people we know who have an aroma of Christ.

- This should be a VERY simple section, because you will need to leave some time for the last section.
- All you are doing is giving them a chance to share about the people in their lives who have an “aroma of Christ.” In other words, who lives their lives and interacts with you in a way that makes you think of Jesus?
- Please clarify for them that you don’t just want to just know the name of the person, but the quality about them that reminds you of Christ. For example, someone will likely say a priest at your church or a youth leader- the question should be, “what do they DO/SAY that makes you think of Christ?” Grandparents, friends, teachers... anyone can be an aroma of Christ!
- You will probably want to have an example in mind to get them going if you need to.
- Give them a few minutes to share their stories OR if you have a particularly chatty group, tell them to share their story with the person sitting next to them.

### Transitional Statement:

The people we talked about remind us of who Christ is. Of course, the next obvious question would be, “would anyone mention us as someone who reminds them of Christ?” Let’s think critically about that...

### **Go Forth, Smelling of Christ** (Took, 10-15 mins)

You will be creating orange pomanders for the youth to take home as a reminder that it is their responsibility to act as Christ and remind others about what Christmas is about!

- Before getting to work on your pomanders, ask the question, “Given some things that are going on in the world today, what are some qualities of Christ that people may need to be reminded of as they prepare for Christmas? What qualities of Christ do you personally need to be reminded of?”
- Take some time to list out what people need to be reminded of, but don’t feel like you need to land on a certain answer.
- Now show them the supplies for pomanders (oranges, cloves, and cinnamon) and explain that these combined scents are typically ones that make us think of

Christmas. We are going to create pomanders to take home so that the smell can remind us that we are called to be the aroma of Christ, especially during this time of Advent.

- The directions are below, but as you make the pomanders, ask them to continue to think of practical things they can do to be an aroma of Christ to prepare people for Christmas. Encourage them to have those conversations as they work. Go around during the craft time and ask them how they will be the aroma of Christ.

There are lots of ways to do this, but here is one set of instructions:

If you would like, you can mix together some cinnamon with the cloves so that you have an additional layer of smells! Place a rubber band around the middle of an orange. Use it as a guide to make an even ring of cloves around the fruit, piercing the skin first with a wooden skewer or nail. Remove rubber band, and make additional rows. Add ribbon and a loop if you plan to hang it off of something.



When you are done, close in prayer, thanking God that there are people in our lives that are the aroma of Christ and asking that he would show us the things that we can do to remind people to prepare for Christmas.