

Operation Christmas Child offers curbside drop-off

November 10, 2020

From online purchases to minimal-contact curbside drop-off, [Operation Christmas Child](#)—the Samaritan’s Purse program that provides shoeboxes filled with small gifts for children in developing nations—looks different this year due to COVID-19.

While some churches held “packing parties” to fill the shoeboxes as  they have done in previous years, others opted out of the group activity this year due to concerns about social distancing and other pandemic-related protocols.

Samaritan’s Purse established [COVID-19 protocols](#) for packing, collecting and processing shoeboxes safely, and the organization communicated the information to volunteers.

This year, Samaritan’s Purse offered individuals and groups the opportunity to [pack a shoebox](#) digitally—selecting and purchasing toys online.

The organization also provided [suggested alternatives](#) to large packing parties, such as family-only events or individual shoebox filling stations at businesses. The group also highlighted the bulk purchase of bundled gifts that individuals could pick up at a church and small groups could then sort and place into shoeboxes.

Curbside drop-off limits contact

During National Collection Week, Nov. 16-23, more than 4,000 collection sites nationally—264 in Texas—will offer [curbside drop-off](#) where Operation

Christmas Child volunteers with personal protection equipment will unload shoeboxes from donors' vehicles.

"The objective is for it to be a safe experience for volunteers and for shoebox donors," said Matt Smith, a member of First Baptist Church in Wylie and logistics team leader for Operation Christmas Child in South Collin County.

Typically, donors have been encouraged to enter a drop-off site, where they could talk to Operation Christmas Child representatives and learn more about the ministry.

"We've seen it as the opportunity to move from transaction to transformation," Smith said, lamenting that COVID-19 makes that level of interaction impossible in 2020.

A family tradition

Smith has been a year-around volunteer with Operation Christmas Child the past three years.



Sally Smith and her husband Carl pictured in a room full of shoeboxes for Samaritan Purse's Operation Christmas Child ministry. She spent all year gathering material to include in the boxes, which are sent to children around the world. (File Photo: George Henson)

For him, involvement in the international ministry to children is a family tradition.

When bone and joint disease deprived his mother, [Sally Smith](#), of participating in many of the mission-related activities she enjoyed, she began packing shoeboxes for Operation Christmas Child—sometimes up to 1,250 a year.

She died in 2015, but her son carries on her legacy by serving as a local Operation Christmas Child leader.

“We don’t know exactly what kind of impact COVID-19 will have in terms of the number of churches participating or number of shoeboxes collected,” Smith said. “We’ll wait and see what happens and trust God.”

To locate the closest shoebox drop-off location, click [here](#).