

Music Notes Document

Greetings, musicians!

If you've never used a Worship Design Studio series before, you will see that we make suggestions for hymns and songs of "classical" and "contemporary" styles as well as suggestions for anthems/band songs. As always, we encourage you to adapt as necessary when the balance of new and familiar seems off for your community.

Included in the series downloads are two songs–an original piece as the theme song for the "threshold moment" and a prayer song. Amanda Udis-Kessler is the amazing composer and musician behind our theme and prayers songs for this series! Be sure to also peruse Amanda's catalogue of free-to-use original worship songs! This document includes thoughts and helpful hints about working with these songs and making adaptations.

Many blessings!
Dr. Marcia McFee

Threshold Moment Song

A “threshold moment” is a concept I teach that introduces people to the journey and the theme of the day at the beginning of the service so that everything is seen through that lens. The threshold moment takes what we typically call an introit, call to worship, and opening prayer and puts it together in a moving experience of being **immersed in the theme**. Of course, Advent is one season that you may have already typically exercised this technique (even if you didn’t call it a “threshold moment”) called the Advent Wreath-lighting ritual.

Each week, one of the verses of “Hope Waits for Us At Advent,” will be sung as the “threshold” into worship (the words change each week: “peace,” “joy,” “love,” etc.). Musical scores and congregational singing parts to use onscreen and/or in Worship Guides for each verse are included in the downloads.

WDS Guest Expert, Stephanie Rhoades, has made a handbell arrangement for this song. You’ll find that arrangement in the downloads as well.

The structure of the threshold moment every Sunday is this:

1. Pastor speaks an opening paragraph (synopsis of the theme for the day) and a soft accompaniment can underscore this speaking
2. The accompaniment begins and a soloist/ensemble/choir sings the verse as the light(s) come forward and readers come up
3. A short reading about the light happens
4. The congregation joins in a repeat of the verse, singing in unison. On the first Sunday when the congregation is just learning the song, you might not want to bring in the descant. But from Week 2 forward, you’ll enjoy adding the descant in this repeat of the verse
5. The music concludes and leads into the Peace

Underscoring

In all of my series, I include the direction, “music continues to underscore.” This means that I imagine the accompaniment continuing softly underneath the spoken word, keeping the flow and mood going. Because I teach worship design techniques through the analogy of “Think Like a Filmmaker,” I understand the emotional role of music as a way of entering the story through musical meditation as a partner to readings in worship.

There are some helpful ways to do this so that the music doesn’t “compete” with the words being spoken and people aren’t distracted. If you are new to this (or if

you are just curious), HERE is a clip from a livestream workshop that musician, Chuck Bell, and I did called “Collaboration” where we talk about and demonstrate this (and you can get this whole workshop that is created for pastors and music folks to do together HERE). The scores for the original songs in this series actually have some underscoring scored out for you!

Opening Hymn/Song

We offer suggestions for more classical (“traditional”) contexts as well as selections from more contemporary (CCM) genres. If neither of our suggestions work for you in any given hymn/song slot, check out our selections anyway and ask, what is the theology and “feel” of this selection (sometimes I pick something because it is “lively” or “contemplative” along with the theological choice) and then see if you can find something that would be a compatible alternative. It may be that you decide to use one of our congregational suggestions as a choral or band song instead.

We use acronyms for several hymnals in the script, so here is the key to those:

AAHH (African American Heritage Hymnal)
GTG (Glory to God Hymnal, PCUSA)
ELW (Evangelical Lutheran Worship)
UMH (United Methodist Hymnal, UMC)
NCH (New Century Hymnal, UCC)
Chalice (Chalice Hymnal, DOC)
VU (Voices United, United Church of Canada)
VT (Voices Together, Mennonite Church USA/Canada)
FWS/STF (Faith We Sing/Sing the Faith, UMC, PCUSA)
W&S = Worship & Song (UMC)
W&R = Worship & Rejoice!
SP&P = Sing Prayer and Praise
SZ = Songs of Zion
MV = More Voices
URW = Upper Room Worshipbook
ZSS = Zion Still Sings
CMP = Convergence Music Project
Songselect (the database of CCLI)

Please note that you are responsible for securing your own license permissions for any songs we suggest that are not created “in house” by Worship Design Studio (you have permission to use and livestream our original songs with credit). Most congregational songs we have chosen will be covered by either CCLI or OneLicense.

Here are the opening hymn/song suggestions for each week for easy reference:

Advent 1:
"Unsettled World"
FWS/STF 2283
or
"Hail to the Lord's Anointed"
AAHH 187, Chalice 140, GTG 149, ELW 311, NCH 104, UMH 203, VU 30
or
"Living Hope"

Advent 2:
"People Look East"
Chalice 142, GTG 105, ELW 248, UMH 202, VU 9, W&R 161
or
"Prepare the Way"

Advent 3:
"Lift Up Your Heads, Ye Mighty Gates"
Chalice 129, GTG 93, NCH 117, UMH 213, W&R 176
or
"Joy of the Lord"

Advent 4:
"My Soul Gives Glory to My God"
Chalice 130, GTG 99, NCH 119, UMH 198, VU 899
or
"I Will Sing of Your Love, Love, Love"

Christmas Eve:
"Joy to the World"
AAHH 197, Chalice 143, ELW 267, GTG 134, NCH 132, UMH 246, VT 240, VU 59, W&R 179

Sunday after Christmas:
"Go Tell It on the Mountain"
AAHH 202, Chalice 167, ELW 290, GTG 136, NCH 154, UMH 251, VT 252, VU 43
or
Band Version

Anthem

Each Sunday has a time for listening to a choral or ensemble/band selection. We have made suggestions based on the theme but, as always, adapt for your context and the current state of music-making at your place. There are lots of alternatives, including instrumental pieces.

Here are the suggestions we have made for each week and the links to purchase each piece:

Advent 1:
"The Manger is Stranger"
[choral arrangement included in downloads]
or
"The Yearning"
or
"Hope"

Advent 2:
"For Everyone Born"
or
"More Than Welcome Here"

Advent 3:
"Prepare the Way O Zion"
or
"Herald in the Wilderness"

Advent 4:
"Will There Be Room"
or
[any Magnificat!]
or
"Room for Us All/We Are On this Earth to Love"

Christmas Eve:
"The Manger is Stranger"
[choral arrangement included in downloads; you may have sung this on Advent 1, making it an easy repeat for those choir members who are in town for Christmas Eve or even a scaled-down quartet of voices]
or

"Welcome to the Manger"
(for soloist/guitar - listen HERE)
[or replace with congregational hymn or classic like "O Holy Night"]

Sunday after Christmas:
"There's a Spirit of Love in This Place"
FEB 22, W&S 3148, ZSS 103
[this easy song would be perfect for solo, ensemble or choir... bring in the congregation on the last verse - and please note that Worship & Song omits the third verse! Here it is...]
There's a space for grace in our hearts
There's a space for grace in our hearts
It's in learning to forgive that our spirits truly live
There's a space for grace in our hearts
or
"Dwell"
[soloist/band - there are several songs on CCLI with this title]

We also realize that you may have one Sunday that is completely musical. Here are some things we found that work well for this theme that you might consider:

Handbells:
"In a Manger"

For a talented Broadway-esqe tenor and advanced choir
"No Room in the Inn"

A children's musical from WDS guest expert, Mark Burrows
"Room for Christmas" (approx. 30 minutes)

For a children's musical (approx. 20 minutes)
"The Inn Crowd"

Youth/adult anthem — could be good for youth or band ensemble
"Make Room"

Prayers of the People

The prayer song for this series is "Make of My Heart a Stable." The song weaves through the time of a guided breathing meditation, with a slightly different wording for each of three iterations. The sheet music for this song is included in the series

downloads. We've also uploaded an example audio track of how this is woven with the guided breathing meditation. A great idea would be to listen to this while looking at the script with the person who will lead the prayers and practice so this is smooth. The good news is that once you have the timing down, it is a repeated element every week with slight change of words (hope, peace, joy, love, light) each week.

Closing Carol

The final hymn is always a Christmas Carol with a short spoken introduction highlighting a little-known verse and the carol's connection to our theme. It may be a wonderful time for the music director, or a different member of the music team/choir, to do this introduction. We have not pointed you to a contemporary version of each of these carols if you are worshiping with a band, but they are all very familiar and no doubt your band will be able to come up with, or find, an arrangement of them.

Preludes and Postludes

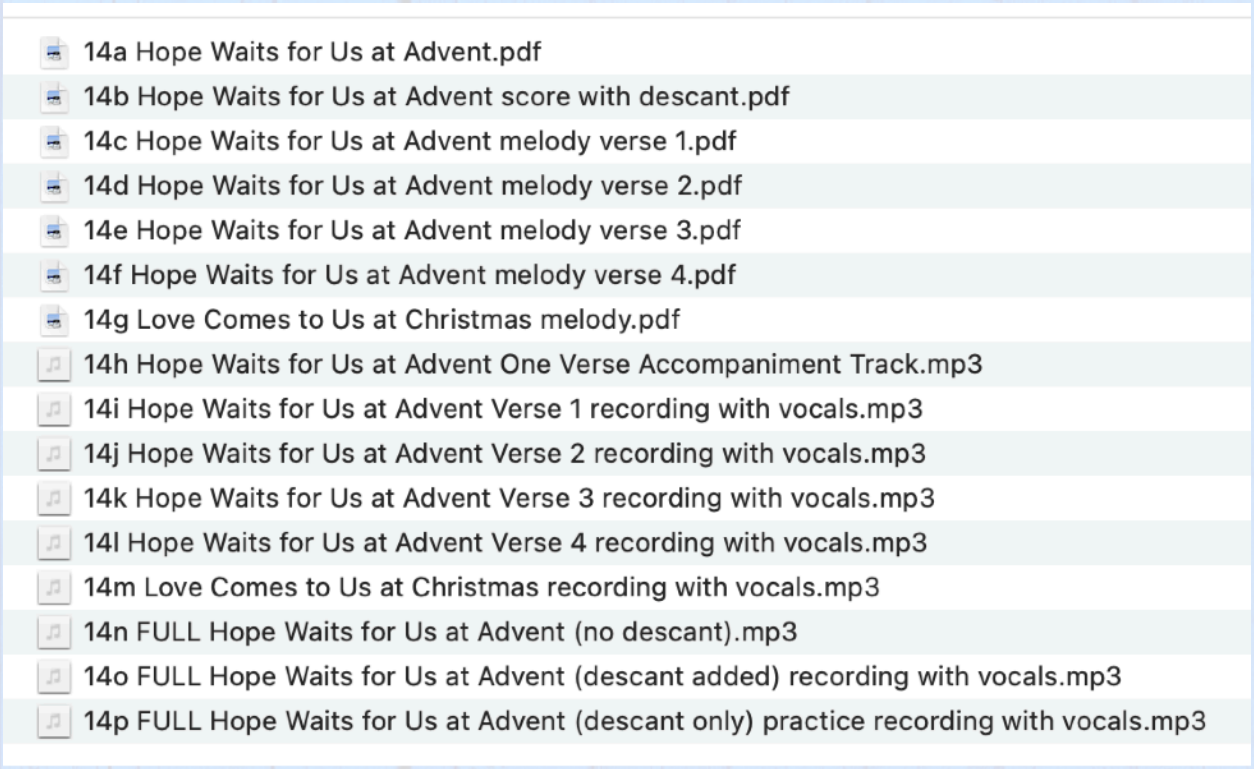
I have not made specific suggestions on these, so it is musicians' choice. This is a wonderful opportunity to highlight instrumental ensembles or guest musicians from your congregation or beyond.

List of Documents and Recordings in Your Downloads

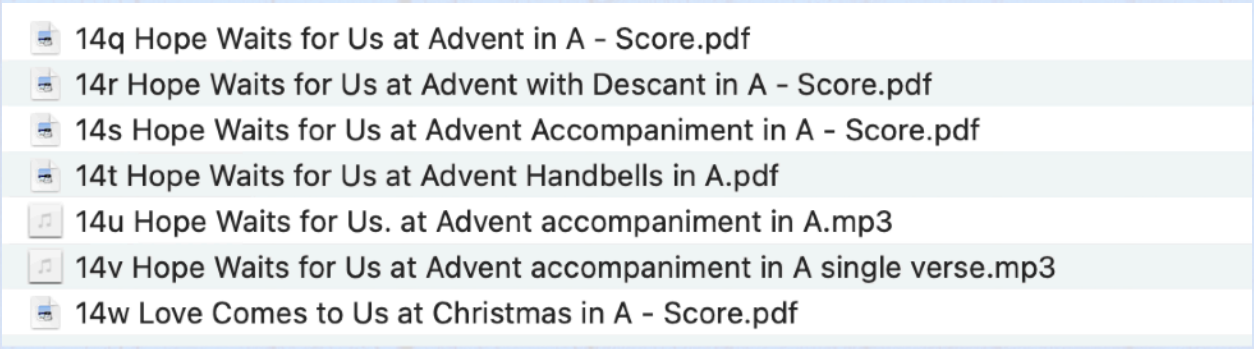
You have everything you need to do these original songs… even if you need to use recordings (with or without pre-recorded vocals). We are grateful to Amanda and her team for providing us with all of these options.

14 and **14a** - This Music document in both PDF and Word format for easy editing.

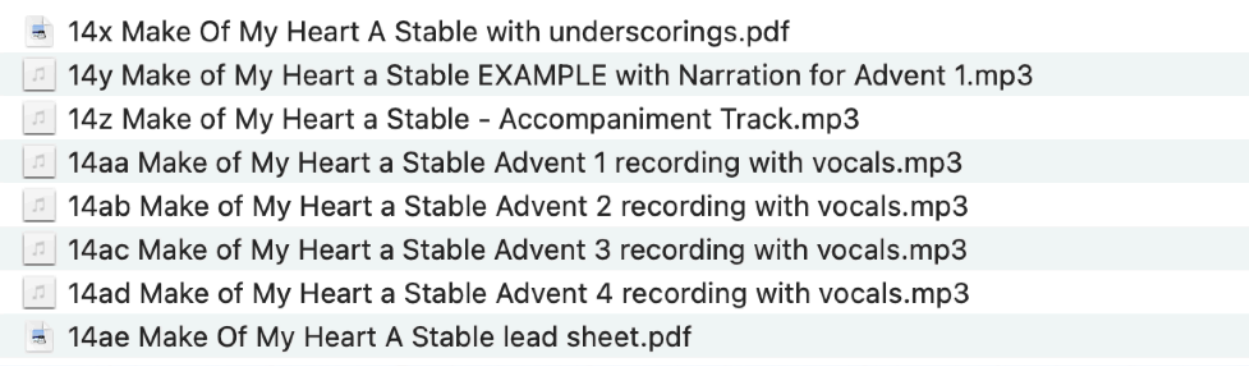
14b “Hope Waits for Us…” (handbell arrangement included as well).



14c “Hope Waits for Us…” in a Lower Key.



14d “Make of My Heart a Stable”



14e “The Manger is Stranger” (choral anthem arrangement included as well)

