



*"The wolf will lie down with the lamb,  
and the leopard will lie down with the young goat,  
the calf and the young lion will feed together,  
and a little child will lead them."  
- Isaiah 11: 6*

*"May Christ come to us now and always,  
and may we have a song in our hearts to welcome him." - Adam Tice*

**Like notes on a music staff, we are called to join together to sing songs that proclaim the renewed creation of Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love. This year throughout the Advent and Christmas season, we will encounter familiar and new Carols for the Coming Christ and pause to consider their messages in fresh ways. As a popular quote attributed to Hans Christian Anderson says, "Where words fail, music speaks." Song poets have long helped us "speak" when our own words fail in the face of our human struggle. The promise of the Coming Christ is that our hearts can hold the world and that the songs in our hearts can heal our weariness.**

*This series is inspired by a new Advent devotional book by Adam Tice, a hymn writer with hundreds of contributions published in our hymnals, many with powerful justice themes. Tice's book weaves daily reflections about songs of the season and invites us to our own reflection. Each worship service features two carols/hymns (Tice uses these terms interchangeably) featured in the devotional book—one familiar to our traditions, and one by a newer composer. This package of worship materials offers a way to seamlessly integrate worship, individual devotions, small group activities, and ideas for interaction with the larger community. All scriptures listed here are from the CEB translation.*

## Carols for Coming Hope Advent One

*The wolf will live with the lamb,  
and the leopard will lie down with the young goat;  
the calf and the young lion will feed together,  
and a little child will lead them.  
The cow and the bear will graze.  
Their young will lie down together,  
and a lion will eat straw like an ox.  
A nursing child will play over the snake's hole;  
toddlers will reach right over the serpent's den.  
They won't harm or destroy anywhere on my holy mountain.  
The earth will surely be filled with the knowledge of the Lord,  
just as the water covers the sea.*  
— Isaiah 11:6-9 (inspiration carol: "We Dream of a Turning")

*A shoot will grow up from the stump of Jesse;  
a branch will sprout from his roots.  
The Lord's spirit will rest upon him,  
a spirit of wisdom and understanding,  
a spirit of planning and strength,  
a spirit of knowledge and fear of the Lord.  
He will delight in fearing the Lord.  
He won't judge by appearances,  
nor decide by hearsay.  
He will judge the needy with righteousness,  
and decide with equity for those who suffer in the land.  
He will strike the violent with the rod of his mouth;  
by the breath of his lips he will kill the wicked.  
Righteousness will be the belt around his hips,  
and faithfulness the belt around his waist.*  
— Isaiah 11:1-5 (inspiration carol: "O come, O come, Immanuel")

**We begin our journey through this Advent season by acknowledging that, like the Hebrew poet Isaiah, we continue to hope for a better world for all people. It is likely that most Advent seasons include the beloved carol, "O Come, O Come, Immanuel." Based on an ancient Latin text, the names for Christ in each verse, when viewed in reverse order, spell out "Ero Cras," Latin for "tomorrow I come." We still wait for that tomorrow—we "dream of a turning from ages of wrong."**

## Carols for Coming Peace Advent Two

*During the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas—God’s word came to John son of Zechariah in the wilderness. John went throughout the region of the Jordan River, calling for people to be baptized to show that they were changing their hearts and lives and wanted God to forgive their sins. This is just as it was written in the scroll of the words of Isaiah the prophet,*

*A voice crying out in the wilderness:*

*“Prepare the way for the Lord;*

*make his paths straight,*

*Every valley will be filled,*

*and every mountain and hill will be leveled.*

*The crooked will be made straight*

*and the rough places made smooth.*

*All humanity will see God’s salvation.”*

*— Luke 3:2b-6 (inspiration carol: “Prepare the Way!”)*

*Jesus went to Nazareth, where he had been raised. On the Sabbath he went to the synagogue as he normally did and stood up to read. The synagogue assistant gave him the scroll from the prophet Isaiah. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written:*

*The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,*

*because the Lord has anointed me.*

*He has sent me to preach good news to the poor,*

*to proclaim release to the prisoners*

*and recovery of sight to the blind,*

*to liberate the oppressed,*

*and to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.*

*He rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the synagogue assistant, and sat down.*

*Every eye in the synagogue was fixed on him. He began to explain to them,*

*“Today, this scripture has been fulfilled just as you heard it.”*

*—Luke 4:16-21 (inspiration carol: “Hark! The Glad Sound!”)*

**The coming of Christ is a kind of “jubilee”—a concept held from the earliest texts of our Judeo-Christian tradition. Jubilee is a moment of respite, of relief, of forgiveness. It is a leveling of the socio-economic playing field so that everyone has enough. This is what Jesus came to declare. His cousin John knew this and began to “prepare the way” for the purpose and message of the Prince of Peace. Our music encourages us to make a “glad sound,” proclaiming the jubilee of God’s peace for all people.**

## Carols for Coming Joy Advent Three

*Therefore, the Lord will give you a sign. The young woman is pregnant and is about to give birth to a son, and she will name him Immanuel.*

*—Isaiah 7:14 (inspiration carol: “Lo How a Rose E’er Blooming”)*

*Mary said,*

*“With all my heart I glorify the Lord!*

*In the depths of who I am I rejoice in God my savior.*

*He has looked with favor on the low status of his servant.*

*Look! From now on, everyone will consider me highly favored  
because the mighty one has done great things for me.*

*Holy is his name.*

*He shows mercy to everyone,  
from one generation to the next,  
who honors him as God.*

*He has shown strength with his arm.*

*He has scattered those with arrogant thoughts and proud inclinations.*

*He has pulled the powerful down from their thrones  
and lifted up the lowly.*

*He has filled the hungry with good things  
and sent the rich away empty-handed.*

*He has come to the aid of his servant Israel,  
remembering his mercy,*

*just as he promised to our ancestors,  
to Abraham and to Abraham’s descendants forever.”*

*—Luke 1:46-55 (inspiration carol: “Canticle of the Turning”)*

**From a tender and willing heart, to a fierce defender of the lowly and prophet of justice, Mary is herself the carol of joy in this narrative of Jesus’ coming in the flesh. Likewise, our carols meet us where we are—in tender moments when our soul yearns to bloom fully, as well as those times when we need to beat the drum and sound the alarm. Today we sing the truth that the world will indeed turn from sorrow to joy, and dawn will draw near, as we work to wipe away all tears.**

## Carols for Coming Love Advent Four

*In the year of King Uzziah's death, I saw the Lord sitting on a high and exalted throne, the edges of his robe filling the temple. Winged creatures were stationed around him. Each had six wings: with two they veiled their faces, with two their feet, and with two they flew about. They shouted to each other, saying:*

*"Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of heavenly forces!  
All the earth is filled with God's glory!"*

*—Isaiah 6:1-3 (inspiration carol: "Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silence")*

*"Then those who are righteous will reply to him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you a drink? When did we see you as a stranger and welcome you, or naked and give you clothes to wear? When did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?'*

*"Then the king will reply to them, 'I assure you that when you have done it for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you have done it for me.'*

*—Matthew 25:37-40 (inspiration carol: "Now the Heavens Start to Whisper")*

**As we draw closer to the mystical moment of Christ's coming, we step into the "thin place" between heaven and earth where we are all wrapped in the love of the Christ who was present from the beginning of time. When our words fail to express this Great Mystery, we turn to musical poets to help us. We are swept up in the expanding silence of awe. And yet, the heavenly resides most fully when our earthly love welcomes the lonely, the stranger, the outcast. Jesus said, "when you [fed, clothed, visited, and healed] the least of these, you did it to me."**

## Carols for Coming Comfort Blue Christmas

*If only you would tear open the heavens and come down!  
Mountains would quake before you  
like fire igniting brushwood or making water boil.  
If you would make your name known to your enemies,  
the nations would tremble in your presence.  
When you accomplished wonders beyond all our expectations;  
when you came down, mountains quaked before you.*

*From ancient times,  
no one has heard,  
no ear has perceived,  
no eye has seen any god but you  
who acts on behalf of those who wait!  
—Isaiah 64:1-4 (inspiration carol for “Come Now, O God”)*

*They entered the house and saw the child with Mary his mother. Falling to their knees, they honored him. Then they opened their treasure chests and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. Because they were warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they went back to their own country by another route.*

*—Matthew 2:11-12 (inspiration carol: “What Child Is This?”)*

**The holiday season can be hard, especially for those whose melancholy is fueled by loss, no matter how long ago the loss occurred. The call to be “jolly” can feel cruel and even raise residual feelings of anger. The prophet Isaiah knew this and, thankfully, so do our musical poets. The stories of Jesus’ birth, life, and death include stories of loss, fear, and injustice. And so this night we bring all of our emotions and experiences and invite God to come now to comfort, soothe, and heal.**

## Carols for the Coming Christ Christmas Eve

*In those days Caesar Augustus declared that everyone throughout the empire should be enrolled in the tax lists. This first enrollment occurred when Quirinius governed Syria. Everyone went to their own cities to be enrolled. Since Joseph belonged to David's house and family line, he went up from the city of Nazareth in Galilee to David's city, called Bethlehem, in Judea. He went to be enrolled together with Mary, who was promised to him in marriage and who was pregnant. While they were there, the time came for Mary to have her baby. She gave birth to her firstborn child, a son, wrapped him snugly, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the guest room [continue]...*

*—Luke 2:1-20 (inspiration carol: "Come Join in Mary's Prophet-Song")*

*After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in the territory of Judea during the rule of King Herod, magi came from the east to Jerusalem. They asked, "Where is the newborn king of the Jews? We've seen his star in the east, and we've come to honor him."*

*—Matthew 2:1-2 (inspiration carol: "Silent Night")*

**It is the night we celebrate the incarnation of God's hope, peace, joy, and love. Through the ages, carols have offered us the delight, nostalgia, and power of this moment as we lift our candles and declare that the light will multiply through us in the world, no matter how dim our situations seem. The dawn of redeeming grace is born in us as we dare to grow peace on earth despite our fear, acting to bring God's holy care to those who need it most.**

## Carols for Coming Justice Sunday After Christmas

*Nearby shepherds were living in the fields, guarding their sheep at night. The Lord's angel stood before them, the Lord's glory shone around them, and they were terrified.*

*—Luke 2:8-9 (inspiration carol: "While Shepherds Watched Their Flocks by Night")*

*When the magi had departed, an angel from the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, "Get up. Take the child and his mother and escape to Egypt. Stay there until I tell you, for Herod will soon search for the child in order to kill him." Joseph got up and, during the night, took the child and his mother to Egypt. He stayed there until Herod died. This fulfilled what the Lord had spoken through the prophet: I have called my son out of Egypt.*

*When Herod knew the magi had fooled him, he grew very angry. He sent soldiers to kill all the children in Bethlehem and in all the surrounding territory who were two years old and younger, according to the time that he had learned from the magi.*

*—Matthew 2:13-16 (Inspiration carol: "Jesus Entered Egypt")*

**The shepherds tending their flock in the hills outside Bethlehem were disrupted by the sight of an other-worldly being and they were terrified. Disruptions can be unsettling at best and devastating at worst. As the story continues, the worst kind of disruption occurs. The disruption of life—a snuffing out of innocent lives. The Holy Family goes on the run, strangers in a strange land—refugees. Musical lament helps us remember that we must keep watch with, and ease the suffering of, those who are displaced or under threat. They are Christ in our midst.**

## Carols for Coming Light Epiphany Sunday

*The true light that shines on all people was coming into the world. The light was in the world, and the world came into being through the light, but the world didn't recognize the light. The light came to his own people, and his own people didn't welcome him.*

*But those who did welcome him, those who believed in his name, he authorized to become God's children, born not from blood nor from human desire or passion, but born from God. The Word became flesh and made his home among us. We have seen his glory, glory like that of a father's only son, full of grace and truth.*

*—John 1:9-14 (inspiration carol: "See Whose Glory Fills the Skies/Jesus, the Light of the World")*

*When the angels returned to heaven, the shepherds said to each other, "Let's go right now to Bethlehem and see what's happened. Let's confirm what the Lord has revealed to us." They went quickly and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in the manger. When they saw this, they reported what they had been told about this child. Everyone who heard it was amazed at what the shepherds told them. Mary committed these things to memory and considered them carefully. The shepherds returned home, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen. Everything happened just as they had been told.*

*—Luke 2:15-20 (inspiration carol: "Go Tell It on the Mountain")*

**It is the Sunday we celebrate the "Epiphany," or manifestation of the Light of the World in the birth of Jesus. Historically, the twelve days of Christmas were a continuation of the season of Christmas called "Christmastide." In some places and times, Christmas carols were only sung within the time span of these twelve days between Christmas and Epiphany. In this last Sunday of our series that has celebrated the carols that form our faith, we declare that we will continue throughout all time to "go tell it on the mountain!"**