



Overview

Every year I begin to discern what the Worship Design Studio library needs in order to round out a fuller theological treatment of each liturgical season. For Advent and Christmas, I already had two delightful series based on big anniversaries of two beloved Christmas carols (*Silent Night* and *Joy to the World*) but I did not have a series that looked at the nativity story with the idea that carols themselves have formed our spirituality. And so when I saw that Adam Tice's new devotional book on Advent and Christmas carols was coming out this year (2026), I jumped at the chance to collaborate with him. Adam is a prolific hymn writer himself, as well as curator of hymns for GIA Publishers. He knows his stuff. And he knows the beauty of spending time in reflection with the words and music that our hymn poets create for us.



Tapping into our personal experience of the faith journey and sharing that with others is such an important part of dwelling and growing in our faith. Every favorite carol has a memory attached to it. When we mine our memories for inspiration, we learn more about ourselves and others get to know more about us. This is the basis of renewed community. Sometimes we just need a subject to get us sharing more deeply with each other.

And so the format Adam uses for his own devotional writing about carols can be a model for what we can do this season. **My hope is that you will ask your congregation to share a favorite carol and the thoughts, memories, and stories related to it.** If you start early enough, you might even be able to create your own written devotional. We've included a guide for people to follow to reflect on their favorite carols. Or simply plan to have a wonderful evening

special event of caroling and telling stories while sipping on cider and wrapping gifts for those who need them most!

Anchor Image

The “anchor image” (main metaphor) for this worship series is the music staff and notes represented in the logo. As the series synopsis says, “like music notes on the staff ,we are called to come together to proclaim the good news of renewed hope, peace, joy, and love for our times.” There are so many ways you can enhance the visuals of your sanctuary with music-related visuals. You can also incorporate this image into mission projects (from caroling in your community to raise money for a project to offering music lessons for those who could not afford it) and new fun activities (think ukuleles, kazoos, a community choir concert effort, or appreciation gifts for music teachers in town). And for the children’s time, the music notes will be coming to life as Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love characters represent the sopranos, altos, tenors, and basses in our midst! People might even learn something new about music. But whether you have music aficionados or novices in your congregation (probably a little of both), we are all drawn to music in some way. I hope it will be fun getting to dip into different styles of Christmas music and thinking up ways to make the music notes and staves come alive!

Using this Document

This Overview document is my way of helping you get an at-a-glance look at the series, the materials, and the basic order of worship. I recommend you read through this before you read individual worship scripts so you come to those scripts with the “bigger picture” in mind. And I recommend inviting all the worship artists who will be helping you prepare this series to read it as well. Then they will be immersed in the theme and also informed as you adapt the order of worship elements to your context.

Adapt, adapt, adapt!

Speaking of adapting... a word about adapting our series. We *expect* that you will. Maybe a little, maybe a lot. I write these scripts with a general view of the majority of Worship Design Studio subscribing churches in mind, but I cannot know each church and your “eccentricities” (I think that’s a good thing). So I expect that you will move things around, delete certain elements, substitute things, come up with your own twists on our basic ideas. You have my permission to do this without needing to ask me if it’s OK. It is. Musicians will

need to read the Music Notes document closely for instructions about permissions and licenses for music we suggest.

We always appreciate being given credit for the series idea and materials with this citation in your worship guide (bulletin), and anywhere you post recordings or materials online: "Adapted from www.worshipdesignstudio.com/carols."

I am deeply grateful for all you are and do on behalf of God's people. If you are a new or long-time Worship Design Studio subscriber, I'm grateful for your ongoing support. If you are completely new to our resources, I am thrilled to be in ministry alongside you for the first time. It is my honor to do this work as I support your work and the spiritual nurture of your congregants. If you have any questions or need support in any way, don't hesitate to [reach out to us](#) immediately.

Peace & Passion,
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***From my place in the choir
loft during one of those
Christmas Eve carol-
infused moments we love.***



Downloads

What's included and what to do with it

This Overview - Have your whole team read this to get a good foothold on the theme and order.

Scriptures and Synopses - This is your at-a-glance look at the movement of the series and the scriptures highlighted each week. For this series, I have utilized the Common English Bible translation because that is what Adam used in his book. As always, feel free to adapt that.

Eight Worship Scripts - You WILL adapt these for your context (Tip: Do this in one fell swoop before the season begins, and you'll feel amazingly prepared and your team will thank you!). For this Advent/Christmas series, I'm including Blue Christmas and Epiphany Sunday scripts to follow along with Adam's devotions.

Children's Time Scripts - Decide who is doing this and get it into their hands early so they can have fun with it, adapt it, and connect it to what children are doing in other settings like education.

Communion Script - Incorporate this into whatever weeks you are doing communion as you adapt your weekly scripts.

Sermon Fodder - Scan it pre-season so you know what is there, then use it to help jumpstart your own sermon preparation each week. An interview with Adam will be helpful in getting ideas for how to talk about the spiritual formation of carols.

Visual and Media Ideas - Make some time early in your planning process to go through the ideas with your team and land on how you'll apply the main images to your space, then get folks working on it (the earlier, the more fun they'll have!).

Music Documents and Files - Since this series is based on inspiration carols, you'll want to get all this material in the hands of your musicians early so they can be a big part of discerning adaptations for your context.

Logo and Trailer - Put your own branding on these early (directions in the Visual and Media Ideas doc) so you can begin to get the word out pre-season.

Small Group Suggestions - Adam's book of daily devotions will be wonderful for individuals to have and for small groups to discuss. We've also made more suggestions for all ages. We've also prepared a "Study Your Own Carol Guide" for people to use as they prepare to share about their favorite carols.



Order of Worship

This series is designed to give you everything you need—all words, hymn and song suggestions, leader introductions, etc. But also please know that if you want to adapt to fit your current order of worship, you can easily lift any of the suggested material out of my scripts and place it in your more familiar structure.

The order of worship is the same each week. This goes with the concept I teach that repetition is a good thing and a solid foundation is necessary in order to be creative within it. Doing series can give you the opportunity to try on a slightly different order of worship or a different way of doing an element of the service for a season but keep it the same during that season, therefore offering some sense of familiarity and a rhythm. We have included a communion prayer separately from the scripts so you can fit that in whenever you have communion. As always, adapt the communion prayer to fit your tradition.

Prelude

I have not suggested anything specific musically so you can feel free to create a “carol sing” of people’s favorite carols that won’t get included in actual worship. In the scripts I mention this: “Be sure to announce that you’ll start singing pre-service before the season begins so people can arrive early, or start this within the service time frame.”

Four-Fold Pattern Headings

The service is designed with the traditional four-fold pattern of worship (Gathering, Proclaiming, Responding, and Sending Forth). As I do occasionally, I have created headings for these four sections that reflect the theme. For this series, these four movements are called “We Enter the Music,” “We Listen Deeply,” “We Respond to the Sounds of Hope/Peace/Joy/Love/Light” (depending on the service), and “We Take Our Music to the World.”

Threshold Moment

This concept of a “threshold moment” that I teach introduces people to the journey and the theme of the day at the beginning of the service so that every part of the service is seen through that thematic lens. Advent has a natural “threshold moment” in the lighting of the Advent candles. Adam has written a theme song for us and it bookends a spoken introduction to the service. The Advent candle(s) are lit and then a litany and introduction to the opening carol happens. You can choose to have one or more people do the candle-lighting, as is your custom.

Opening Carol

There are two feature carols that I have pulled from Adam's devotional book (with his expert help). We chose a more familiar one, which I have placed in this opening carol slot, and a newer, less familiar carol, that will show up later in the service. I have linked to two places for this opening carol—one to the online information about the traditional hymnal listings and the other to a more contemporary version of the song for your bands. You can also feel free to adapt our suggestions if you choose. Just look at the hymns/songs we have chosen and try to find something that keeps the "essence of the message." Preachers and musicians will want to be extra-communicative about these choices since the sermon fodder features the carols we selected.

Opening Prayer

The carol is followed by an opening prayer that has an invitational and well as confessional feel. If you need to add the traditional "in the name of Jesus Christ, you are forgiven," response, please do.

The Peace

You will invite people to pass the peace in the way you usually do. You might want to preface this invitation with an invitation for the children to make their way forward.

Notes for the Children

Of course this is a play on words. We are constantly giving "notes" to children as advice, but these "Notes" are characters played by a soprano, alto, tenor, and bass who talk with the children about what it means to live in "harmony," spreading songs of hope, peace, joy, and love. The song we've suggested you sing as the children come forward and leave again is a carol from the country of Cameroon, "*He came down that we might have love.*" This is fun, easy, repetitive, and great with small percussion instruments! In fact, I've woven in the gift of hand-made percussion instruments for Christmas Eve!

WE LISTEN DEEPLY

First Reading

Each service has two readings that correlate to the two carols from Adam's book that I chose to highlight. Even though this series is not based on a lectionary set of readings, you will find that the readings follow a very traditional flow associated with the season of Advent and Christmas. See all the Scriptures and Synopses together in that document.

A Carol for Listening

This is the second featured carol—one that will likely be newer for your congregation. So I've made the suggestion here that this is an opportunity to hear the carol from a soloist, the choir, ensemble, or band—whatever you have. We have links for you to get the music for all the selections. This series is a little different in that I have not made traditional anthem and band song suggestions for this slot. As always, you can adapt in several ways if you want to: do traditional anthems in this slot and save a listening of the feature carol for inside the sermon time as the preacher uses it as part of the message. Or place a traditional anthem in an Offertory or Communion slot. You will figure out how best to accomplish what you need!

Second Reading

As mentioned above, I have utilized the CEB translation. Feel free to use other translations that you may prefer. And as you read through the scripts before the season, think about ways you might offer one of the scriptures creatively (in other words, not from the lectern every time): a short one could be unison, a longer one could be with multiple voices, a member of the choir could read one from their place in the choir just before or after the anthem, a dancer could choreograph based on one, make one a video with music and photos taken by the congregation, etc. Think about the talents in your congregation and plan accordingly!

Sermon

I have included Sermon Fodder in a separate document for each of the services. You will have Adam's devotional book to get you started, as well as my interview with him. WDS Associate, Rev. Ben Hensley, and I give you a "*Pas de Deux*" of commentaries for each service. Between the riches of the scripture and the feature carols and the inspiration that is music itself, you will have plenty to help you create inspirational messages.

WE RESPOND TO THE SOUNDS OF HOPE

Prayers of the People

The prayers of the people begin with the first four lines of "Come Thou Long Expected Jesus" sung a cappella. In talking with Adam, who is clergy in the Mennonite tradition as well as a composer, he said that a cappella singing is a hallmark of many Mennonite

churches. I wanted to honor his tradition in this way as well as invite you to remember the original music of humanity—simply the human voice. I believe this will be powerful.

The sequence moves then to an introduction to prayer so we can settle into the idea that we “find our rest in thee.” Then there are three movements of intercessory prayer. If your congregation is used to lifting their voices and sharing aloud, encourage this. If they are not, simply adapt my words to invite silent prayer over these three intercessions. Or you could fill it yourself with the names, places, etc as prompted, making the whole thing more of a pastoral prayer.

The sequence finishes with the Lord’s Prayer and the full second verse of the carol. We’ve included a link to four-part harmony that you could put in your worship guide if you want to encourage the congregation over the course of the season to learn to sing the parts a cappella. It will be a wow moment if they do, I assure you.

Offering/Offertory/Doxology

Another aspect of Mennonite worship practices that Adam mentioned was the “talk-back” of congregants to the sermon. I’ve decided to place that option here as a way of “offering” our own carols of good news. You can have people fill in the blank to a sentence I suggest in the scripts or leave it wide open to simply offering up words or phrases that stuck with them from the sermon or the singing or the prayers... anything. Depending on the size of your congregation, you’ll want to decide to have them share in small grouping at their seats or offer their reflections to the whole congregation. Again, you know your congregation and what they’ll get comfortable with if they’ve never done this before in worship.

The Doxology is taken from one of my favorite hymns about the power of music, “When In Our Music God is Glorified.” I’ve chosen different verses for each week.

Communion

This is the place where you can insert the communion script I have written on the weeks when that is appropriate for your tradition. As always, I’ve used the format of a 2nd century text that has become an ecumenical norm but you should adapt as needed for your tradition. In order to keep the service to a certain length, you might decide to fold the offering “talk-back” into the time of receiving communion.

WE TAKE OUR MUSIC TO THE WORLD

Benediction

An introduction is spoken by the leader/pastor and an invitation is given for the benediction to be a blessing that comes from Adam's book that we say together for this season:

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

Closing Carol

I have chosen traditional and modern versions of a carol to sing for this last song. You could also change my choices out with something that congregants have offered as a favorite.

Postlude

Again, this is an opportunity to incorporate people's favorites. Are you getting the idea that soliciting people's favorites could be great fodder for your adaptations to this series? Many blessings!

I hope this helps you get an at-a-glance feel for the scripts!

See the synopses for every worship experience in the series [HERE](#)

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