



"A Service of Lessons and Carols"

Compiled by Greg Atkinson

The following is a sample service of "Lessons and Carols" used by Greg Atkinson at churches where he has served. One can use this "as is" or as a template to build one's own service of "Lessons and Carols".

Format: After the introduction, which you are encouraged to change and customize however needed, a Scripture reading takes place, followed by the singing of traditional Christmas carols. This pattern repeats through to the end, which is the offertory.

Order: The service progresses from "Advent" to "Angel Appears to Mary" to "Angel Appears to Joseph" to "Birth of Christ" to "Shepherds" to "Wisemen" to a time of giving.

Ideas: This service order provides lots of flexibility for the worship planner. This kind of service could or could not:

- ❖ Have a formal feel with all the readings being performed by a professional narrator in formal attire.
- ❖ Have a family feel with the readings being performed by a Grandparent in a rocking chair and/or children participating.
- ❖ Have the congregation read the Scripture aloud together.
- ❖ Involve drama or a show a scene/silhouette with each movement.
- ❖ Use visuals on the screen that correspond with what is being read.

SAMPLE INTRODUCTION

Welcome to our first ever (*or annual*) service of “Lessons and Carols”. If you are familiar with a traditional or liturgical service of this nature, this may seem a little different in form and content. What we would like to do today is tell the Christmas story through various Biblical passages and then sing corresponding songs or carols that go along with the passage that was just read. We hope the Christmas story will come alive for you this day!

ADVENT

Read: Isaiah 7:14, Isaiah 9:6

Isaiah 7:14 – Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Emmanuel. **Isaiah 9:6** – For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

Sing:

Come, Thou Long Expected Jesus
O Come, O Come, Emmanuel

ANGEL APPEARS TO MARY

Read: Luke 1:26-38

Luke 1:26-38 – In the sixth month, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin’s name was Mary....the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favor with God. You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus... “How will this be,” Mary asked the angel, “since I am a virgin?” The angel answered, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God...“I am the Lord’s servant,” Mary answered. “May it be to me as you have said.” Then the angel left her.

Sing:

O Holy Night
Emmanuel

ANGEL APPEARS TO JOSEPH

Read: Matthew 1:18-23

Matthew 1:18-23 – This is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be with child through the Holy Spirit. Because Joseph her husband was a righteous man and did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly. But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, “Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.” All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: “The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Emmanuel” - which means, “God with us.”

Sing:

It Came Upon the Midnight Clear
Joy to the World

BIRTH OF CHRIST

Read: Luke 2:1-7

Luke 2:1-7 – In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world...And everyone went to his own town to register. So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

Sing:

O Little Town of Bethlehem
Hark! The Herald Angels Sing
O Come, All Ye Faithful

SHEPERDS

Read: Luke 2:8-15

Luke 2:8-15 – And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find the baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.” Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel praising God and saying, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men...”

Sing:

Angels, from the Realms of Glory
How Great Our Joy
Go, Tell It on the Mountain

WISEMEN (right before Offertory)

Read: Matthew 2:1-2, 7-11

Matthew 2:1-2, 7-11 – After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem and asked, “Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star in the east and have come to worship him.”...Then Herod called the Magi secretly and found out from them the exact time the star had appeared. He sent them to Bethlehem and said, “Go and make a careful search for the child. As soon as you find him, report to me, so that I too may go and worship him.” After they had heard the king, they went their way, and the star they had seen in the east went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshipped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold and of incense and of myrrh.

SAMPLE TRANSITION

Just as the Magi worshipped by bringing gifts to the Christ child, we too, worship by giving of our money, talents, and time. I’m going to ask our ushers to come now as we enter into a time of worship and giving.

Instrumental ensemble or praise band plays: What Child is This?