

# Nine Lessons and Carols

A Service Guide for Christmas

**Please use this as a guide for planning your own Nine Lessons and Carols service. We've suggested prayers, carols and hymns, but feel free to choose different ones that are familiar for your congregation.**

## Prelude

## Hymn

CH4 301 Hark! The herald angels sing

## Bidding Prayer

Love is patient and kind. Justice struggles with waiting and so they hold hands, inseparable and committed to each other. Together they are a powerful force, holding an equilibrium only God could hope for. Prayer expresses the deepest desire of our hearts. As Advent holds us in expectant waiting, let love and justice embody us as they did the one upon whom we wait. God whose will courses through history, Yahweh, the Great 'I am' who cannot be contained, pour your spirit on our gathering, on our remembering, on

our waiting. Your will be done, as the incarnate one comes into our midst and is reborn in our hearts.

## Hymn

CH4 273 O come, o come Emmanuel

## Lesson 1: Cain & Abel Genesis 4:3-16

This is the first act of physical violence in the Old Testament. As Croatian theologian Miroslav Volf points out, this story is 'not only an example of rivalry between two brothers, it also narrates the structure of encounter between "them" and "us".' The root cause of this violence is found in the inequality between Cain and Abel. Addressing this inequality, perceived or actual, might have helped protect Abel from his brother's jealous anger; and addressing inequality today is a concrete step toward making lasting peace. Let us take a moment to reflect on the ways our world is not yet equal.

## Hymn

CH4 305 In the bleak midwinter



## Lesson 2: Where is God?

### Psalm 42

'So where is God today? I sense that God is in the brave front-line workers who sacrificially give themselves to the service of saving lives, in the young neighbour who volunteers to do grocery shopping for the elderly in their street... God is in the members of our church in Nairobi who have been giving food donations to families whose breadwinners lost their jobs. God is in the many churches and individuals in the UK, Ireland and beyond who have contributed through Christian Aid for people a continent away to not sleep hungry or cold. Around the world God is near through the hearts and hands of those who are reaching out to touch their neighbours. Were it not for the touch of God through your words and acts of kindness, the hearts of many would have been downcast and discouraged. But because of the actions of true neighbours – the neighbour down the street and the neighbour a continent away – many people when wondering where God is can now say to themselves – 'In each other, God is with us. We thank you, Oh God, that you are with us.'

**Words from Bob Kikuyu, Christian Aid Global Theology Advisor. Taken from a sermon in 2020 during the COVID 19 pandemic.**

## Hymn

CH4 393 It came upon the midnight clear

## Lesson 3: Good News

### Isaiah 61:1-4

Kakoli Khatun is a 21 year old woman living in a small village in Bangladesh. Most girls in her village are born into poverty and are married off as young as 13 years old, with no access to education or job opportunities. But Kakoli is creating a new narrative for herself and her community. With support from Christian Aid's partner, Aid Comilla, Kakoli has launched a small business from home. She and 9 other young women are creating beautiful embroidered quilts following the centuries-old Bengali tradition of Nakshi Kantha, and then selling them online. This gives them a safe way to earn a living and support themselves. As they bind up their quilts, they bind each other up as well. They are building an empowered future for women and girls, full of hope, possibilities and good news.

## Hymn

CH4 306 O come, all ye faithful



## Lesson 4: What is Required?

### Micah 6:6-12

“Act Justly. Love Mercy. Walk Humbly.” These words were featured on Christian Aid placards at the Global Day of Action for COP26, the UN climate summit in Glasgow in 2021. Calling for world leaders to act justly in response to the climate crisis is one way that we can love our global neighbours. We walk humbly in solidarity with those on the sharp edge of injustice, not by speaking for them, but by amplifying their voices when they call for mercy from the impacts of climate chaos.

### Hymn

CH4 304 O little town of Bethlehem

## Lesson 5: Magnificat

### Luke 1:46-55

The face of global poverty is a woman’s face. She may have lost her livelihood due to climate shocks; she may have been displaced from her home due to conflict; she might not know where her children’s next meal will come from; her day may be filled trying to keep herself and her family alive, leaving no time to participate in her community’s decision-making, if her voice were even welcome. But she is not helpless, do not believe that myth. She is resilient and determined in the face of adversity. She doesn’t need pity, she needs her calls for justice to be heard and

realised. Will we listen to her prophetic voice?

### Hymn

CH4 291 When out of Poverty is Born

## Lesson 6: The Birth Account

### Luke 2:1-7

The miracle of birth, and a gift that lives on. Beryl was a Christian Aid supporter for much of her life. Born in 1927, she worked as a nurse and midwife for many years. Later in life, she was shown love and kindness after an eye operation by a nurse, who originally came from Africa. It meant so much to Beryl that she decided to remember Christian Aid in her will. Beryl’s legacy gift is providing healthcare, particularly maternal care to expectant mothers, in Sierra Leone, Burundi, and South Sudan. As we remember Jesus’ birth in less-than-ideal circumstances, we are grateful for people like Beryl, who let their love live on.

### Hymn

CH4 310 See him lying on a bed of straw



## Lesson 7: The Shepherds

### Luke 2:8-20

Shepherding communities today still live close to the earth, in tune with and directly affected by shifts in natural patterns. Whether lost livestock, flooded farmland, scorched crops, or destroyed homes, the climate crisis continues to disrupt lives and livelihoods, often in communities who have done the least to cause it. Justice for them is twofold – immediate resilience support and funding for loss and damage; as well as longer-term campaigning and advocating for changes in climate policy at a global level. As we celebrate the Good News, first told to shepherds on a hillside, let us remember those whose livelihoods are still inextricably interwoven with the livelihood of creation.

### Hymn

CH4 323 The first Nowell the angel did say

## Lesson 8: Magi & Herod

### Matthew 2:1-12

Internally Displaced Persons are those who have been forced to flee their homes due to armed conflict, human rights violations, or loss of livelihood due to the climate crisis. They often move to areas that are difficult to reach with humanitarian aid, making them among the most

vulnerable people in the world. As we reflect on the political uncertainty and climate of fear that Jesus was born into, we remember the millions of people who face fear, uncertainty, and continued instability today.

### Hymn

CH4 315 Once in royal David's city

## Lesson 9: The Incarnation

### John 1:1-4 (The Message)

Love and justice hold hands, and the world holds its breath. Christmas is coming, incarnation is imminent - the pregnant pause before the cry and the breath and the brand-new life, vulnerable - an astonishing mix of fragile resilience. As Advent holds us in expectant waiting, let love and justice embody us as they did the one upon whom we wait. His birth is only the beginning. After the cry and the breath, there is the becoming – the nurture and the needs. The story of the infant who will change our world, but whose very existence from the very beginning is challenged by the oppressive regime he is born under, poverty that pervades his community and the struggles of an uncertain world, that in the story, does not find room for him or his family. God whose will courses through history, Yahweh, the Great 'I am' who cannot be contained, pour your spirit on our gathering, on our remembering, on our waiting. Your will be done, as the



incarnate one comes into our midst  
and is reborn in our hearts.

## Hymn

CH4 320 Joy to the world

## Closing Prayer

God of love and justice  
As we anticipate your incarnation  
Born of flesh and blood in a manger  
To a couple on the margins  
Announced first to lowly shepherds  
We marvel at the ways you show up  
In unexpected places  
Through unremarkable people  
In unlikely ways

In our celebrations  
Help us to remember  
our global neighbours  
Across the street and around the  
world  
Those yearning and working towards  
A full life, free from poverty  
Grant us impatience  
as we strive for justice  
And patience as we love one another  
Amen

