



# Worship Planning for Christmas Eve

## Options and Ideas for Christmas Eve Worship

**Theme** The theme of C20 is “God’s Greatest Gift.”

### Worship folders

A worship folder draft of 16 pages (11x14 format) is available under “Worship Resources.” A ledger option, 11x17, is also available. Local information and announcements may be added on various pages.

The worship folder selections included are not meant to suggest that these are optimal for every WELS congregation. They are simply a baseline starting point, using familiar items in the public domain. Many congregations will want to modify the plan to include some stanzas or anthems sung by a choir or soloist.

### Lector options

While it is possible for the pastor to read both the introductory commentaries and the lessons, here are other options.

- Rather than reading the commentaries, the pastor “delivers” them as he would a sermon. Then he reads the lessons.
- The pastor “delivers” the commentaries and various lectors read the lessons.
- The pastor reads the commentaries and various lectors read the lessons.

### Sermon

The C20 plan includes two options.

1. Extended commentaries on the lessons are available in the worship resources section. These commentaries are the sermon for the evening. They may be adjusted at the pastor’s discretion to comment more on some lessons and less on others.

One option is to focus only on the first and last lessons. The first commentary establishes why the gift was so needed. God's gift solves the problem of enmity between Satan and the human race. The sermon describes this enmity as apparent in world events, national strife, and private failings—in contrast to a warm and fuzzy sentimentality that wants to gloss over the meaning of these things. The worship folder comments for the first hymn response quote from that hymn: “Death was reigning o’er us . . . till he opened for us a bright eternity.” An extended commentary might add:

Christmas carols often sing some very dark thoughts. Have you ever noticed this? Christmas carols—so beloved all around the world, so commonly wafting through shopping malls, so persistently played on some radio stations—carols often sing about very dark and serious things. After the first lesson we’ll sing: “Death was reigning o’er us . . .” Now that’s a bleak admission from people who want to have a merry Christmas!

You’ll see this in other songs tonight. “Oh, come, oh, come, Emmanuel and ransom captive Israel that mourns in lonely exile here.” Really? I kind of like my comfortable (suburban) life. “Oh, come, O Root of Jesse, free your own from Satan’s tyranny; from depths of hell your people save.” Now there’s a fine thought to go along with your custom Christmas card photo!

2. To make room for a regular sermon, the extended commentaries may be omitted or drastically shortened. (Note that the worship folder includes very brief comments on both lessons and hymns). Thoughts for a sermon on Romans 8:32 are in a separate document under “Worship Resources.” A full sermon might best be placed either before the first lesson or after “Hark! The Herald Angels Sing.”

In either location the sermon can weave in thoughts from select lessons. For example, if before the first lesson, the sermon can “set the stage” for all that follows. Due to the fall into sin (first lesson), the last thing we should have expected is “God’s greatest gift.” Thoughts about dark themes in Christmas carols may be included.

## Christmas Day sermon option

If the sermon is not used on Christmas Eve, it could be used on Christmas Day—with publicity calling attention to the thematic connection between Christmas Eve and Christmas Day. If preaching on Romans 8:32, that text is used only as the sermon text rather than the Second Lesson due to its brevity.

Additional resources are not provided for Christmas Day since the purpose of the C20 program is to provide coordinated resources and planning tools for an outreach emphasis on Christmas Eve.

## Additional musical options

If a children’s group is involved in the singing, they might sing a stanza of *Away in a Manger* and a stanza of another hymn.

The links below provide recommended options for both choral and keyboard music that supports the hymns/carols in the service.

*All of this music, including selections from other publishers, can be ordered from NPH.*

## **ADULT CHORAL**

Once in Royal David's City: <https://online.nph.net/once-in-royal-davids-city.html>

Of the Father's Love Begotten: <https://online.nph.net/catalog/product/view/id/24972/>

O Come, O Come, Emmanuel: <https://online.nph.net/o-come-o-come-emmanuel-1.html>

Silent Night: <https://online.nph.net/silent-night.html>

## **UNISON/2-PT/CHILDREN'S CHORAL**

Now Sing We, Now Rejoice (Moeller, NPH): <https://online.nph.net/now-sing-we-now-rejoice.html>

Now Sing We, Now Rejoice (Koeritz, CPH): <https://online.nph.net/catalog/product/view/id/24947/>

Joy to the World: <https://online.nph.net/catalog/product/view/id/25268/>

Oh, Come, Oh, Come, Emmanuel: <https://online.nph.net/oh-come-oh-come-emmanuel.html>

## **ORGAN** (includes music based on hymns recommended in service)

Advent and Christmas Hymn Preludes (various, NPH): <https://online.nph.net/advent-and-christmas-hymn-preludes-for-organ.html>

Creative Hymnodist: Advent and Christmas (Kosche): <https://online.nph.net/the-creative-hymnodist-advent-and-christmas.html>

Creative Hymnodist: Christmas and Epiphany (Kosche): <https://online.nph.net/the-creative-hymnodist-christmas-and-epiphany.html>

Christmas with Minimal Pedals (Childs): <https://online.nph.net/christmas-with-minimal-pedals.html>

25 Hymn Introductions for Organ (Weber): <https://online.nph.net/organ-25-hymn-introductions-for-organ-weber.html>

Proclaim! Preludes and Harmonizations for the Hymn of the Day (Advent, CPH): <https://online.nph.net/catalog/product/view/id/26021/>

Introductions, Harmonizations, Accompaniments, Interpretations Vol 9 (Blersch): <https://online.nph.net/introductions-harmonizations-accompaniments-interpretations-volume-9.html>

On Christmas Night (Kosche): <https://online.nph.net/on-christmas-night-2.html>

## **PIANO** (includes music based on hymns recommended in service)

This Is Christmas (Unke): <https://online.nph.net/this-is-christmas.html>

This Christmas Time (Unke): <https://online.nph.net/this-christmas-time.html>

A Quiet Christmas (Larson): <https://online.nph.net/catalog/product/view/id/21805/>

Piano Stylings Set 4 (Floeter): <https://online.nph.net/piano-stylings-set-4.html>

Hymn Tune Masters (various): <https://online.nph.net/hymn-tune-masters.html>

The Quiet Center (Keesecker): <https://online.nph.net/the-quiet-center.html>

Christmas by Candlelight (McDonald): <https://online.nph.net/christmas-by-candlelight.html>

A Treasury of Christmas Carols (Shackley): <https://online.nph.net/a-treasury-of-christmas-carols.html>

**INSTRUMENTAL** (includes music based on hymns recommended in service)

Reproducible Rings Vol III (Larson): <https://online.nph.net/reproducible-rings-iii-for-2-3-octaves.html>

Ring & Sing Christmas (Thompson): <https://online.nph.net/ring-sing-christmas.html>

Hymnprovisations for Piano and Instruments Vol 1 (Floeter):  
<https://online.nph.net/hymnprovisations-for-piano-and-instruments.html>

Instrumental Praise Vol 1 (Floeter): <https://online.nph.net/instrumental-praise.html>

Instrumental Praise Vol 2 (Floeter): <https://online.nph.net/instrumental-praise-volume-2.html>

Instrumental Praise Vol 3 (Floeter): <https://online.nph.net/instrumental-praise-volume-3.html>

Hymns for the Contemporary Ensemble Vol 1 (Magness):  
<https://online.nph.net/catalog/product/view/id/26470/>