

CAROL SERVICE



FOR THE TEACHER:

Each year of the *Alive-O* programme has lessons for Advent and Christmas. They are a rich source of material that can be used both inside and outside the classroom as a school community prepares for Christmas, e.g. music, artwork, readings, poems, prayers, etc. The posters that accompany each of the year's programmes, and which include many of the scenes associated with Advent and Christmas, could be used to decorate the school hall or the church where the carol service takes place. In *Alive-O7* [T1, L12-14] the season of Advent is explored with specific material for each day of a three week period. Some of the material in these lessons could be used for the school community as a whole.

The *Alive-O* programme also has a number of specific Christmas Plays and Prayer Services that you might like to look at as a source of material to celebrate the coming of Christ at Christmas.

<i>Alive-O</i> ₁ Christmas Play: <i>A Time to Be Born</i>	Teachers' Book, p.247
<i>Alive-O</i> ₂ Christmas Play: <i>Ready and Waiting</i>	Teachers' Book, p.261
<i>Alive-O</i> ₃ Christmas Play: <i>The Moment We've Been Waiting For</i>	Teachers' Book, p.347
<i>Alive-O</i> ₄ Christmas Play: <i>The Magi Cantata</i>	Teachers' Book, p.434
<i>Alive-O</i> ₆ Christmas Prayer Service	Teachers' Book, p.149
<i>Alive-O</i> ₇ Christmas Lessons: <i>Waiting in Joyful Hope</i>	Teachers' Book, p.87
<i>Alive-O</i> ₈ <i>Nativity Play</i>	Teacher's Book, p.89

It is traditional in many primary schools to end the year with a **Carol Service/ Christmas Concert**. You'll find here some resources that will help in organising a **Carol Service**. In the Anglican (Church of Ireland) Tradition a *Service of Nine Lessons and Carols* has been a time-honoured beginning to the Christmas season, by combining some of the readings associated with the foretelling of the Christ Child, with some traditional Christmas Carols. Nine lessons and carols would be a little too much for a primary school, but the idea could work very well.

What follows is an outline of a short prayer service of readings and carols, which is constructed using material entirely from the *Alive-O* programme. There is a rich source of material there that is simple, age appropriate and prayerful. Two reading options are given for most of the readings, depending on the audience, or if the prayer service takes place in a Junior or a Senior Primary School. There are six sections, each containing the following: an introduction, a reading/poem, a carol, and a prayer. Each section is more or less related to a character associated with the Christmas story. The carols are all from the *Alive-O* programme. Other traditional and familiar carols can be used. If you have the Tapes/CDs for each of the *Alive-O* programmes, you can use them to accompany the singing. Page references are given for all the material. It finishes with prayers of intercession, a final prayer and blessing. The Prayer Service is an ideal opportunity to invite your school chaplain to become involved, but it can also be done should he be unable to attend.

PICTURE TO COLOUR



CAROL SERVICE

INTRODUCTION

We gather here today as a school to prepare for Christmas. We do that by listening to the stories related to the coming of Jesus, by singing some Christmas carols and by praying together. Advent is a time of waiting. Waiting is not something that we like to do much, but when we wait patiently for something, it makes it all the nicer when that thing comes: our birthday; our school holidays; a trip with our family; a present or a prize. Many people in the Christmas story were people who waited. God had always promised that he would send a Saviour and for many thousands of years the people of Israel waited. Today we begin a little journey – it is a journey through the stories of these people who waited and who then rejoiced when Jesus was born in Bethlehem. We begin with the most important person in the story after Jesus – his mother Mary.

THE ANNUNCIATION

READING: *One Moment (Alive-O₃, p.133)/The Annunciation to Mary; 'Who is the One Who is Coming?' (Alive-O₅, p.113)/Advent Word (Alive-O₇, p.99)/A Few Little Moments (Alive-O₇, p. 100)*

CAROL: *Mary, Will You Take (Alive-O, p.114; Alive-O₂, p.132; Alive-O₃, p.140)*

PRAYER: God of love and mercy, help us to follow the example of Mary, who was always ready to do your will. At the message of an angel, she welcomed Jesus. Help us to learn from the example of Mary, our mother. We ask this prayer through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

MARY & ELIZABETH

We now listen to the story of two cousins, Mary and Elizabeth. Mary was always a person who thought of others. Even when she was busy getting ready for the birth of Jesus, she was thinking about her cousin Elizabeth, who lived a good distance away and who was also expecting a baby.

READING: *Two Cousins (Alive-O₂, p.109) / Poem Mary & Elizabeth (Alive-O₂, p.112)*

CAROL: *Away in a Manger (Alive-O₂, p.131; Alive-O₃, p.161; Alive-O₆, p.153)*

PRAYER: God of power and mercy, open our hearts in welcome. Take away the things that stop us from receiving Jesus with joy. We ask this prayer through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

JOHN THE BAPTIST/ISAIAH

The baby that Elizabeth was expecting was John the Baptist. It was he who told the people about the coming of Jesus. The prophet Isaiah was a prophet who talked to God's chosen people at a time of great difficulty. The people were very sad and Isaiah told them of the Saviour that God would send.

READING: *The People Who Walked in Darkness (Alive-O₄, p.148)*
John the Baptist (Alive-O₅, p.125)/Waiting in Joyful Hope (Alive-O₇, p.91)

CAROL: *Carol of the Journey (Alive-O, p.108; Alive-O₂, p.124; Alive-O₃, p.162)*
Advent Hymn (Alive-O₅, p.114)/Every Valley (Alive-O₇, p.297)

PRAYER: God our Father, you loved the world so much you gave your only Son. Help us who wait for his coming and lead us to love you more. We ask this prayer through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

BIRTH OF JESUS

We now listen to what happened on that first Christmas night, when all the characters of the story come together. The Saviour that God would send his people would not come with a great army, would not come and make everyone afraid, would not come the way anyone expected. He would come as a baby born in a manger.

READING: *The Waiting is Over (Alive-O, p.110)/Jesus is Born (Alive-O₂, p.127)/The Moment They'd All Been Waiting For (Alive-O₃, p.153)/Christmas Story (Alive-O₄, p.173)*
Gospel according to St Luke (Alive-O₆, p.145; p.146)/The Birth of Jesus (Alive-O₇, p.103)

CAROL: *Silent Night/Oíche Chiúin (Alive-O₄, p.176; Alive-O₅, p.140;*
Alive-O₆, p.154-155)

PRAYER: Lord our God, may we, your children who look forward to the birthday of Jesus, experience all the joy that the celebration will bring. We ask this prayer through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

THE SHEPHERDS

The first people that met the baby Jesus were not the important people, not the wealthy people, not the very clever people. The first people to meet the baby Jesus were simple shepherds, who were minding their sheep on a mountain. This was something that was important to Jesus right throughout his life, to meet people that nobody cared about and to be their friend.

READING: *The Shepherds Prepare (Alive-O₂, p.118)/Advent Word (Alive-O₇, p.100)
Advent Reflection (Alive-O₇, p.101)*

CAROL: *Mary's Lullaby (Alive-O₄, p.175; Alive-O₅, p.138)/O Little Town of Bethlehem (Alive-O₆, p.152)*

PRAYER: Lord, fill our hearts with your love, and as you revealed to us by an angel the coming of your Son in the stable at Bethlehem, lift our hearts and minds in watchful hope and open our ears to listen to your Word. We ask this prayer through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

THE WISE MEN

God had sent his people a Saviour, but this Saviour would not be just for God's chosen people. Jesus would be a Saviour for all people. The three wise men that came to give their gifts to the baby represent that fact: the birth of Jesus wasn't just an event in the Holy Land – it was an event for the whole world.

READING: *The Kings Prepare (Alive-O₂, p.120)/Watching, Waiting, Wondering (Alive-O₃, p.143)/ Poem Half Wise (Alive-O₇, p.103)*

CAROL: *Following a Star (Alive-O₃, p.149; Alive-O₄, p.152)*

PRAYER: Lord our God, help us to prepare for the coming of Jesus, your Son. May he find us waiting and watching in prayer. We ask this prayer through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL

INTRODUCTION: God our Father, open our hearts and minds this Advent to the greatness of the love you show for us by sending your Son, Jesus Christ. We pray for your guiding light as we begin to prepare for Christmas.

- Help us to prepare for the coming of Jesus in our prayers at home, at school and at mass. May God our Father show us how to live like Jesus. Lord, Hear Us.
- Let us give thanks for the past year: for the things we have learnt, for the fun we have had, for the skills we have gained, for the help we have had, and for the friends we have made. Lord, Hear Us.
- Let us pray for our families, our friends and all who are with us during this Advent. May we come to know the baby Jesus together. Lord, Hear Us.
- Let us pray for children around the world for whom Christmas is not a time of celebration. We remember children who are hungry, who are homeless and who are sick. Lord, Hear Us.
- Let us pray for the world: for an end to terrorism, for peace where there is war, for healing where there is hurt, for food where there is hunger, for care for the environment, and for respect for all human life. Lord, Hear Us.
- Let us pray for those who are far away from home this Christmas. May they feel close to Christ this Christmas. Lord, Hear Us.
- Let us pray for ourselves and for the future: for a happy holiday time, for safety for those who travel, for families and friends, for help and guidance in the new school year, and for continuing growth in faith and hope and love. Lord, Hear Us.
- Let us pray for all who have died, especially those close to us whom we remember and miss, that eternal peace may be theirs. Lord, Hear Us.

CONCLUSION:

Hear us, heavenly Father, as we offer our prayers to you – the prayers we have said, and the silent prayers of our hearts. Help us, this Advent, to know you better. We ask these and all our prayers through the power of Christ, who lives and reigns forever and ever. **Amen.**

CAROL: *Joy to the World (Alive-O7, p.306)*

CLOSING PRAYER

Lord, our God, we have travelled through the account of Christmas, through the stories of those who were there and witnessed the happy events. Help us to learn from them and from each other as we prepare for the great feast of Christmas. We ask this prayer through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

BLESSING

LEADER: May God give us light to guide us, courage to support us, and love to unite us. Let us bless the Lord.

ALL: **Thanks be to God.**

CAROL: *O Come All Ye Faithful (Alive-O7, p.307)*

WRITE YOUR FAVOURITE CAROL ON THE BOOK





Go raibh maith agat, a Dhia,
Chuir tú Íosa chugainn.
Rugadh é lá Nollag,
Is é mo chara buan é.