

## An A to Z of Organising a Carol Service

If this is your first service, one aim is to ensure you can host another next year, and that people want to come to it.

Within Barclays Bank, Christians have been actively involved in organising carol services – with as many as 50 attending in London alone across three different venues. Below are a number of ideas and tips:

- a. Organise the date well in advance – avoid clashes with Staff Christmas parties.
- b. Consider what the best location is – a local church or your own building? Will people travel? – More than 5 minutes walk is likely to be off-putting.
- c. If you are using a local church, invest time in building a relationship with the staff there. Be precise about what role you / they are to play. Do not make assumptions.
- d. Consider the best time of day for the service – will people stay after work? Lunchtime is probably best, as people have many other commitments in evenings in December.
- e. Get the support of senior executives in your building – will they take readings?
- f. Using a PC design an attractive eye catching poster, and use modern technology to print an attractive order of service.
- g. Advertise the service through a number of different channels – e.g. Intranet, email to your building, posters, posters in the staff canteen a few days before.
- h. Have a Christian member of staff to lead the service. Introduce the carols briefly, explaining the Gospel from the words of the carols.
- i. Can a member of staff give the talk? If not, who is most suitable to speak? Give precise instructions to the Speaker for both content and length– 7 minutes is probably the maximum for non-churchgoers.
- j. Try to think of an interesting title for the talk, and try to ensure the talk has relevant links to your workplace .
- k. Who could play in a staff band / orchestra? (Participants will bring their friends) Organise music before the service so there is not an awkward silence.
- l. How many staff could sing in a choir / singing group? Who could organise it? Could someone do a solo, or a solo verse? Ensure there is enough time for rehearsal and you are satisfied with the standard. Does it matter if people singing in the choir are not Christians? Our experience is ‘the more the merrier’.
- m. Time the content precisely – you will probably start a few minutes late. You should probably limit the service to 45 minutes if it is at lunchtime so as not to abuse the lunch hour. Make people ‘want more’ rather than wish they hadn’t come. It is better to plan for 45 minutes and overrun slightly, than to plan for an hour, overrun, and find people walking out! Minimise ‘risks’ e.g. if a local minister gives a welcome he may speak for 10 minutes!
- n. Think about including one ‘more modern’ carol in the service.
- o. Have modern poems as well as traditional readings during the service.
- p. Have a modern sketch. Hire in ‘outside skills’ if you need to.

- q. Print all the words of the readings in the Order of Service.
- r. Include prayers / testimony. Give precise instructions as to content and length, if necessary ask to see the prayers in advance.
- s. Give away free copies of books and videos at the end e.g. the Jesus Video from Agape or Why Christmas?
- t. Organise coffee for those who come early.
- u. Organise refreshments – wine / juice mince pies – Will your employer pay?
- v. Have ushers / welcomers to hand out orders of service, and ensure people sit well to the front.
- w. Have a collection for a local charity which staff will be interested in.
- x. Use modern technology to print an attractive order of service.
- y. Advertise your Christian group in the Order of Service, with names / phone numbers / email addresses.
- z. Look after those who take part – thank you notes etc. Afterwards, evaluate what was good or not so good – ask for feedback, and make notes for next year!