

We are big fans of [John August Swanson](#). His art tells Bible stories in finely detailed, brilliantly colored paintings and original prints that you often see on the covers of religious journals and magazines as well as a variety of curriculum posters.

His art reflects the strong heritage of storytelling he inherited from his Mexican mother and Swedish father. John Swanson's narrative is direct and easily understood. He addresses himself to human values, cultural roots, and his quest for self-discovery through visual images. These include Bible stories and social celebrations such as attending the circus, the concert, and the opera. He also tells of everyday existence, of city and country walks, of visits to the library, the train station or the schoolroom. All his parables optimistically embrace life and one's spiritual transformation.

And now they are even more accessible to all ages for use in your church during the Advent or Christmas season.

Candler School of Theology in Atlanta has the largest collection of Swanson's work on display, and the faculty members (Michael Joseph Brown, Luke Timothy Johnson, Steven J. Kraftchick, Thomas G. Long, Carol A. Newsom and Gail R. O'Day) have added their voices to the beautiful series known as "the Birth Narrative." View a snippet via YouTube here:

[A Thrill of Hope](#)

O holy night! The stars are brightly shining, It is the night of our dear Saviour's birth. Long lay the world in sin and error pining, 'Til He appear'd and the soul felt its worth. A thrill of hope the weary world rejoices, For yonder breaks a new and glorious morn.

Six of the pieces at Candler constitute "A Thrill of Hope," familiar Advent and Christmas texts from Matthew and Luke brought to life by Swanson in glorious color and detail. These can now be found on a DVD with an accompanying study guide to discover more about the art as well as the story.

1. A Visit - Luke 1:26-38
2. The Nativity - Luke 2:1-7
3. The Shepherds - Luke 2:8-20
4. Epiphany - Matthew 2:1-12
5. Presentation in the Temple - Luke 2:21-40
6. Flight into Egypt - Matthew 2:13-15

The 50-minute DVD presents the familiar story alongside the artwork of John August Swanson with commentary. Each chapter is about eight minutes long. It can be enjoyed all at once or chapter by chapter. It can be used as a study resource - by Sunday school classes, youth groups, adult groups or families at home.

While it is the middle of summer, why not line up some resources for this coming Advent now? Here is one you won't want to miss!

[A Thrill of Hope: The Christmas Story in Word and Art](#) DVD and separate Discussion Guide is presented by Emory / Candler School of Theology and Morehouse Education Resources.