



**12 Songs of
Christmas**



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Introduction

Welcome to the 12 Songs of Christmas! Hymns and songs play a very important role in our anticipation and celebration of Jesus's birth on Christmas. This Advent, join friends from across Christ Presbyterian Church to learn the stories behind some of your favorite Christmas songs. For 12 days leading up to Christmas, take a few moments to ponder the lyrics, history, related Scripture, and a brief devotional about each song. We hope that as you sing these beloved tunes this year, they will take on new and deeper meaning.

Merry Christmas! Christ is born!

***Listen along with the
12 Songs of Christmas playlist!***



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1

*Joy to the
World*



Joy to the World

(Isaac Watts, 1719)

Scripture: Psalm 98

Isaac Watts was one of the most famous hymn writers in church history. *Joy to the World*, written by Watts in 1719, was not originally written as a Christmas carol, but as a poem paraphrasing King David's words from Psalm 98. Watts desired to celebrate Jesus's role as King of both his church and the whole world. Over a century later, the second half of this poem was adapted and set to music. Now, we sing it every year along with people all over the world.

This hymn is full of exclamations about the hope Jesus brings:

"Joy to the world, the Lord is come!"

"Joy to the earth, the Savior reigns!"

"He comes to make his blessings flow, far as the curse is found!"

"He rules the world with truth and grace!"

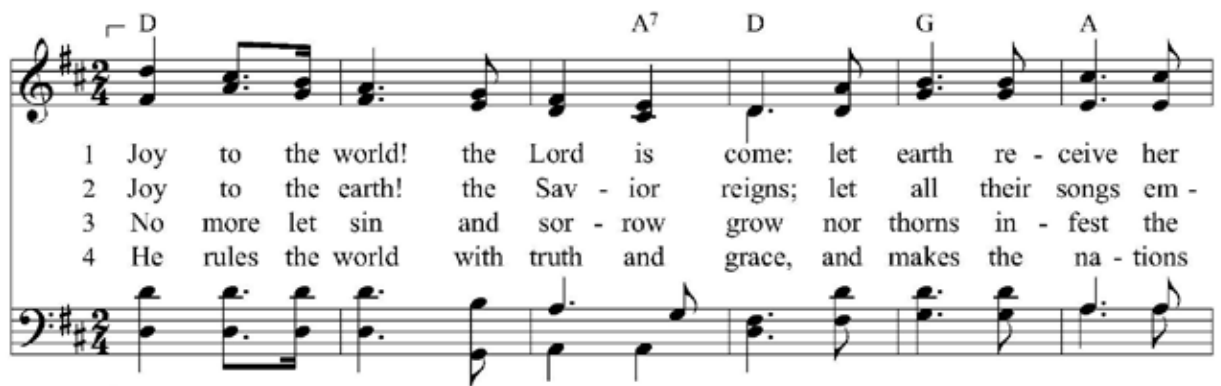
This is Good News that we sing with loud and joyful voices proclaiming that God has done what He promised He would do - send His Son to live a perfect life and die a sinner's death on our behalf, so that we might be covered by His righteousness and be made right with God forever. The deepest, most real, most lasting joy we will ever know comes from receiving this gracious gift from above.

As much as I cherish singing all of the beloved Christmas carols, every year I wait in anticipation for the moment when the congregation of God's people joyfully sing out "Joy to the World, the Lord is come!" My heart quickens and a smile comes to my lips as I raise my voice proclaiming "the wonders of His love!"

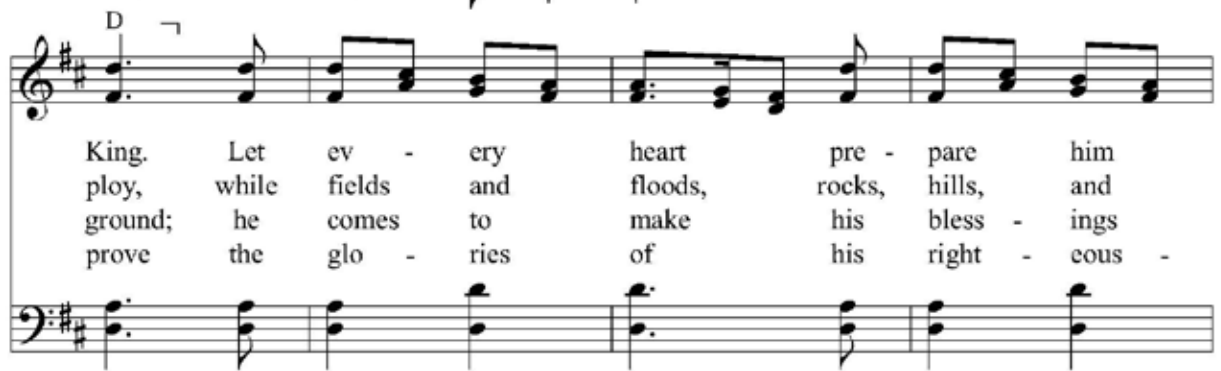
May the deep and lasting joy of Jesus living inside you through the Holy Spirit anchor you through all of life's ups and downs and may this joy overflow to others all around you!

Joy Alms (Kids Preschool Coordinator, OHB)

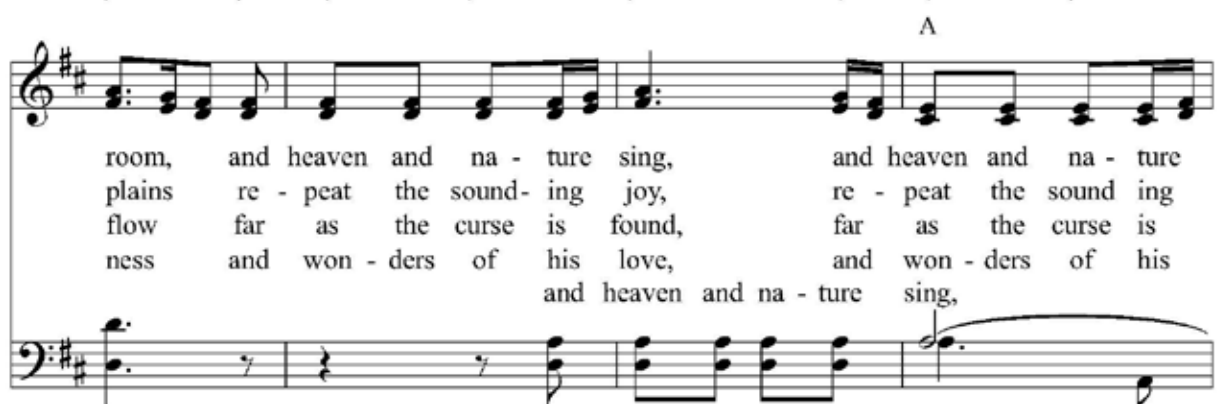
1 Joy to the world! the Lord is come: let earth re - ceive her
 2 Joy to the earth! the Sav - ior reigns; let all their songs em -
 3 No more let sin and sor - row grow nor thorns in - fest the
 4 He rules the world with truth and grace, and makes the na - tions



King. Let ev - ery heart pre - pare him
 ploy, while fields and floods, rocks, hills, and
 ground; he comes to make his bless - ings
 prove the glo - ries of his right - eous -



room, and heaven and na - ture sing, and heaven and na - ture
 plains re - peat the sound - ing joy, re - peat the sound ing
 flow far as the curse is found, far as the curse is
 ness and won - ders of his love, and won - ders of his
 and heaven and na - ture sing,



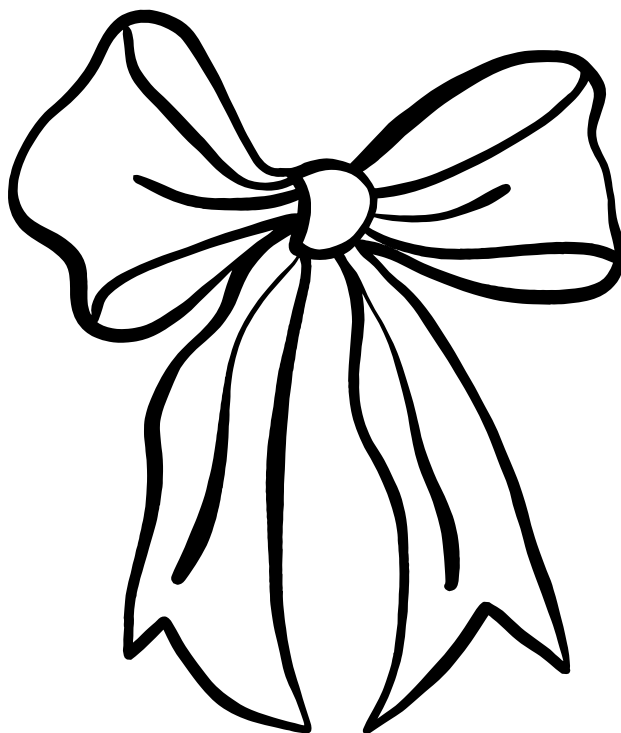
sing, and heaven, and heaven and na - ture sing.
 joy, re - peat, re - peat the sound - ing joy.
 found, far as, far as the curse is found.
 love, and won - ders, won - ders of his love.

heaven and na - ture sing,



2

O Come All
Ye Faithful



O Come All Ye Faithful

(John F. Wade, 1743)

Scripture: Luke 2:13-14

O Come All Ye Faithful was written originally in Latin as *Adeste fideles* in the 18th century and has been attributed to John Francis Wade. This carol invites Christians to come and worship Jesus Christ, just as the shepherds came to Bethlehem to praise and glorify him on the night of his birth.

The second verse connects us to Christians across the centuries as it draws from the Nicene Creed, initially written at the Council of Nicaea in 325. Christians have confessed these words for 1700 years: "God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made." Jesus Christ took on human flesh in Bethlehem at a particular point in history, but he has existed eternally as the second person of the Trinity.

Verse 3 brings us back to the shepherds as they cared for their flocks of sheep outside Bethlehem. The quiet of night was suddenly interrupted by an angel of the Lord announcing the arrival of the Savior of the world, followed by a choir of angels praising God, saying: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased" (Luke 2:14).

The final verse returns to Jesus as Lord. He is the Word who "became flesh and dwelt among us" (John 1:14). The shepherds went to Bethlehem to see Jesus and then returned to the fields, "glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them" (Luke 2:20). The angels and shepherds could not hold back their praise of God as they witnessed Jesus' birth. Likewise, as we celebrate Christmas through singing carols like this one, we also give glory to God for the birth of his son.

Debbie Pixley (Discipleship Coordinator, OHB)



1 O come, all ye faith - ful, joy - ful and tri - um - phant, O
2 Sing, choirs of an - gels, sing in ex - ul - ta - tion,
3 Yea, Lord, we greet thee, born this hap - py mor - ning,



come ye, O come ye to Beth - le - hem; Come and be -
sing, all ye ci - ti - zens of heaven_ a - bove; glo - ry to
Je - sus, to thee_ be all glo - ry given; Word of the

Refrain



hold him, born the King of an - gels;
God, all glo - ry in the high - est; O come, let us a -
Fa - ther, now in flesh ap - pear - ing;



dore him, O come, let us a - dore him, O



come, let us a - dore him, — Christ, — the Lord.

3

O Little Town
of Bethlehem



O Little Town of Bethlehem

(Phillips Brooks, 1865)

Scripture: Matthew 2:1-6

When Phillips Brooks wrote the hymn *O Little Town of Bethlehem* in 1865, he had returned from a trip to visit Bethlehem and other famous sites from Jesus's life. Brooks was a pastor at a church in Philadelphia, PA, and he wanted to capture the beauty of little Bethlehem for the children in his congregation. And so he wrote this beloved Christmas song – which is one of my very favorites.

I remember about 20 years ago singing this hymn at my grandmother's memorial service, which was not near Christmas, because it was a song she loved. And so it has always held a very precious place in my heart, because I feel connected to her when I sing it. But it also contains, to me, one of the most perfect verses about the incarnation, God's coming to earth as a baby to dwell with his people, that we sing.

*Yet in thy dark streets shineth
the everlasting light;
the hopes and fears of all the years
are met in thee tonight*

Every year I sing this song at Christmas, I pause on the words "the hopes and fears of all the years" and I remember not only the life and legacy of my grandmother, but the long story of God's people that stretches all the way back to the garden of Eden in Genesis and all the way forward to our future hope of heaven described in Revelation. I wonder what it will be like to have no hopes and no fears, because everything will be gloriously perfect as we are united with Jesus forever. But for now, I will sing this song at Christmas and joyfully remember that all my hopes and all my fears are carried by Jesus, the little baby born in Bethlehem on that dark night so many years ago.

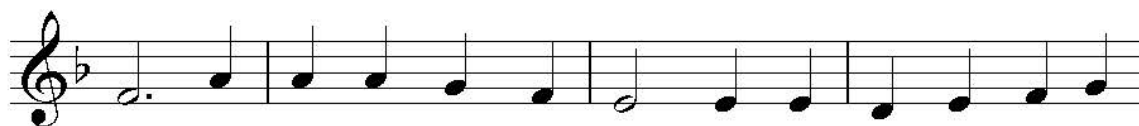
Melanie Rainer, Ministry Director (Cool Springs)



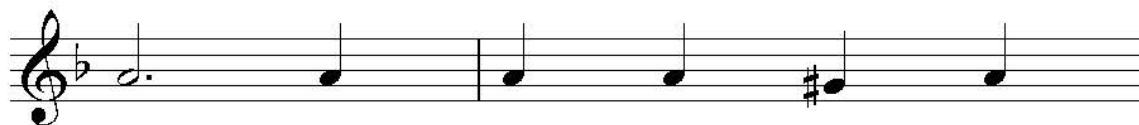
1 O lit - tle town of Beth-le-hem, how still we see thee lie!
2 For Christ is born of Ma - ry, and ga thered all a - bove,
3 How si - lent - ly, how si - lent - ly the won drous gift is given!
4 O ho - ly Child of Beth-le-hem, des - cend to us, we pray;



A - bove thy deep and dream-less sleep the si - lent stars go
while mor-tals sleep, the an - gels keep their watch of won d'ring
So God im - parts to hu - man hearts the bles sings of his
cast out our sin, and en - ter in; be born in us to -



by. Yet in thy dark streets shin - eth the e - ver - las-ting
love, O mor-ning stars, to - ge - ther pro-claim the ho - ly
heaven. No ear may hear his co - ming, but in this world of
day. We hear the Christ-mas an - gels the great glad ti-dings



Light; the hopes and fears of
birth, and prai - ses sing to
sin, where meeek souls will re -
tell; O come to us, a -



all the years are met in thee to - night.
God the King, and peace to all on earth.
ceive him still, the dear Christ en - ters in.
bide with us, our Lord Em - ma - nu - el.

4

O Come
O Come
Emmanuel



O Come O Come Emmanuel

(John Mason Neale, 1851, from Latin text)

Scripture: Isaiah 11

The stockings were hung on the mantle, the fire crackling in the fireplace and seven-year-old me lay on the rug with my Grinch-stockinged feet kicking in the air, a Christmas cookie in one hand, waiting with all the hope and promise of what Christmas morning would bring. I looked up at a Christmas tree three times my size and wished upon the twinkling lights that there would be a bike under the tree on Christmas morning. It had bright pink handlebars and streamers that would dance in the wind as I whipped down the driveway, clicking the bell beside a basket where I could tuck away treasures from all my adventures – *that bike*. I had circled this bike in the magazine and pleaded with my mom daily, “please, can I have *this bike*?” I repeated this short sentence daily with all the urgency my little seven-year-old heart could manage and I waited breathless with longing.

I think of that moment when I sing *O Come O Come Emmanuel*. Advent is a season of holy longing. Only this time, we wait not for a material gift, but for a Savior who comes to restore all things. The hymn was originally written in the ninth century and had seven sentences that were sung as an antiphon, which is a short sentence sung or recited before or after a psalm. This particular hymn was used during the Advent season and sung by believers through time who knew the ache of exile. Their prayer was simple and desperate: “Come, ransom captive Israel.” It is the prayer of all who feel the fractures of a broken world and long for restoration.

And yet, woven into every plea is a promise: “Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee.” Just as I once longed for what I could not yet hold, so we lean forward in hope, trusting that God has not forgotten us.

So we pray and we wait. Not with empty wishing, but with steadfast confidence. Emmanuel has come. Emmanuel will come again.

Lauren Brett (Youth Ministry Program Coordinator, OHB)

1 O come, O come, Im - man - u - el, and ran - som cap - tive
 2 O come, O Wis - dom from on high, who or - dered all things
 3 O come, O come great Lord of might, who to your tribes on
 4 O come, O Branch of Jes - se's stem, un - to your own and

Is - ra - el that mourns in lone - ly ex - ile here
 might - i - ly to us the path of knowl - edge show
 Si - nai's height in an - cient times did give the law
 res - cue them! From depths of hell your peo - ple save,

Refrain

un - til the Son of God ap - pear.
 and teach us in its ways to go. Re - joice! Re -
 in cloud and maj - es - ty and awe.
 and give them vic - tory o'er the grave.

joice! Im - man - u - el shall come to you, O Is - ra - el

5

Angels We
Have Heard
On High



Angels We Have Heard on High

(James Chadwick, 1862)

Scripture: Luke 2:8-14

Writing based on the French song, 'Les Anges dans nos campagnes,' (angels in our countryside), James Chadwick penned one of the most festive Christmas carols still sung by many today: *Angels We Have Heard on High*. It portrays the story we find in Luke 2, when a "multitude of the heavenly hosts" appear to a group of modest shepherds "keeping watch over their flock by night."

The first stanza sets the stage: An expanse of land. Shepherds tremble in fear. Angels singing. And mountains joining in the praise of the angels. You can close your eyes and almost imagine being there on that dark night, in the fields near Bethlehem. The silence of the night is broken: "Gloria in excelsis Deo! Glory to God in the highest!" The shepherds are sent to go and see Jesus, the son of God, lying in a manger.

After the death of Jesus, an angel appeared to a woman outside of the tomb. The earth trembles. An angel appears. You can close your eyes and almost imagine being there "after the Sabbath, toward dawn of the first day." (Matthew 28:1) The silence of death is broken. "Gloria in excelsis Deo! Glory to God in the highest!" The woman is sent to go see where Jesus' lay. But this time, he isn't swaddled in cloths, lying in a manger. He is risen!

Christ came into the world to rescue his people from darkness and bring them into light. We celebrate the birth of Jesus, knowing the birth of Christ points us to the resurrection of Christ. May we be a people who stand in holy reverence, as we join in with the multitudes singing, "Gloria in excelsis Deo! Glory to God in the highest!"

Melanie Beasley (Director of Children's Ministry, OHB)



1 An - gels we have heard on high sweet - ly sing - ing
 2 Shep - herds, why this ju - bi - lee? Why your joy - ous
 3 Come to Beth - le - hem, and see him whose birth the



o'er the plains, and the moun - tains in re - ply
 strains pro - long? Say, what may the ti - dings be
 an - gels sing; come, a - dore on ben - ded knee



c - cho back their joy - ous strains.
 which in - spire your heaven - ly song? Glo - -
 Christ the Lord, the new - born King.



ri - a



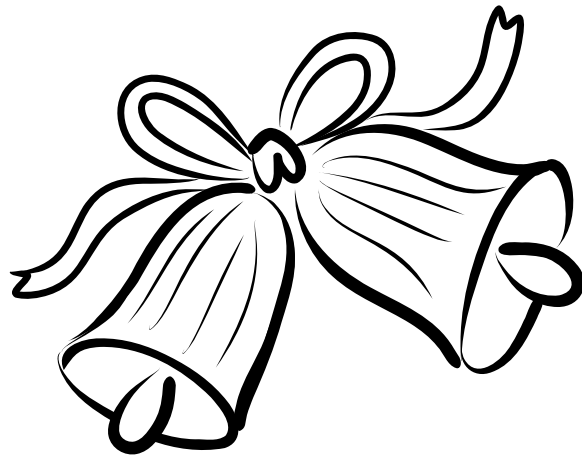
in ex - cel - sis De - o! Glo - -



ri - a in ex - cel - sis De - o!

6

*It Came Upon
a Midnight
Clear*



It Came Upon a Midnight Clear

(Edmund H. Sears, 1839)

Scripture: John 16:33

Advent is a season of longing. We wait for Christmas morning with so much anticipation. But in the message of the coming of Christ, we're led to an even deeper longing—one where the peace the angels sang of on that hill outside of Bethlehem permeates and prevails over every corner of creation—our own darkened hearts included.

It Came Upon a Midnight Clear is filled with longing for a peace not yet realized. First published in Boston's *Christian Register* on December 29, 1849, Edmund Sears' Christmas hymn about the angelic visitation to the shepherds was written under the looming concerns of the fast-approaching Civil War—"peace, peace on earth, good will to men, from heaven's all-gracious King, the world in solemn stillness lay to hear the angels sing." The song is praying, *May the peace the angels sang of then come and find us here and now.*

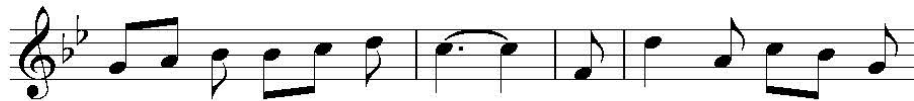
One of the things I love about this carol is the way it captures how the reality of the human struggle—of we "whose forms are bending low"—intersects with the mystery of the angel's message—of how "peace shall over all the earth, its ancient splendors fling"—all without a single explicit mention of the Christ. I appreciate the tension this lyric creates of waiting for a hope we cannot exactly put to words, while still trusting it will come in ways we cannot fully comprehend.

When those shepherds on that hillside heard the angels sing, they felt a sense of wonder and hope for what was to come, even though they could not imagine all that was meant in the promise of peace that that would be theirs through the child born that night. And so they strain to listen, and this song bids us to do the same—strain to listen, so that by faith "the whole world send back the song which now the angels sing."

Russ Ramsey (Pastor, Cool Springs)



1. It came up - on___ the mid - night clear, that
2. Still through the clo - ven skies they come with
3. And ye, be - neath___ life's cru - shing load, whose
4. For lo! the days___ are has - tening on, by



glo - rious song_ of old,___ from an - gels ben - ding
peace ful wings un - furled,___ and still their heaven - ly
forms are ben - ding low,___ who toil a - long_ the
pro - phet seen_ of old,___ when with the ev - er -



near the earth to touch their harps_ of gold:___ "Peace
mu - sic floats o'er all the wea - ry world;___ a -
climb - ing way with pain - ful steps_ and slow,___ look
cir - cling years shall come the time___ fore - told___ when



on the earth, good will to men, from heaven's all gra - cious
bove its sad_ and low - ly plains, they bend_ on ho - vering
now! for glad_ and gol - den hours come swift - ly on___ the
peace shall o - ver all the earth its an - cient splen - dors



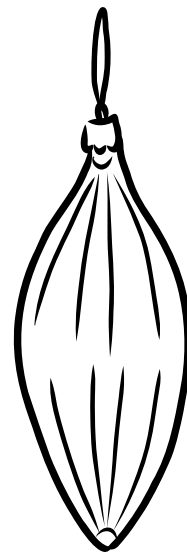
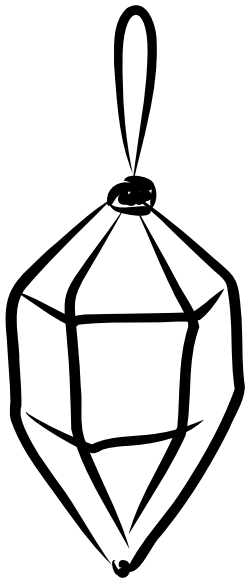
King."___ The world in so - lemn
wing,___ and e - ver o'er___ its
wing,___ O rest be - side___ the
fling,___ and the whole world___ send



still - ness lay, to hear the an - gels sing.
Ba - bel sounds, the bles - sed an - gels sing.
wea - ry road, and hear the an - gels sing!
back the song which now the an - gels sing.

7

*Hark the
Herald
Angels Sing*



Hark the Herald Angels Sing

(Charles Wesley, 1739)

Scripture: Philippians 2:5-11

Using Charles Wesley's text, George Whitefield's adjustments to the text, and then an adaptation to Felix Mendelssohn's music, *Hark the Herald Angels Sing* has become one of the most recognized Christmas hymns in the Western Christian Church. The hymn's lyrics glory in the advent of Christ, the Savior to the nations, whose entrance into creation came not with a loud trumpet blast, but as the "offspring of the virgin's womb."

In the second stanza, the hymnwriter expresses one of the greatest mysteries of the universe in simple, yet profound, verse. How could Jesus be both fully God and fully man—a necessity for our need of a perfect substitutionary representative? The hymnwriter tells us:

*Veiled in flesh the Godhead see,
Hail the incarnate deity.*

Jesus, the second person of the Triune God—infinite, eternal, and unchanging—entered the landscape of human history not by sacrificing anything of his own deity, but by adding a human nature, serving as a "veil," shielding humanity from the fullness of God's glory. Just as the Lord shielded Moses from his glory by hiding him in the cleft of the rock (Exodus 33:21–22), Christ's veil of flesh shielded every man, woman, boy, and girl whom he encountered from the glory that would otherwise overwhelm and consume them; his flesh became the cleft of the rock enabling him to be "pleased as man with man to dwell, Jesus our Emmanuel."

This hymn is a showcase of Philippians 2:5–11, providing the Church with a song to celebrate Christ, "who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself"—but not of his deity. He willingly set aside his heavenly glory—he shielded us with flesh—very God of very God to walk with us and near us.

Lee Eric Fesko (Pastor of Discipleship, OHB)



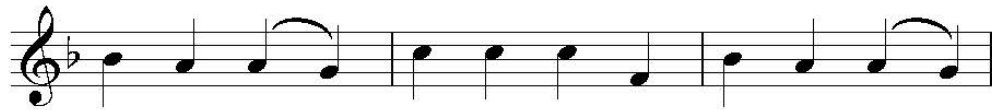
1 Hark! the he - rald an - gels sing, — "Glo - ry to the
 2 Christ, by high - est heaven a - dored, — Christ, the e - ver -
 3 Hail the heaven - born Prince of Peace! Hail the Sun of



new - born King: peace on earth, and mer - cy mild, —
 las - ting Lord, late in time be - hold him come, —
 Right eous - ness! Light and life to all he brings, —



God and sin - ners re - con - ciled!" Joy - ful, all ye
 off - spring of the Vir - gin's womb: veiled in flesh the
 risen with heal - ing in his wings. Mild he lays his



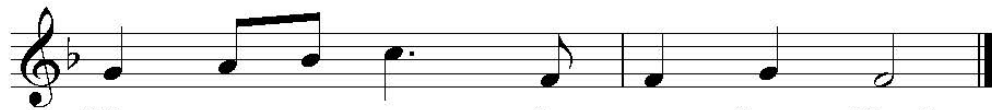
na - tions, rise, — join the tri - umph of the skies; —
 Go - dhead see; — hail th'in - car - nate De - i - ty, —
 glo - ry by, — born that we no more may die, —



with th'an - ge - lic hosts pro - claim, "Christ is — born in
 pleased with us in flesh to dwell, Je - sus, — our Im -
 born to raise us from the earth, born to — give us



Beth - le - hem!"
 ma - nu - el. Hark! the her - ald an - gels sing,
 se - cond birth.



"Glo - ry — to the new - born King."

8

Go Tell It on
the Mountain



Go Tell It on the Mountain

(John W. Work Jr., 1901)

Scripture: Luke 2:1-7

While the creator of *Go Tell It on the Mountain* is unknown, we do know that this African-American spiritual was preserved and popularized by Nashville native, John Wesley Work Jr., and the Fisk Jubilee Singers. In 1871, this group embarked on an 18-month journey to share their music on a global stage in hopes of rescuing Fisk University from financial ruin. Not only was the group's tour successful—Fisk University is *still* open today as the oldest institution of higher learning in Nashville—but their efforts have had a lasting impact on the Church.

Whenever I get to sing this timeless hymn, I can't help but smile. There is a genuine *joy* that comes over me. I'm not just singing, I'm *celebrating*. The lyrics and the music are so simple, and yet so profound and so brimming with excitement and hope:

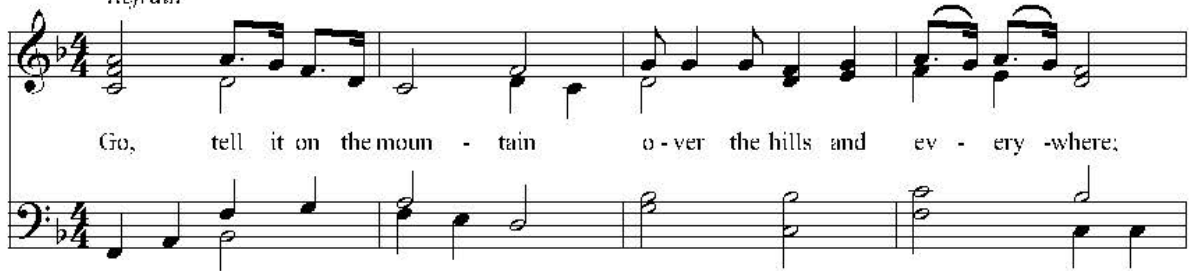
*Go, tell it on the mountain,
Over the hills and everywhere;
Go, tell it on the mountain,
That Jesus Christ is born.*

When God gives us eyes to see that he has 'sent us salvation' through his Son, like being overcome by the joy of one of our favorite songs, we can't help but sing along. Like the 'angel chorus' in Luke 2, and like the Fisk Jubilee Singers that traveled across the western world, we too are invited to respond with a kind of uncontainable joy that we can't help but shout from the housetops and sing to every nook and cranny of creation...

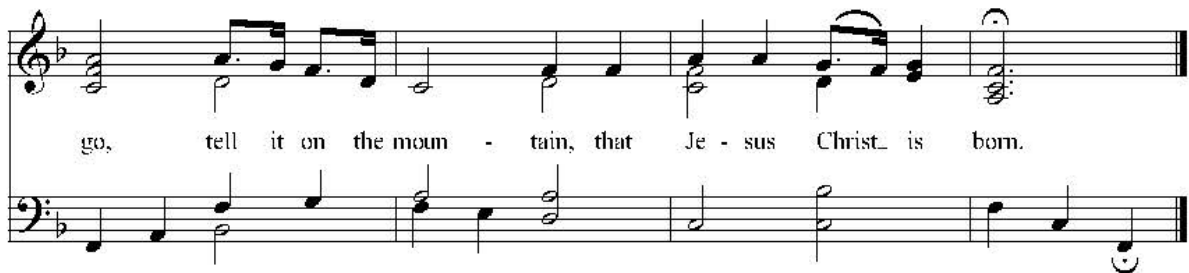
Christ has come... God came down in human flesh, lived a perfect life, died a sinner's death, and was raised for our salvation! He ascended into heaven where he now sits on his glorious throne until, one day... *Christ will come again*. And when he does, he is going to make all things right... all things new. And how will we respond? We will join together with the great multitude of *all* the saints from *all time*... and we will sing (Rev. 19:6-8).

Nate Evans (*Director of Youth and Families, Cool Springs*)

Refrain



Go, tell it on the moun - tain o - ver the hills and ev - ery - where;



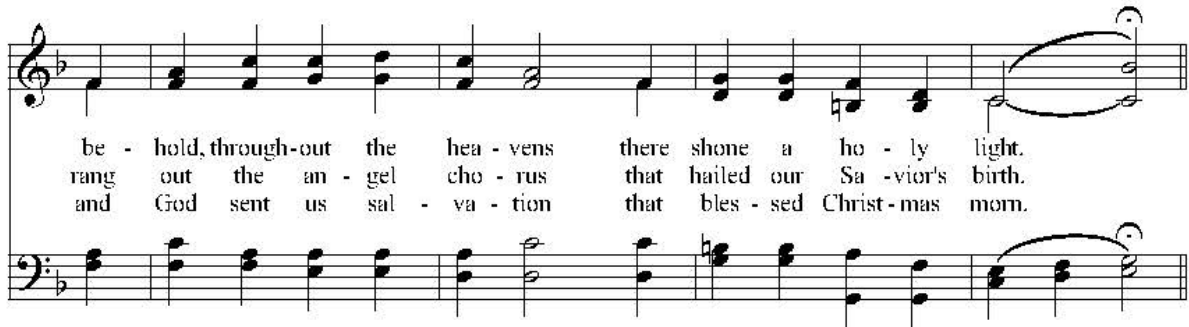
go, tell it on the moun - tain, that Je - sus Christ is born.

Parts



1 While shep - herds kept their watch - ing o'er si - lent flocks by night,
2 The shep - herds feared and trem - bled when, lo! a - bove the earth
3 Down in a low - ly man - ger the hum - ble Christ was born,

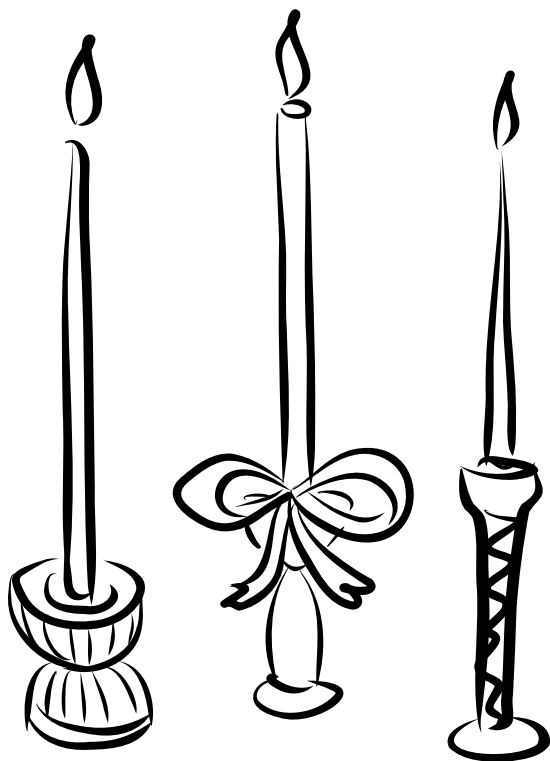
to Refrain



be - hold, through-out the hea - vens there shone a ho - ly light.
rang out the an - gel cho - rus that hailed our Sa - vior's birth.
and God sent us sal - va - tion that bles - sed Christ - mas morn.

9

The First Noel



The First Noel

(Anonymous, 1823)

Scripture: John 1:48-50

The First Noel likely began as a folk carol, in Cornwall, a county in south west England in the 15th century. Although it first appeared in print in 1823, it had been joyfully sung throughout prior generations as a way to tell of the birth of Christ. The word Noel (or Nowell) means the birth of Christ. As one of the first Christmas Carols I remember singing, *The First Noel* recounts the announcement the birth of Jesus to the shepherds, and the arrival of the searching wise men.

When I think of the angels coming to the shepherds who were with their sheep at night, I can't even imagine the terror they likely felt! Barely able to comprehend the light invading their darkness, their lives were forever changed. As the angel proclaimed the good news of the birth of Christ, the shepherds had a response that only could have come from God. Their paralyzing fear changed to joy and movement towards the Savior. Likewise, as the carol states, the wise men followed the star seeking a king. The reality of the hope of heaven came to be seen and known, just as they had longed for in their life long journey, with hearts full of praise.

*Then let us all with one accord
sing praises to our heavenly Lord,
that hath made heaven and earth of nought,
and with his blood our life hath bought.*

As believers, we, like the shepherds and the wise men, have been rescued and forever changed by the birth of Christ. Might we be moved by him to joyfully proclaim "Nowell, Nowell, Nowell, Nowell, born is the King of Israel", and to know we are seen, known, and dearly loved by Him.

Gigi Sanders (Director of Special Needs Ministry, OHB)



1. The_ first_ No - well the_ an - gel did say, Was to
 2. For_ all_ to_ see there was_ a star Shin - ing
 3. And by_ the_ light of_ that_ same star The_
 4. Then let_ us_ all with one_ ac - cord Sing_



cer - tain poor shep - herds in fields as they lay; In_ fields_ where
 in_ the_ east, beyond them_ far, And to_ the_ earth
 wise_ men came_ from coun - try far; To_ seek_ for a
 prai - ses to_ our hea - ven - ly Lord Who hath_ made



they lay_ keep - ing their sheep, On a
 it gave_ great_ light, And so_
 king was_ their_ in - tent, And to
 heav'n and_ earth_ of naught, And_



cold win - ter's night_ that was_ so deep.
 it con - ti - nu - cd both day_ and night.
 fol - low the star_ wher - e - ver it went.
 with_ His blood_ man - kind_ hath bought.



No well, No - well, No - well, No - well,



Born is the King_ of Is - ra - el.

10

Silent Night



Silent Night

(Joseph Mohr, 1816)

Scripture: Isaiah 7:14-16

Picture a snowy evening in Oberndorf, Austria in 1816. The organ in St. Nikolaus Church is broken, so Father Joseph Mohr asks the church organist, Franz Gruber, to write a simple melody. He wanders the moonlit streets of Oberndorf, inspired by their tranquility, and then writes the lyrics—right in time for their Midnight Mass service on Christmas Eve. That night, they play a simple hymn called *Silent Night* for the first time.

I imagine it was noisy in the cathedral that night, with people joyfully arriving to celebrate Christmas. Just like centuries earlier, there was probably a lot of noise when a young couple named Mary and Joseph arrived in the town of Bethlehem.

The night Jesus was born was probably far from silent. Isn't it ironic, then, that *Silent Night* is such a beloved hymn? I love it so much, though, because it captures the moments in-between. After Jesus was born and before the angels proclaimed his birth, Mary and Joseph sat alone in the stable, looking on the promised Emmanuel, God with us. The Light of the World finally come, celebrated in quiet adoration.

Silent Night, Holy Night

All is calm, all is bright...

Radiant beams from thy holy face,

With the dawn of redeeming grace.

God doesn't always speak through choirs of angels appearing to shepherds, but instead through the silence, when we can listen for his voice. Silence doesn't always feel beautiful, like the calm of Jesus' birth before it was proclaimed. The silence would have been deafening the three days Jesus lay in an empty tomb before triumphantly rising from the grave. But always in the silence, God is speaking his redeeming grace over us. It's a reminder for me, and I hope for you, to be listening.

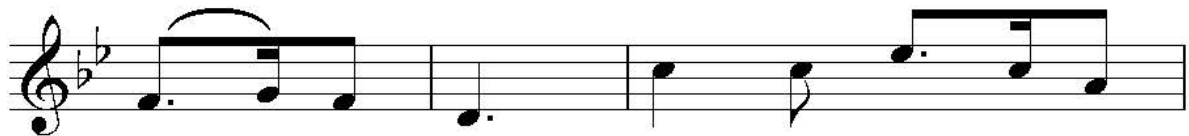
Emma Van Veldhuizen (Communications Coordinator, Music Row member)



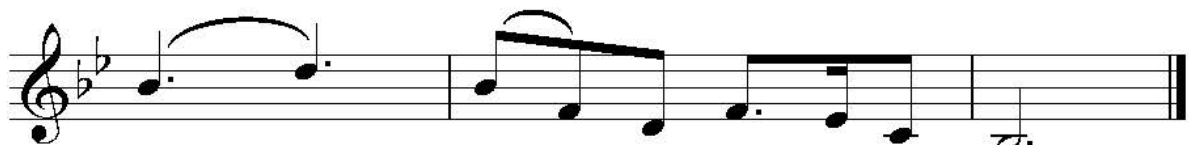
1 Si - lent night, ho - ly night! All is calm, all is bright
2 Si - lent night, ho - ly night! Shep-herds quake at the sight,
3 Si - lent night, ho - ly night! Son of God, love's pure light,



'round yon vir - gin mo-ther and child; ho - ly in - fant, so
glo - ries stream from hea-ven a - far, heaven-ly hosts sing
ra - diant beams from thy ho - ly face, with the dawn of re -



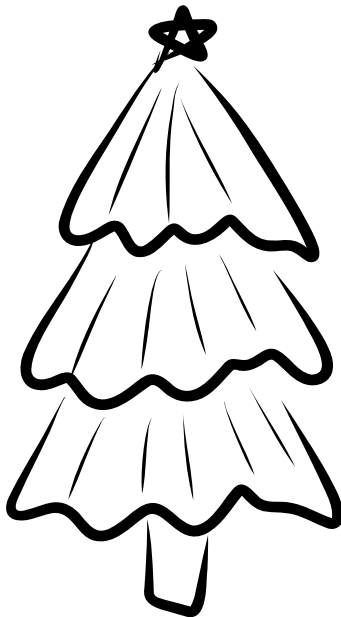
ten - der and mild, sleep in hea - ven - ly
al - le - lu - ia; Christ, the Sa - vior, is
deem - ing grace, Je - sus, Lord, at thy



peace, _____ sleep in hea - ven - ly peace.
born! _____ Chris, the Sa - vior, is born!
birth, _____ Je - sus, Lord, at thy birth.

11

Good
Christian
Friends
Rejoice



Good Christian Friends Rejoice

(Unknown)

Scripture: Matthew 1:20-23

Some words are deemed important enough to be penned and passed down for generations. Beloved recipes are shared by mothers to daughters. Creeds and confessions are carefully recorded to guide Christians in healthy doctrine. Lyrics composed in music also tend to stand the test of time, such as those from the carol *Good Christian Friends Rejoice*, which have been sung for some 800 years now.

Originally conveyed in a mix of Latin and German, the author of *In Dulci Jubilo* remains unknown. It finds its first historical reference in the autobiography of the Dominican friar Henry Suso (1295-1366), who claimed its angelic origin. Over the centuries, the song underwent various revisions, including some likely done by Martin Luther! The version we sing today comes from John Mason Neale's 1853 English interpretation as a fruit of the 19th-century Oxford Movement, wherein Anglican church leaders sought to reinvigorate traditional elements of worship in the Church of England.

Neale's version has three stanzas which support the overarching theme: Christians can rejoice in the birth of Christ. The first stanza tells us the news of the incarnation; Christ was born *today*, that is, on Christmas day. The second tells the effect of the incarnation: *joy*. Christ was born for the joy of God's people. The final stanza emphasizes peace while pointing to the purpose of the incarnation and the source of its joy: *Jesus has come to save God's people*.

In a sense, the song follows the logic of Luke 2:10-11. Angels tell the shepherds they have brought *good news* of *great joy* for everyone, namely, that a Savior has been born. This is great instruction for our hearts in a season where the leaves have fallen and things are cold and dark. In winter, the good news of the incarnation of the saving Christ is an evergreen source of joy and peace. May our hearts and minds find hope in the incarnation this Christmas season.

Carlos Portillo (Guys Discipleship Coordinator, OHB)

1 Good Chris - tian friends, re - joi - ce with heart and soul and voice;
 2 Good Chris - tian friends, re - joi - ce with heart and soul and voice;
 3 Good Chris - tian friends, re - joi - ce with heart and soul and voice;

give ye heed to what we say: Je - sus Christ was born to - day.
 now ye hear of end - less bliss: Je - sus Christ was born for this!
 now ye need not fear the grave: Je - sus Christ was born to save!

Ox and ass be - fore him bow, and he is in the man - ger now.
 He has o - pened heav - en's door, and we are blest for - ev - er - more.
 Calls you one and calls you all to gain his ev - er - last - ing hall.

Christ is born to - day! Christ is born to - day!
 Christ was born for this! Christ was born for this!
 Christ was born to save! Christ was born to save!

12

O Holy Night



O Holy Night

(Placide Cappeau, 1847)

Scripture: John 13:34-35

In 1847, the first notes of *O Holy Night* echoed through the walls of a church in Roquemaure, France. As Christmas morning arrived, the parishioners were the first in history to sing the now-beloved refrain: "Fall on your knees, o hear the angel voices!"

Placide Cappeau, a wine merchant, penned the words, while composer Adolphe Adam developed the melody we still sing today. With its complicated musicality, the song's high notes and vocal swells help us to imagine the glory of the angels filling the sky above the shepherds on that first Christmas night.

O Holy Night is the gospel set to music; from its first stanzas to its last, it tells the story of God's creation plummeted into sin-soaked existence, and the future promise of peace secured by Christ on the cross. We remember that, "long lay the world in sin and error pining," and yet when Christ appears, "the soul felt its worth."

We bring our weary hearts each Advent as a gift to the Christ-child, and we lay at his manger our gifts of fear, hope, and pain. Jesus binds us up with a thrill of hope, and those weary hearts we carry rejoice. And because we are filled with the joy that Christ alone brings, we are freed and empowered to "love one another" and work toward the day when "all oppression shall cease." Our lives are transformed by the gospel, given to us by the baby born to Mary on that night two thousand years ago. We receive the gift of mercy, and we move forward into a world that, though wearied by sin, we are called to love and serve as the hands and feet of Jesus.

Melanie Rainer (Ministry Director, Cool Springs)

1. O ho - ly night! the stars are bright - ly shin - ing, it is the
 2. Led by the light of faith se - rene - ly beam - ing, with glow - ing
 3. Tru - ly He taught us to love one an - oth - er; His law is

6 C/G G C

night of the dear Sav - ior's birth; Long lay the world in
 hearts by His cra - dle we stand; So led by light of a
 love and His gos - pel is peace; Chains shall He break, for the

12 F C C⁷ Em/B B⁷ Em

sin and er - ror pin - ing, till He ap - peared and the soul felt its worth.
 star sweet - ly gleam - ing, here came the wise men from O - ri - ent land.
 slave is our broth - er, and in His name all op - pres - sion shall cease.

18 G⁷/D G⁷ C G⁷/D

A thrill of hope, the wea - ry world re - joic - es, for yon - der
 The King of kings lay thus in low - ly man - ger, in all our
 Sweet hymns of joy in grate - ful cho - rus raise we, let all with -

CHORUS

24 G⁷ C Am Em

breaks a new and glo - rious morn; Fall on your knees,
 tri - als born to be our Friend; He knows our need,
 -in us praise His ho - ly name; Christ is the Lord,

30 Dm Am C/G G/F

O, hear the an - gel voic - es! O night di -
 to weak - ness is no stran - ger. Be - hold your
 O, praise His name for - ev - er! His pow'r and

37 C/E F C/G G⁷ C C/E G

-vine, O night when Christ was born! O night,
 King, be - fore Him low - ly bend! Be - hold
 glo - ry ev - er - more pro - claim! His pow'r

44 G/F C/E F C/G G⁷

O your and ho King, glo ly be ry, night, fore ev O night di Him low ly er more pro

49 C

-vine!
bend!
-claim.



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