

# People, Look East

Words Eleanor Farjeon (1881-1965), © 1928, 1957 all rights reserved

Music is a lively, traditional French carol BESANÇON

Sing along with Canto Deo of Aurora, CO @ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vwel-dLLSAY>

*D* *G A D*  
People look East. The time is near,

*D A E7 A*  
Of the crowning of the year.

*A7 D A A7 A6 A*  
Make your house fair as you are ab-le.

*D Dsus4/A D A Asus4 D Dsus4/A D A Asus4*  
Trim the hearth and s - et the ta-ble.

*D G A D Asus4 A7 D*  
People look East, and sing to - day:

*D G A Asus4 D*  
Love, the Guest is on the way.

*D G A D*  
Furrows be glad, though earth is bare.

*D A E7 A*  
One more seed is planted there;

*A7 D A A7 A6 A*  
Give up your strength and seed to nourish,

*D Dsus4/A D A Asus4 D Dsus4/A D A Asus4*  
That in time the flower may flourish.

*D G A D Asus4 A7 D*  
People look East, and sing to - day:

*D G A Asus4 D*  
Love, the Rose is on the way.

*D G A D*  
Stars, keep watch when night is dim.

*D A E7 A*  
One more light the bowl shall brim.

*A7 D A A7 A6 A*  
Shining beyond the frosty weather,

*D Dsus4/A D A Asus4 A D Dsus4/A D A Asus4*  
Bright as sun and moon to-ge-ther.

*D G A D Asus4 A7 D*  
People look East, and sing to - day:

*D G A Asus4 D*  
Love, the Star is on the way.

*D G A D*  
Angels, announce with shouts of mirth:

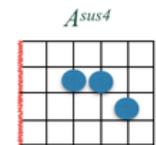
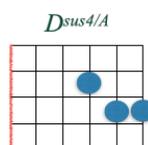
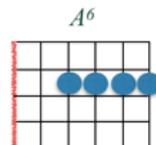
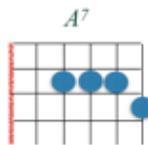
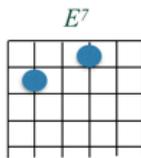
*D A E7 A*  
Him who brings new life to earth.

*A7 D A A7 A6 A*  
Set every peak and valley humming,

*D Dsus4/A D A Asus4 A D Dsus4/A D A Asus4*  
With the word, the Lord is coming.

*D G A D Asus4 A7 D*  
People look East, and sing to - day:

*D G A Asus4 D*  
Love, the Lord is on the way.



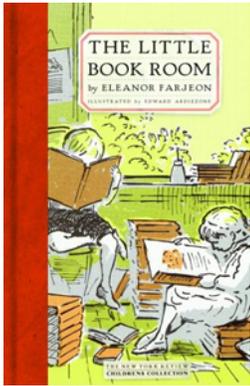
# Scripture and History

Psalm 65, Isaiah 40:1-5, Ezekiel 43:1-2, Amos 4:12, Matthew 24:27, Philippians 4:1-9, Revelation 22:16-17

"People, Look East" was written by Eleanor Farjeon (1881-1965). She received much encouragement as a writer from her parents, Benjamin Leopold Farjeon, a successful writer and novelist, and Maggie Jefferson Farjeon, daughter of an American actor.

"Nellie," as she was affectionately called by her parents, was a small, shy young girl. She later cared for her dying mother for the twelve years of a long and difficult illness. One brother, Harry, was a composer; and her other brothers, Joseph and Herbert, were writers.

Farjeon had a vivid imagination. Her father encouraged her to write from the age of five. At age eighteen, she penned the libretto for an operetta composed by her brother Harry. In spite of her shyness, she participated in a circle of talented artists, writers, and musicians.



Farjeon grew up in England in a home surrounded by books. She and her brothers both enjoyed reading stories to one another and writing their own. In the United States, Farjeon's best-known work is the hymn "Morning Has Broken" (later recorded by Cat Stevens, now Yusuf Islam, in 1971); but in England, she is beloved as the author of more than eighty children's books and poem collections, most notably Elsie Piddock Skips in Her Sleep, Martin Pippin in the Apple Orchard, and The Little Book Room.

Some of Farjeon's books won prestigious recognitions, including the Hans Christian Andersen Award and the Carnegie Medal. The artist refused another prize, Dame of the British Empire, explaining that she "did not wish to become different from the milkman." Upon her death, the Children's Book Circle established the Eleanor Farjeon Award in her honor.

"People, Look East" first appeared in The Oxford Book of Carols (1928). The lively tune, a traditional French carol BESANÇON, which earlier appeared with the anonymous text, "Shepherds, shake off your drowsy sleep," provides a festive setting for this wonderful Advent text. In the last forty years, this hymn has gained increasing popularity, as evidenced by its appearance in a number of hymnals in the United States.

Key images of the season are abundant. "People, Look East" is the direction of the rising sun and, in the history of Christianity, the direction of the coming Messiah. In stanza two, the bare earth is waiting for the seed that will flourish in the reign of the Promised One. In stanza three, the stars that guided the Magi shape the "bowl" of the heavens, giving signs of hope beyond "the frosty weather." The angels' song, in stanza four, sets "every peak and valley humming," an oblique reference to Isaiah 40:4, "Every valley shall be exalted and every mountain and hill brought low. . ."

Except for one word that changes in the last two lines of each stanza, the poem and its musical setting give the sense of a refrain. "Love," in turn, is defined as "Guest," "Rose," "Star," and "Lord." Stanza three is usually omitted:

Birds, though ye long have ceased to build,  
Guard the nest that must be filled.  
Even the hour when wings are frozen  
He for fledging-time has chosen.  
People, look east, and sing today:  
Love, the Bird is on the way.

This joyful Advent hymn has the spirit of a Christmas carol, but with an imaginative Advent text. Singing this carol is indeed one way to prepare both our homes and hearts for the coming of the Savior.

For more information on Eleanor Farjeon, visit [www.eldrbarry.net/rabb/farj/fari.htm](http://www.eldrbarry.net/rabb/farj/fari.htm) .

by C. Michael Hawn from [www.umcdiscipleship.org](http://www.umcdiscipleship.org)

Dr. Hawn is distinguished professor of church music at Perkins School of Theology. He is also director of the seminary's sacred music program.