

O Little Town of Bethlehem

Poem conceived by Phillip Brooks on Christmas Eve 1865, written in 1868, music by Lewis Redner
 Sing along with the Mitchell Road Presbyterian Church Choir @ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bx3KO0nYBMM>

F Fdim7 F/C Gm
 O little town of Bethlehem,
F C7 F

How still we see thee lie!
F D Gm Gm7

Above thy deep and dreamless sleep.
F C7 F
 The silent stars go by;
C Dm A

Yet in thy dark streets shineth,
Dm A Gm7 A#6/D A
 The ev-er-last-ing light;
F Fdim7 F/C Gm

The hopes and fears of all the years,
F C7 F
 Are met in thee tonight.

F Fdim7 F/C Gm
 For Christ is born of Mary,
F C7 F

And gathered all above,
F D Gm Gm7
 While mortals sleep the angels keep,
F C7 F
 Their watch of wondering love.
C Dm A

O morning stars to-gether,
Dm A Gm7 A#6/D A
 Proclaim the ho-ly birth,
F Fdim7 F/C Gm

And praises sing to God the King,
F C7 F
 And peace to men on earth!

D Ddim7 D Em
 How silently, how silently,
D A7 D

The wondrous gift is given!
D B Em Em7
 So God imparts to human hearts,
D A7 D
 The blessings of His heaven.
A Bm F#

No ear may hear His coming,
Bm F# Em7 G6 F#
 But in this world of sin,
D Ddim7 D Em

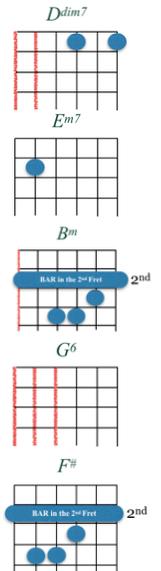
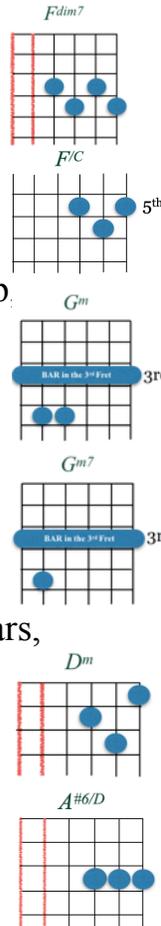
Where meek souls will receive Him still,
D A7 D
 The dear Christ enters in.

F Fdim7 F/C Gm
 O holy Child of Bethlehem,
F C7 F

Descend to us we pray;
F D Gm Gm7
 Cast out our sin and enter in;
F C7 F
 Be born in us today!
C Dm A

We hear the Christmas angels,
Dm A Gm7 A#6/D A
 The great glad tid-ings tell;
F Fdim7 F/C Gm

O come to us, a - - bide with us,
F C7 F
 Our Lord Emmanuel!



History

"O Little Town of Bethlehem" was written by Phillip Brooks (1835–1893), a recognized Christian voice in the America of his time. He was an Episcopal priest, Rector of the Church of the Holy Trinity in Philadelphia and the man called upon to give the funeral message over the slain Abraham Lincoln. That solemn honor, in tandem with leading his congregation through the bloody years of the Civil War, had taken its toll. Everyone knew someone who had been killed or gravely wounded. Scores of women in his congregation wore black in mourning for lost husbands or sons. Worn out and needing spiritual renewal, Brooks took a sabbatical, leaving the US to tour the Middle East.



Right Reverend
Phillips Brooks,
Episcopal Bishop of
Massachusetts

On Christmas Eve, 1865 in Jerusalem, the American felt an urge to get away from the hundreds of other pilgrims who had journeyed to the Holy Land during that season. Although warned that he might encounter thieves, the preacher borrowed a horse and set out across the arid and unforgiving countryside. For many peaceful hours he was alone with his thoughts as he looked upon a land that had changed little since the days that Jesus walked there.

At dusk, a sense of awe fell over Brooks. Under a clear sky, the first stars just beginning to emerge, he rode into the still tiny and remote village of Bethlehem. He saw, in vivid detail the humble circumstances in which the Heavenly King was born. There on streets almost unchanged since biblical times, Brooks felt as if he were surrounded by the spirit of the first Christmas. He would later tell his family and friends that the experience was so overpowering that it would forever be “singing in his soul.”

Three years later, he wrote the poem for his church. His friend and organist, Lewis Redner, added the music. Redner's tune, simply titled "St. Louis", is the melody used most often for this carol in the United States. Redner struggled to write the melody. It was finally given to him as he slept one night. He woke to find that the tune heard in his sleep perfectly fit the lyrics written by his friend Phillip Brooks and “O Little Town of Bethlehem” was given to the world.

Phillip Brooks is recognized as one of the greatest preachers of the 19th century. His first volume of sermons sold more than two hundred thousand copies when released in 1878 and is still read and studied today. There is a building named for the preacher at Harvard University.

From “Stories Behind the Best-Loved Songs of Christmas” by Andrew Collins, 2001



Bethlehem: City of David and Birthplace
of Jesus Christ

Image from www.thoughtco.com



Lewis Redner
source:

www.sheetmusicdirect.com