

It Came Upon a Midnight Clear

Poem by Dr. Edmund Sears in 1849, music by Richard Storrs Willis in 1850, an alternative tune by Arthur Sullivan in 1874

G C G C^{6sus4} G
It came upon a midnight clear,

C A⁷ D D⁷
That glorious song of old.

G C G C^{6sus4} G
From angels bending near the earth,

C D⁷ G
To touch their harps of gold.

G B⁷ Em^[1] B Em^[2]
Peace on the earth, good will to men,

D A⁷ D D⁷
From heaven's all gracious King!

G C G C^{6sus4} G
The world in solemn stillness lay,

C D⁷ G
To hear the angels sing.

} Intro

G C G C^{6sus4} G
Still through the cloven skies they come,

C A⁷ D D⁷
With peaceful wings unfurled.

G C G C^{6sus4} G
And still their heavenly music floats,

C D⁷ G
O'er all the weary world.

G B⁷ Em^[1] B Em^[2]
Peace on the earth, good will to men,

D A⁷ D D⁷
From heaven's all gracious King!

G C G C^{6sus4} G
The world in solemn stillness lay,

C D⁷ G
To hear the angels sing.

G C G C^{6sus4} G
Above its sad and lowly plains,

C A⁷ D D⁷
They bend on hovering wings.

G C G C^{6sus4} G
And ever o'er its Babel sounds,

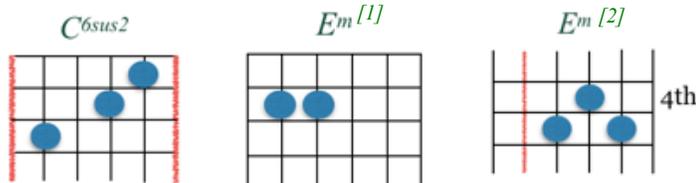
C D⁷ G
The blessed angels sing.

G B⁷ Em^[1] B Em^[2]
Peace on the earth, good will to men,

D A⁷ D D⁷
From heaven's all gracious King!

G C G C^{6sus4} G
The world in solemn stillness lay,

C D⁷ G
To hear the angels sing.



Christmas as you go

Scripture and History

Luke 2:8-14 Now there were shepherds in that region living in the fields and keeping the night watch over their flock. The angel of the Lord appeared to them and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were struck with great fear. The angel said to them, “Do not be afraid; for behold, I proclaim to you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For today in the city of David a savior has been born for you who is Messiah and Lord. And this will be a sign for you: you will find an infant wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger.”

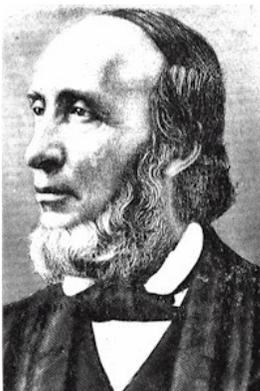
And suddenly there was a multitude of the heavenly host with the angel, praising God and saying: “Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.”

The words in this American carol are based on a poem written by Unitarian Minister Dr. Edmund Sears in 1849. Although a Unitarian, Sears preached the divinity of Christ. He believed that Jesus was the Son of God and had died on the cross for man’s sins. He also believed the every Christian should be involved in reaching out to the lost, helpless, and poor. One can hear in the words of this carol, Sears’ concern for the hopelessness and poverty of the people he saw and served all around him. And it’s also clear that Emmanuel is the salvation our weary world needs.

The following year, inspired by the poem, Richard Storrs Willis, a composer who studied with Felix Mendelssohn, as well as editor and critic for the New York Tribune, wrote a melody called "Carol" to which the words were adapted.

In the United Kingdom the tune called "Noel", which was adapted from an English melody in 1874 by Arthur Sullivan, is the usual accompaniment. This tune also appears as an alternate in The Hymnal 1982, the hymnal of the United States Episcopal Church.

Wikipedia



Dr Edmund Hamilton Sears
Image from Wikipedia



Richard Storrs Willis
Image from Wikipedia



Arthur Sullivan in 1888
Image from Wikipedia

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