

# O Little Town of Bethlehem Lyrics and Carol History

## O Little Town of Bethlehem Lyrics: A Cherished Christmas Hymn

“O Little Town of Bethlehem” is a traditional Christmas carol cherished for its gentle melody and evocative lyrics depicting the peaceful scene of Jesus Christ’s birth. Penned by Phillips Brooks and set to music by Lewis Redner, this hymn captures the quiet wonder and profound hope associated with the Nativity story, making it a staple in Christmas services and celebrations worldwide.

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### Full Lyrics of “O Little Town of Bethlehem”

**\*\*(Verse 1)\*\***

O little town of Bethlehem,  
How still we see thee lie!  
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep  
The silent stars go by;  
Yet in thy dark streets shineth  
The everlasting Light;  
The hopes and fears of all the years  
Are met in thee tonight.

**\*\*(Verse 2)\*\***

For Christ is born of Mary,  
And gathered all above,  
While mortals sleep, the angels keep  
Their watch of wondering love.  
O morning stars, together  
Proclaim the holy birth!  
And praises sing to God the King,  
And peace to men on earth.

**\*\*(Verse 3)\*\***

How silently, how silently,  
The wondrous gift is given!  
So God imparts to human hearts  
The blessings of His heaven.  
No ear may hear His coming,  
But in this world of sin,  
Where meek souls will receive Him still,  
The dear Christ enters in.

**\*\*(Verse 4)\*\***

O holy Child of Bethlehem!  
Descend to us, we pray;  
Cast out our sin and enter in,  
Be born in us today.  
We hear the Christmas angels  
The great glad tidings tell;  
O come to us, abide with us,  
Our Lord Emmanuel!

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## Historical Significance

The lyrics for “O Little Town of Bethlehem” were written by Phillips Brooks (1835–1893), an Episcopal priest who served as rector of the Church of the Holy Trinity, Philadelphia. He was inspired after visiting the town of Bethlehem in 1865 during a trip to the Holy Land. Standing on the hills overlooking the town on Christmas Eve, he felt a deep connection to the Nativity story. Three years later, in 1868, he wrote the poem for his Sunday school children.

Brooks asked his church organist, Lewis H. Redner (1831–1908), to set the poem to music. Legend holds that Redner struggled to find a suitable melody but was struck with inspiration in the middle of the night just before Christmas. He quickly jotted down the tune, which he later called “St. Louis.” The carol was first sung by the children of Holy Trinity Church on December 27, 1868, and quickly gained popularity, becoming one of the most beloved Christmas hymns in the English-speaking world.

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## Why “O Little Town of Bethlehem” Matters

“O Little Town of Bethlehem” resonates deeply due to its peaceful imagery and profound theological message. It contrasts the quiet, seemingly insignificant setting of Bethlehem with the immense, world-changing event taking place within it – the birth of Christ, the “everlasting Light.” The carol speaks to the personal nature of faith (“Be born in us today”) and the universal themes of

hope, peace, and redemption central to the Christmas narrative. Its gentle melody and reflective tone provide a moment of calm and contemplation amidst the often-busy holiday season, reminding listeners of the quiet miracle at the heart of Christmas. Its enduring appeal lies in its ability to evoke a sense of wonder and personal connection to the Nativity story across generations.

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**Tags:**

O Little Town of Bethlehem, Christmas Carol, Hymn, Folk, Classical, Devotional, Religious, Hopeful, Nostalgic, Holiday, Christmas, Slow Song Visit us at: <https://lyricspdf.com>