**Carol 21- O little town of Bethlehem**

This carol is based on a text by Phillips Brooks, an Episcopal priest in Philadelphia and then Boston. He was inspired by a visit to Bethlehem in 1865. Just a few years later he wrote this poem for the Sunday school at his church and the organist added the music.

THe organist, Lewis Redner, wrote the tune “St Louis”. This remains the most popular setting used in America. He described it as a “simple music written in great haste and under much pressure.” As it was needed just a few days later.

In the UK, and in countries historically associated with the Commonwealth, the tune “Forest Green” is most popular and familiar. Adapted by Ralph Vaughan Williams from an English folk ballad called “The Ploughboy’s Dream”. He collected it from a Mr Garman of Forest Green in Surrey in 1903, hence the name.

First recorded for the popular market in the UK by Cliff Richard in 1982 and then across the ocean by Amy Grant in 1983. It is a firm favourite within many traditional Carol services and a well known “ear worm” in shops and restaurants from November onwards!

Roger Jones included a setting of this Carol within his musical “Simeon” in the late nineties. Hearing such familiar words to a new tune and in a new setting reawaken the beautiful poetry. Matt Redman has also reworked it for a more informal and contemporary feel that would be suited within a modern worship setting with guitars and amplification. Both versions are below for you to listen to.

**Versions to enjoy.**

<https://youtu.be/zuzeajx5gV0> Roger Jones version from Musical Simeon

<https://christianbsl.com/12983c3b-1710-4d38-89f9-793bfb4fc8b3> traditional with BSL

<https://youtu.be/QOCiuF291_o> Matt Redman’s version

<https://christianbsl.com/8be03e1e-0726-42dd-9106-42b72545a14b> alternative modern day O little town with BSL

<https://youtu.be/QAU5Xg-o-eM> BBC with lyrics with descant (USE)

<https://youtu.be/Lj2fwME46GM> - alternative tune

<https://youtu.be/KrkrG0Uo50M> brass compilation

[Carol Accompaniments (Celebrating Christmas at Home) - Salvation Army Music Index (samusicindex.com)](https://samusicindex.com/celebrating-christmas-at-home/carol-accompaniments) Salvation Army

**O little town of Bethlehem**

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

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

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

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
Oh, come to us, abide with us
Our Lord Immanuel!