

## Good King Wenceslas

The musical score is written in G major (one sharp) and 4/4 time. It consists of four staves. The first three staves are vocal lines, and the fourth is a piano accompaniment. The chords G, C, and D7 are indicated above the notes.

1. Good King Wenceslas look'd out,  
On the Feast of Stephen;  
When the snow lay round about,  
Deep, and crisp, and even:  
Brightly shone the moon that night,  
Though the frost was cruel,  
When a poor man came in sight,  
Gath'ring winter fuel.
2. "Hither page and stand by me,  
If thou know'st it, telling,  
Yonder peasant, who is he?  
Where and what his dwelling?"  
"Sire, he lives a good league hence.  
Underneath the mountain;  
Right against the forest fence,  
By Saint Agnes' fountain."
3. "Bring me flesh and bring me wine,  
Bring me pine-logs hither:  
Thou and I will see him dine,  
When we bear them thither."  
Page and monarch forth they went,  
Forth they went together;  
Through the rude wind's wild lament,  
And the bitter weather.
4. "Sire, the night is darker now,  
And the wind blows stronger;  
Fails my heart, I know now how,  
I can go no longer."  
"Mark my footsteps, my good page;  
Tread thou in them boldly;  
Thou shalt find the winter's rage  
Freeze thy blood less coldly."
5. In his master's steps he trod,  
Where the snow lay dinted;  
Heat was in the very sod  
Which the Saint had printed.  
Therefore, Christian men, be sure,  
Wealth or rank possessing,  
Ye who now will bless the poor,  
Shall yourselves find blessing.

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The tune for this composed carol is found in *Piae Cantiones* (1582) where it is a carol for spring "*Tempus Adest Floridum*". J. M. Neale's lyrics celebrate the life of Vaclav the Good (germanized as Wenceslas) who ruled Bohemia from 922 to 929. He was an ardent Christian proselytizer who was canonized for political reasons after his murder by supporters of his brother who ruled after him. He is the patron saint of Bohemia (Czech Republic). The carol is not based on any known incident in the life of Vaclav but was probably intended only as an illustration of charity connected with St. Stephen's Day (Boxing Day), a day for giving to the poor.

In plays nicely on the banjo in G tuning and goes well in a medley with "Angels We Have Heard on High" and "Deck the Halls".