

## O Little Town of Bethlehem

E A B7 1. E

5 2. E

9 B7 E A B7 E

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

---

The words of "O Little Town of Bethlehem" are by Phillips Brooks(1835–1893), an Episcopal priest, then rector of Church of the Holy Trinity, Philadelphia and later of Trinity Church, Boston. He was inspired by visiting the village of Bethlehem in 1865. Three years later, he wrote the poem for his church, and his organist Lewis Redner (1831-1908) added the music. Redner's tune, simply titled "St. Louis", is the tune used most often for this carol in the United States. In Great Britain the lyric is usually sung to a tune that Vaughan Williams set the carol to an English traditional melody, "The Ploughboy's Dream", which he re-titled "Forest Green" in 1903. It first appeared in the **English Hymnal** in 1906.

The first printing of the tune was a broadside titled "The Plow-boy's Dream", published by J. Marshall in London in 1795, now in the Bodleian library.

I have included this tune because after singing these words to Redner's chromatic tune, I find "Forest Green" nicely straightforward and singable.