



Christmas
Carols

OF
FAMILY RADIO



Do You Hear What I Hear?

It was October, 1962. People all over the country believed the world was ending. The Cuban Missile Crisis and the Cold War threatened the world with nuclear annihilation.

Amidst the social chaos, Noël Regney and Gloria Shayne Baker wrote a Christmas Carol filled with imagery evoking the current conflict and the nativity story.

The lyrics,

*"A star, a star
Dancing in the night
With a tail as big as a kite,"*

reference both the star leading the magi to Christ and the image of a missile traveling through the night sky.



With such darkness engulfing the nation, the song called upon people everywhere to pray for peace. In its final lines, "Do You Hear What I Hear?" reminds us that we have hope in Jesus—who "will bring us goodness and light."




I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day

Christmas Day, 1863. The Civil War was raging. Brother fought against brother. Our nation was in turmoil. Two years earlier, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's wife had died tragically in a fire. Now he was nursing his son back to health after being wounded in battle.

It was that Christmas, when his world was so broken and peace seemed impossible, that Longfellow wrote a poem called "Christmas Bells". It ended with this call for hope:

*God is not dead, nor doth He sleep;
The wrong shall fail,
The right prevail,
With peace on earth, good-will to men.*

Today we sing *I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day* knowing that in any tragedy there is hope and peace in Jesus.



O Little Town of Bethlehem

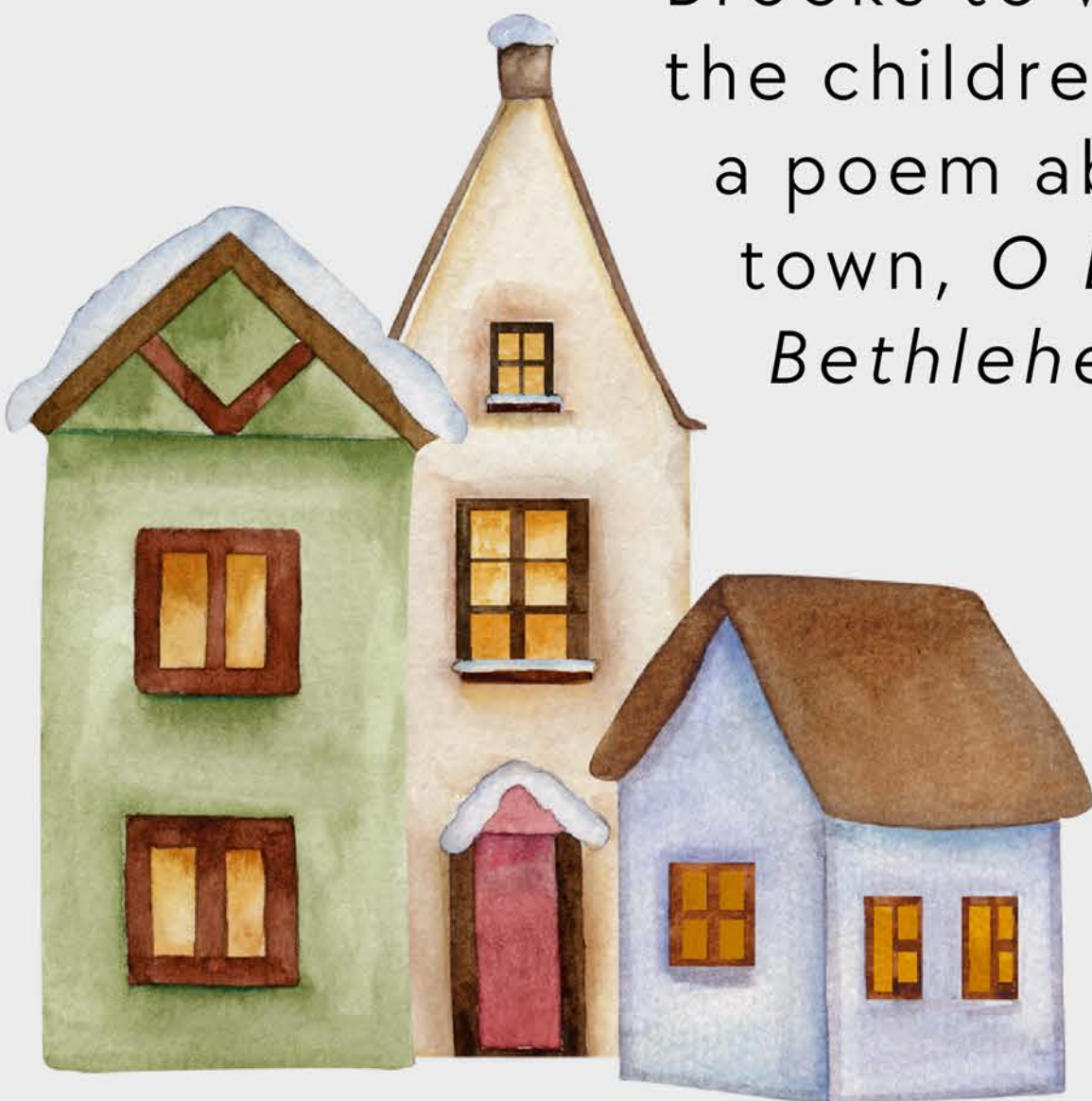


In 1865, Phillips Brooks went on a pilgrimage to Israel. On Christmas Eve he traveled by horseback from Jerusalem all the way to the town of Bethlehem.

He rode through the pastures and hills where shepherds had once seen a great star—where angels had broken the stillness of the night by proclaiming peace on earth.

He made his way to the Church of the Nativity, believed to be the very spot where Jesus was born. There he worshiped during a five-hour Christmas Eve service—all the way until 3 o'clock Christmas morning.

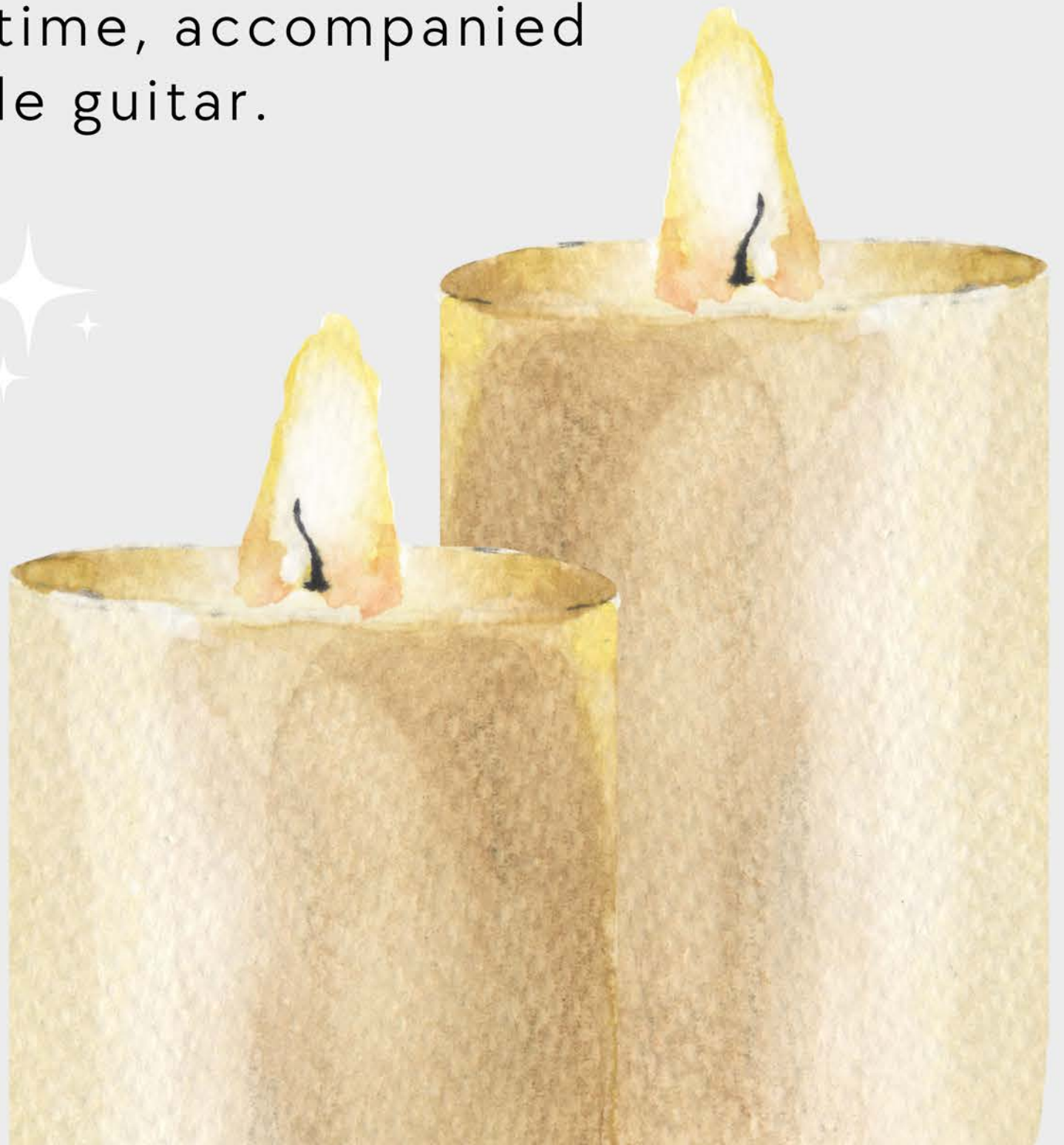
This life-changing experience inspired Brooks to write a poem for the children of his church—a poem about that little town, *O Little Town of Bethlehem*.



Silent Night

It was 1818. Many years ago, shepherds kept watch over peaceful hills like the one Josef stood on now. He looked at the snow-covered Austrian town below and remembered a poem he had written. It would make a great Christmas carol. But he could never come up with a melody that worked with a traditional church organ.

That very morning, the church organ fell into dis-repair. There would be no church music that Christmas—unless they broke with tradition. That same evening, Josef Mohr and Franz Gruber performed "Silent Night" for the first time, accompanied by a single guitar.



Go, Tell It on The Mountain



In 1871, Fisk University, a historically Black university, was less than a decade old and deep in debt. As a last-ditch effort, the school put together a group of singers to tour the country and raise money.

At first, the young singers didn't want to sing the spirituals of their parents. They associated the songs with slavery and struggle. But, at the urging of a professor, they began singing the worship songs on tour and the spirituals became a resounding hit!

John Wesley Work, Jr., a professor at Fisk University, wrote down and cataloged the spirituals. His work saved these worship songs from being lost forever.

One particular saved song became a Christmas tradition when Professor Work began taking his students caroling before sunrise, as they proclaimed the good news of *Go, Tell It on The Mountain* —that Jesus Christ is born!





We Three Kings of Orient Are

John Hopkins Jr. went to college to study law. But he soon became so enraptured with the work of God that he decided to go to seminary instead.

In 1857, he was asked to write a song for his seminary's Christmas pageant. John was inspired by the "wise men from the East" in Matthew 2. Although the Bible never mentioned the number of wise men, Hopkins wrote the carol for three men to sing, each explaining the significance of their gift to Jesus.

Gold for the King, frankincense for the Deity, myrrh for the Sacrifice.

Today, "We Three Kings" reminds us that our Savior came as king, deity, and sacrifice. Jesus is the greatest gift anyone could ever receive.



What Child Is This?

William Chatterton Dix was the successful manager of an insurance company in Scotland. But in 1865, at the young age of 29, he grew very ill and could no longer work.

He became bedridden and suffered from severe depression. But this suffering caused him to cry out to God for hope. It was during this time that he wrote some of his most beloved hymns, including a poem called "The Manger Throne."

It was this poem that asked a very important question—a question the shepherds must have asked themselves when they found the baby on His mother's lap, born in a humble stable—a question we now sing . . .
"What Child is this?"

