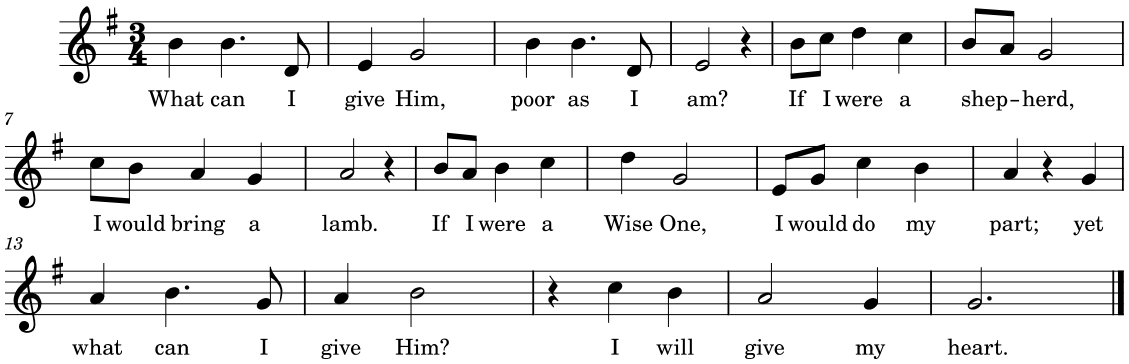
Westminster
Presbyterian Church
353 E. Pine St., Wooster, OH 44691
330-263-2398 / wpcwooster@gmail.com

First Sunday in Advent
November 26, 2023

Welcome and Announcements — **Rev. Dr. Enikö Ferenczy**

Let us open our hearts and minds to the rhythm of the gathering music as it centers us in God's presence for worship.

Advent Prelude



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Becoming Present — **An Advent Ritual** — **Linda and Greg Barbu**

Leader: Advent can be filled with worry about finding the perfect Christmas gifts. Deep down we want people in our lives to know they are special and that we love them. But sometimes we overlook the greatest gift of all… our very presence.

The 19th century poet, Christina Rosetti, wrote "In the Bleak Midwinter" that became a popular Christmas carol. Modern composer, Mark Hayes, set the last verse of that poem to music as our theme song for our Advent/Christmas series. It reminds us that even if we are feeling poor — in resources, in body or spirit — we can simply be a gift of presence, we can give our hearts.

The congregation joins into song.

What can I give Him, poor as I am?
If I were a shepherd, I would bring a lamb;
If I were a Wise [One], I would do my part;
Yet what can I give Him: I will give my heart.

Reader: We unwrap a present on this first Sunday of Advent
with great anticipation for the gift that God will reveal.
People: **We open our hearts as we open the gift!**

The gift is unwrapped…

Reader: The promise of Hope is the Divine Gift we receive.
People: **And what will we do with it?**

The box is opened and the candle from it is placed on the Advent wreath and lit.

Reader: The gift of hope is an essential survival tool
because it reminds us that the hard times do not have the last word.
Hope is not simply a wish.
Hope calls us into action based on a belief that things can be different.
We can work to bring about the better world that we hope for.
People: **We light this Candle of Hope as a sign that we will be**
Present with Hope in the world.

The congregation joins into song.

What can I give Him, poor as I am?
If I were a shepherd, I would bring a lamb;
If I were a Wise [One], I would do my part;
Yet what can I give Him: I will give my heart.

Prayer of Presence

Let us pray:

Holy Living Light of God,
you are our Hopeful Presence.
Let this hope grow in our lives each day,
so we can be a Present of Hope to others.
Unwrap and open our hearts.
May it be so.

Amen.

Opening Hymn No. 82 "Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus" *Hyfrydol

Prayer of Illumination Rev. Dr. Enikö Ferenczy

First Readings

Psalm 80: 1-2

Shepherd of Israel, hear us,
you who lead Joseph like a flock!
You who are enthroned on the cherubim, shine out!
Shine out before Ephraim, Benjamin and Manasseh!
Awaken your power and come to save us!
O God, return to us — let your face smile on us,
and we will be saved!

1 Corinthians 1: 4-7

I continually thank my God for you because of the gift bestowed on you in Christ Jesus, in whom you have been richly endowed with every gift of speech and knowledge. In the same way, the testimony about Christ has been so confirmed among you that you lack no spiritual gift, as you wait for the revelation of our Savior Jesus Christ.

Gospel Reading *Mark 13: 24-37*

"But in those days, after that time of distress, 'the sun will be darkened, the moon will lose its brightness, the stars will fall from the sky and the powers in the heavens will be shaken.' Then they will see the Promised One coming in the clouds with great power and glory; then the angels will be sent to gather the chosen from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven. Take the fig tree as a parable: as soon as its twigs grow supple and its leaves come out, you know that summer is near. In the same way, when you see these things happening, know that the Promised One is near, right at the door. The truth is, before this generation has passed away, all these things will have taken place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away. But as for that day or hour, nobody knows it — neither the angels of heaven, nor the Only Begotten — no one but Abba God. Be constantly on the watch! Stay awake! You do not know when the appointed time will come. It is like people traveling abroad. They leave their home and put the workers in charge, each with a certain task, and those who watch at the front gate are ordered to stay on the alert. So stay alert! You do not

know when the owner of the house is coming, whether at dusk, at midnight, when the cock crows or at early dawn. Do not let the owner come suddenly and catch you asleep. What I say to you, I say to all: stay alert!"

Sermon **Being Present With Hope** **Rev. Dr. Enikö Ferenczy**

Hymn No. 123** **"It Came Upon the Midnight Clear"** ***Carol

Sharing of Joys and Concerns **Linda and Greg Barbu**

Prayer of the People **Linda and Greg Barbu**

"Right Here, Right Now"

Right here and right now we open our senses
to see and perceive the gifts we've been given,
to know and believe that what we must do
is open our hearts to let all gifts flow through.

Leader: In our time of prayers during this Advent and Christmas season, we will take the opportunity to practice being fully present in the moment. Mindfulness has deep roots in our Judeo-Christian tradition. The scriptures say "be still and know that I am God" and, as we have heard, Jesus speaks often about "staying awake" to what God is up to. Prayer is an intentional way to stay awake and alert to the presence of God among us.

We will begin our prayers with three questions, each followed by a short silence. Focusing intentionally on thoughts and memories can be a kind of prayer, bringing our lives into a conversation with the Holy. I invite you to take a deep breath and close your eyes if you are comfortable doing that.

The first question is this: Who was a gift of presence to you this week? Did you experience their attention in a way that felt like a special connection? Take a moment to recall this in your mind's eye, seeing it emerge like opening a gift. If you cannot recall such a moment, it is OK... this week you will notice these moments more deeply.

[pause for a bit]

The second question is this: How did you offer yourself as a gift of presence? What did it feel like to extend your attentiveness and availability beyond yourself? Did you notice how it made a difference to someone else for you to be truly present to them?

[pause for a bit]

The third question is this: Is it possible that God's presence is felt more acutely in these moments when we truly tend to one another? What could you do this coming week that would allow God's gift of Hope to flow through you to someone else? It may be as simple as finding opportunities to speak an encouraging word. Or as complex as actually lifting up someone's circumstances through volunteering or donating.

[pause for a bit]

Right here and right now we open our senses
to see and perceive the gifts we've been given,
to know and believe that what we must do
is open our hearts to let all gifts flow through.

In this prayerful, present moment, we train our attention on those who are in distress.
We pray this week for...
[continue with the prayer concerns of your community and the world]

In this prayerful, present moment we ask you, Christ Jesus, the Greatest Gift of All, to help us
savor our journey toward the celebration of Christmas.
Help us recognize and create moments of sweet presence
rather than filling the voids with the things that do not last.
Help us to stop, notice what we are experiencing,
and accept it with open hearts and minds.
In doing this, we allow you to meet us
in the right here, right now, right where we are.
Amen.

***Closing Hymn No. 765** **"May the God of Hope Go with Us"** *Argentina*

Benediction **Rev. Dr. Enikö Ferenczy**

Postlude **"Lift Up Your Heads, Ye Mighty Gates"** *T. WIlliams, arr. T Bliss*

Lift up your heads, ye mighty gates; behold the King of glory waits;
the King of kings is drawing near; the Savior of the world is here.
Fling wide the portals of your heart; make it a temple, set apart
from earthly use for heaven's employ, adorned with prayer and love and joy.

The service continues with fellowship.

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*Liturgy is from the Worship Design Studio.
*Hymns are from the Glory to God Hymnal.
*Music: Tom Shaw, organ
*Sunday Service Assistant/flowers: Linda Barbu

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To continue to assure the safety of all, the offering plate is located on a table in the back of the sanctuary. If you are moved to support our ministry, we invite you to place your gifts in the plate.

GIVE NOW

You may also give online through our website by clicking on the "GIVE NOW" button at the bottom of the home page. Your generosity helps us to fulfill our calling to engage in God's transformative mission in our community.

We offer our gifts of money, talents, time, and energy—the gifts of our lives in gratitude for God's relentless love and grace for all. These gifts represent our commitment to heed God's call and join God in God's mission of healing and transforming our world.

Upcoming Events

Sunday, Nov. 26
- Worship Service – 10 am – Mackey Hall
- Wooster Friends Meeting – 10.30 am – The Meeting Place

Monday, Nov. 27
- Troop 61 – 6 pm – Mackey Hall

Thursday, Nov. 30
- Dance and Exercise – 8.30 am – The Meeting Place

Sunday, Dec. 3
- Worship Service – 10 am – Mackey Hall
- Wooster Friends Meeting – 10.30 am – The Meeting Place
- Alternative Gift Market at First Presbyterian in Bruch Hall – 11.30 am-2 pm
  WPC Palestine olive oil and soap will be there.

Westminster Presbyterian Church
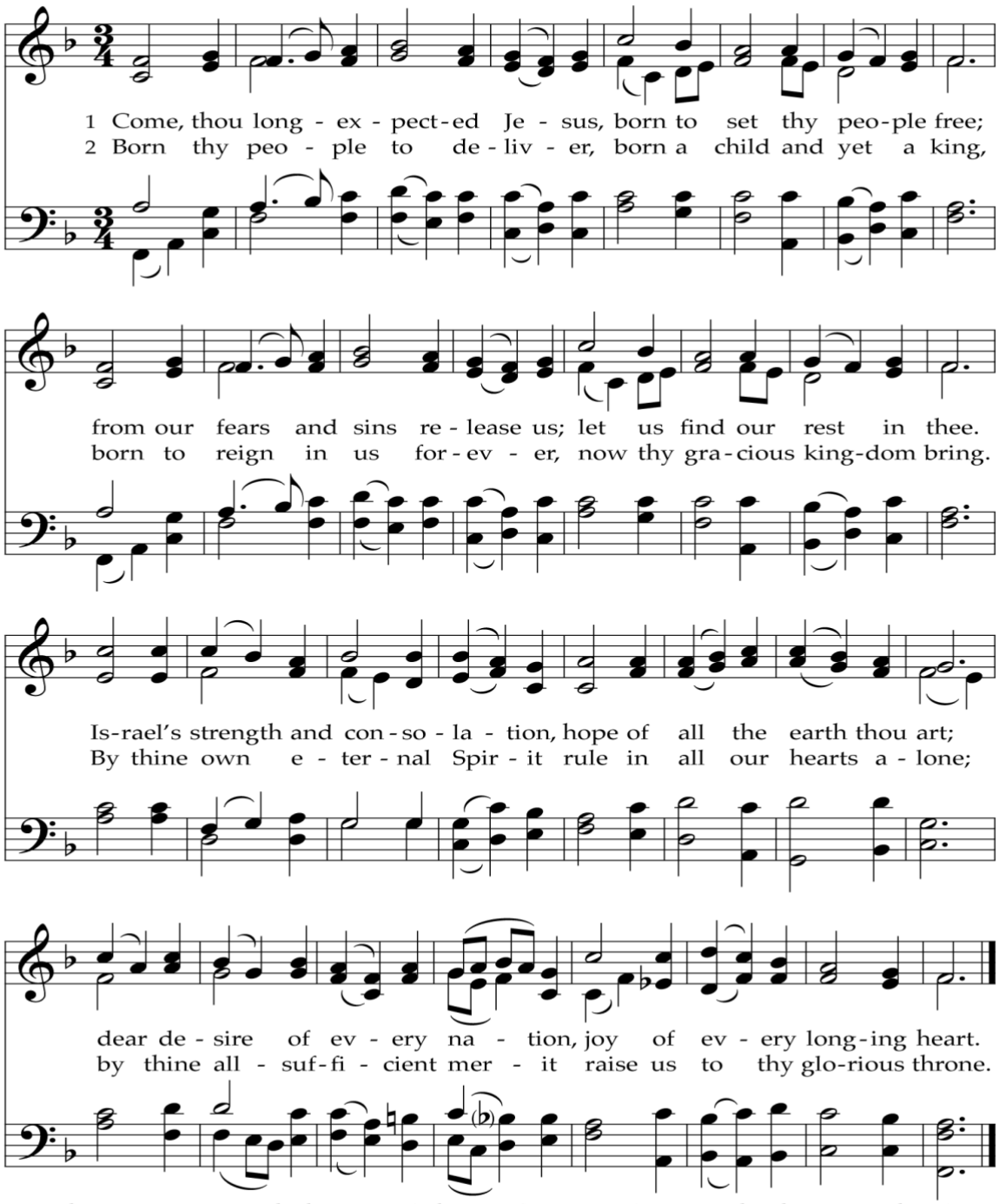
Pastor Rev. Dr. Enikő Ferenczy
Minister of Music Rev. Dr. Thomas Shaw
Office Administrator Rev. Dr. James Henery
AV Assistant/Event Steward Tony Mendiola

Office Hours: Monday through Friday, 10 a.m.-2.p.m.

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Westminster Presbyterian Church strives to be a safe place for all people to worship regardless of ethnicity, creed, age, cultural background, gender identity, or sexual orientation.

Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus 82

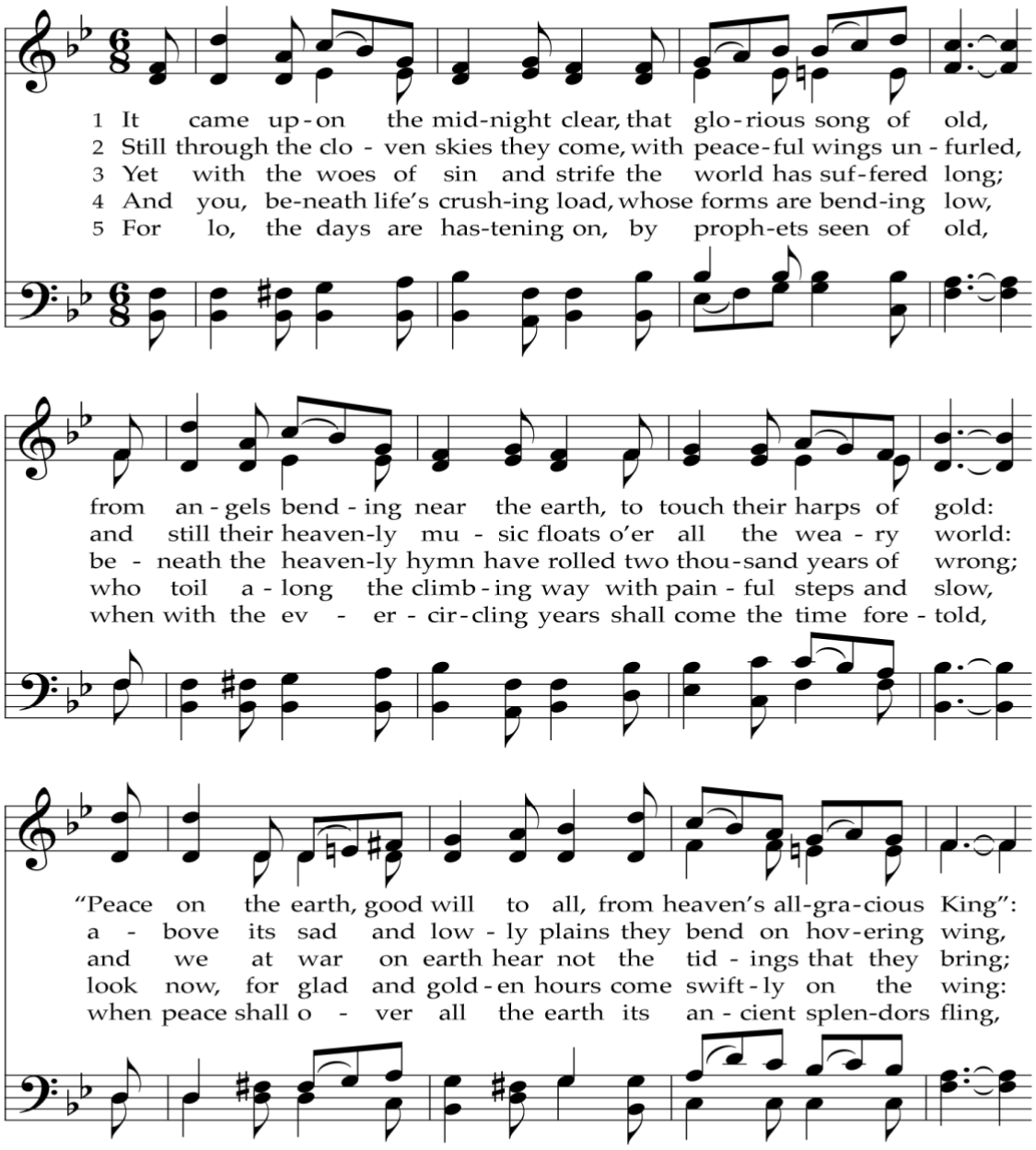


With its opening "Come," this hymn sounds the note of entreaty and invitation that characterizes the Advent season (from the Latin *adventus* = "coming"). Its blending of memory and hope helps us to give voice to our present faith as we stand between the past and the future.

TEXT: Charles Wesley, 1744
MUSIC: Rowland Hugh Prichard, 1830; harm. Ralph Vaughan Williams, 1906

HYFRYDOL
8.7.8.7.D
(alternate tune: STUTTGART, 83)

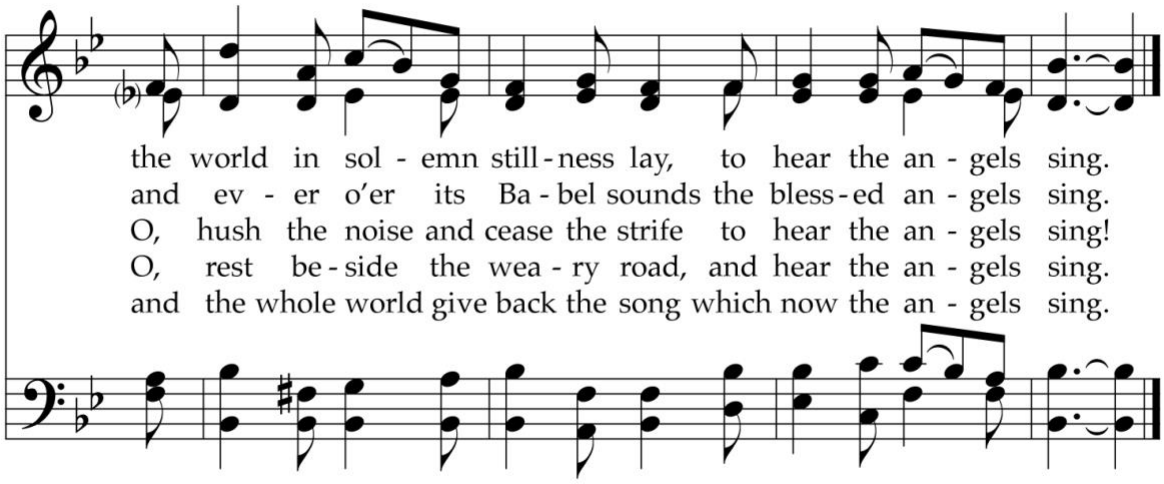
123 It Came Upon the Midnight Clear



The "it" of the first line of this text by a Unitarian minister does not refer to the birth of Jesus, but to "that glorious song of old," the angelic tidings of peace on earth. The restored third stanza laments how often the noise of human strife has obscured that message.
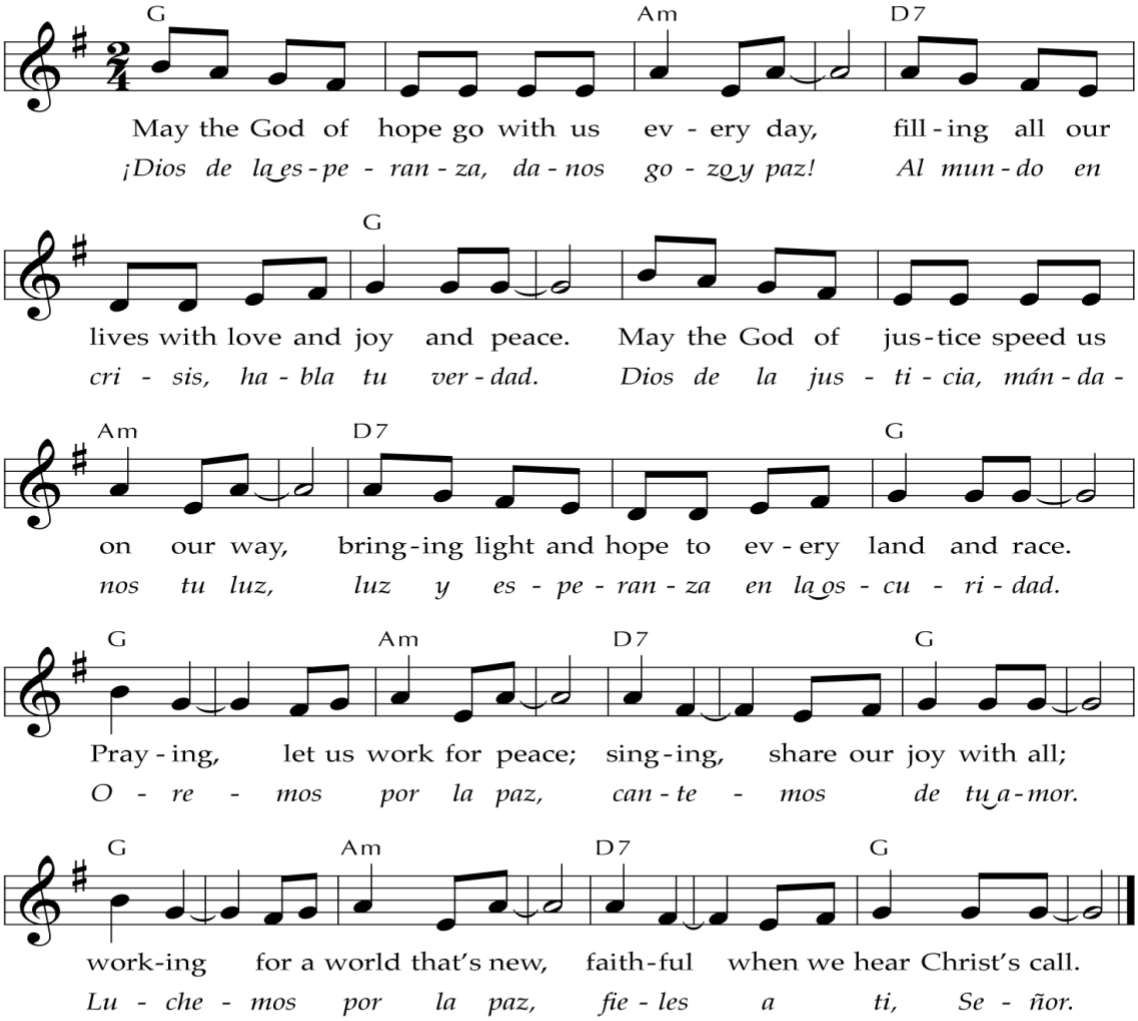
TEXT: Edmund Hamilton Sears, 1849, alt.
MUSIC: Richard Storrs Willis, 1850

CAROL
CMD
(alternate tune: NOEL)


the world in sol - emn still - ness lay, to hear the an - gels sing.
and ev - er o'er its Ba - bel sounds the bless - ed an - gels sing.
O, hush the noise and cease the strife to hear the an - gels sing!
O, rest be - side the wea - ry road, and hear the an - gels sing.
and the whole world give back the song which now the an - gels sing.

May the God of Hope Go with Us 765

Song of Hope / *Canto de esperanza*



This Argentine folk melody sets Spanish and English words, both created by a PC(USA) missionary with much Latin American experience. The two versions complement each other: the Spanish text offering a prayer to God, and the English one providing inspiration for the singers.

TEXT: Alvin Schutmaat, 1984
MUSIC: Argentine folk melody

ARGENTINA
11.11.11.11 with refrain