

December
2022

POETRY

Beautiful and fun
Christmas poetry to read
and memorize
as a family

HYMNS & SONGS

A hymn and carol for
each week leading up to
Christmas

OTHER

Old and new testament
scripture readings to
guide you thru the
Christmas story

***“The thing is, to keep your eye upon words
and wait to feel their force and beauty;***

*and, when words are so fit that no other words can be put in their
places, so few that none can be left out without spoiling the sense,
and so fresh and musical that they delight you,
then you may be sure that you are reading Literature,
whether in prose or poetry.”*

Charlotte Mason

*"Blessings be with them and eternal praise,
who gave us nobler loves, and nobler cares -
the poets, who on earth have made us heirs
of truth and pure delight by heavenly lays."*

Wordsworth

DECEMBER OVERVIEW

WEEK 1

Poetry | Christmas Bells

Hymn | Lo, How a Rose Ever Blooming

Bible | Isaiah 7:14 & Luke 1:26-38

Carol | Carol of the Bells

WEEK 2

Poetry | Christmas Carol

Hymn | Come, Though Long Expected Jesus

Bible | Isaiah 9:2,6-7 & Luke 2:1-20

Carol | God Rest Ye Merry, Gentlemen

WEEK 3

Poetry | A Visit from St. Nicholas, 1823

Hymn | Of the Father's Love Begotten

Bible | Isaiah 40:1-8 & Matthew 2: 1-12

Folk Song | Star in the East

PRAYER

By Henry Thornton

O Lord, God Almighty, you are the creator and governor of the world, and have abundantly provided for the various wants of your creatures; you have ordered the day and the night to succeed each other, and when you have refreshed man with sleep, require him to pursue his work until the evening; you have also ordained that he shall be born to trouble, and have appointed the grave to be the end of all living - we thank you, that, while you have thus placed our lot in this life, you have not left us without hope in the world which is to come. We adore you for the gift of Jesus Christ your Son, by whose gospel, life and immortality are brought to light, and we are fully instructed in all those things which concern our salvation. We bless you for the pardon of sin, through faith in a redeemer; for the guidance of your providence; and for the consolations of your Spirit. We thank you for your hold Sabbaths; for your written Word; and for all the other means of grace, which you have entrusted to us. Amen.

WEEK ONE

CHRISTMAS BELLS

By Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

I heard the bells on Christmas Day
Their old, familiar carols play,
And wild and sweet
The words repeat
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!

And thought how, as the day had come,
The belfries of all Christendom
Had rolled along
The unbroken song
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!

Till ringing, singing on its way,
The world revolved from night to day,
A voice, a chime,
A chant sublime
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!

Then from each black, accursed mouth
The cannon thundered in the South,
And with the sound
The carols drowned
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!

It was as if an earthquake rent
The hearth-stones of a continent,
And made forlorn
The households born
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!

And in despair I bowed my head;
"There is no peace on earth," I said;
"For hate is strong,
And mocks the song
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!"

Then pealed the bells more loud and deep:
"God is not dead, nor doth He sleep;
The Wrong shall fail,
The Right prevail,
With peace on earth, good-will to men."

LO, HOW A ROSE EVER BLOOMING

German hymn, 1500

"A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from his roots a branch will bear fruit."
Isaiah 11:1

Lo, how a Rose e'er blooming from tender
stem hath sprung, from Jesse's lineage coming,
as men of old have sung. It came, a flow'ret bright,
amid the cold of winter, when half spent was the night.

Isaiah 'twas foretold it, the rose I
have in mind; with Mary we behold it,
the virgin mother kind. To show God's love aright
she bore to men a Savior, when half-spent was the night.

The shepherds heard the story, proclaimed by
angels bright, how Christ, the Lord of glory,
was born on earth this night. To Bethlehem they sped
and in the manger found him, as angel heralds said.

This flow'r, whose fragrance tender with sweetness
fills the air, dispels with glorious splendor
the darkness ev'rywhere. True man, yet very God;
from sin and death he saves us and lightens ev'ry load.

O Savior, child of Mary, who felt our
human woe; O Savior, King of glory,
who dost our weakness know, bring us at length, we pray,
to the bright courts of heaven and to the endless day.

ISAIAH 7:14

ESV

Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.

LUKE 1:26-38

ESV

In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. And the virgin's name was Mary. And he came to her and said, "Greetings, O favored one, the Lord is with you!" But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and tried to discern what sort of greeting this might be. And the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end."

And Mary said to the angel, "How will this be, since I am a virgin?"

And the angel answered her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God. And behold, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son, and this is the sixth month with her who was called barren. For nothing will be impossible with God." And Mary said, "Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word." And the angel departed from her.

CAROL OF THE BELLS

Hark! how the bells
Sweet silver bells
All seem to say,
"Throw cares away."
Christmas is here
Bringing good cheer
To young and old
Meek and the bold

Ding, dong, ding, dong
That is their song
With joyful ring
All caroling
One seems to hear
Words of good cheer
From ev'rywhere
Filling the air

Oh how they pound,
Raising the sound,
O'er hill and dale,
Telling their tale,
Gaily they ring
While people sing
Songs of good cheer
Christmas is here

Merry, merry, merry, merry Christmas
Merry, merry, merry, merry Christmas

On, on they send
On without end
Their joyful tone
To ev'ry home
Ding, dong, ding, dong.

WEEK TWO

CHRISTMAS CAROL

By Paul Laurence Dunbar

Ring out, ye bells!
All Nature swells
With gladness at the wondrous story,—
The world was lorn,
But Christ is born
To change our sadness into glory.

Sing, earthlings, sing!
To-night a King
Hath come from heaven's high throne to bless us.
The outstretched hand
O'er all the land
Is raised in pity to caress us.

Come at his call;
Be joyful all;
Away with mourning and with sadness!
The heavenly choir
With holy fire
Their voices raise in songs of gladness.

The darkness breaks
And Dawn awakes,
Her cheeks suffused with youthful blushes.
The rocks and stones
In holy tones
Are singing sweeter than the thrushes.

Then why should we
In silence be,
When Nature lends her voice to praises;
When heaven and earth
Proclaim the truth
Of Him for whom that lone star blazes?

No, be not still,
But with a will
Strike all your harps and set them ringing;
On hill and heath
Let every breath
Throw all its power into singing!

COME, THOU LONG EXPECTED JESUS

Charles Wesley and Mark Hunt

"Waiting for the consolation of Israel."
Luke 2:25

Come, thou long expected Jesus, born to set thy people free;
from our fears and sins release us let us find our rest in thee.
Israel's strength and consolation, hope of all the earth thou art,
dear Desire of every nation, joy of ev'ry longing heart.

Joy to those who long to see thee, Dayspring from on high, appear;
come, thou promised Rod of Jesse, of thy birth we long to hear!
O'er the hills the angels singing news, glad tidings of a birth:
"Go to him, your praises bringing; Christ the Lord has come to earth."

Come to earth to taste our sadness, he whose glories knew no end;
by his life he brings us gladness, our Redeemer, Shepherd, Friend.
Leaving riches without number, born within a cattle stall;
this the everlasting wonder, Christ was born the Lord of all.

Born thy people to deliver, born a child and yet a king,
born to reign in us forever, now thy gracious kingdom bring.
By thine own eternal Spirit rule in all our hearts alone;
by thine all-sufficient merit, raise us to thy glorious throne.

ISAIAH 9:2, 6-7

ESV

The people who walked in darkness
have seen a great light;
those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness,
on them has light shone.

For to us a child is born,
to us a son is given;
and the government shall be upon his shoulder,
and his name shall be called
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

Of the increase of his government and of peace
there will be no end,
on the throne of David and over his kingdom,
to establish it and to uphold it
with justice and with righteousness
from this time forth and forevermore.
The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.

LUKE 2:1-20

ESV

In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration when Quirinius was governor of Syria. And all went to be registered, each to his own town. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the town of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, to be registered with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child. And while they were there, the time came for her to give birth. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with great fear. And the angel said to them, "Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger." And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying,

"Glory to God in the highest,
and on earth peace among those with whom he is
pleased!"

When the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us." And they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in a manger. And when they saw it, they made known the saying that had been told them concerning this child. And all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them. But Mary treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart. And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

GOD REST YE MERRY, GENTLEMEN

God rest you merry, gentlemen,
Let nothing you dismay,
Remember Christ our Saviour
Was born on Christmas day
To save us all from Satan's power,
When we had gone astray.
O tidings of comfort and joy, comfort and joy.
O tidings of comfort and joy.

From God our heav'nly Father
A blessed angel came;
And unto certain shepherds,
Brought tidings of the same;
How that in Bethlehem was born
The Son of God by name.
O tidings of comfort and joy, comfort and joy.
O tidings of comfort and joy.

"Fear not, then, " said the angel,
"Let nothing you affright;
this day is born a Savior
of a pure virgin bright,
to free all those who trust in him
from Satan's pow'r and might."
O tidings of comfort and joy, comfort and joy.
O tidings of comfort and joy.

The shepherds at those tidings
rejoiced much in mind,
and left their flocks a feeding,
in tempest, storm, and wind:
and went to Bethlehem straight-way,
the Son of God to find.
O tidings of comfort and joy, comfort and joy.
O tidings of comfort and joy.

WEEK THREE

A VISIT FROM ST NICHOLAS, 1823

By Moore

'Twas the night before Christmas, when all through the house
Not a creature was stirring, not even a mouse;
The stockings were hung by the chimney with care,
In hopes that St. Nicholas soon would be there;
The children were nestled all snug in their beds;
While visions of sugar-plums danced in their heads;
And mamma in her 'kerchief, and I in my cap,
Had just settled our brains for a long winter's nap,
When out on the lawn there arose such a clatter,
I sprang from my bed to see what was the matter.
Away to the window I flew like a flash,
Tore open the shutters and threw up the sash.
The moon on the breast of the new-fallen snow,
Gave a lustre of midday to objects below,
When what to my wondering eyes did appear,
But a miniature sleigh and eight tiny rein-deer,
With a little old driver so lively and quick,
I knew in a moment he must be St. Nick.
More rapid than eagles his coursers they came,
And he whistled, and shouted, and called them by name:
"Now, Dasher! now, Dancer! now Prancer and Vixen!
On, Comet! on, Cupid! on, Donner and Blitzen!
To the top of the porch! to the top of the wall!
Now dash away! dash away! dash away all!"
As leaves that before the wild hurricane fly,
When they meet with an obstacle, mount to the sky;
So up to the housetop the coursers they flew
With the sleigh full of toys, and St. Nicholas too—
And then, in a twinkling, I heard on the roof
The prancing and pawing of each little hoof.

'As I drew in my head, and was turning around,
Down the chimney St. Nicholas came with a bound.
He was dressed all in fur, from his head to his foot,
And his clothes were all tarnished with ashes and soot;
A bundle of toys he had flung on his back,
And he looked like a pedler just opening his pack.
His eyes—how they twinkled! his dimples, how merry!
His cheeks were like roses, his nose like a cherry!
His droll little mouth was drawn up like a bow,
And the beard on his chin was as white as the snow;
The stump of a pipe he held tight in his teeth,
And the smoke, it encircled his head like a wreath;
He had a broad face and a little round belly
That shook when he laughed, like a bowl full of jelly.
He was chubby and plump, a right jolly old elf,
And I laughed when I saw him, in spite of myself;
A wink of his eye and a twist of his head
Soon gave me to know I had nothing to dread;
He spoke not a word, but went straight to his work,
And filled all the stockings; then turned with a jerk,
And laying his finger aside of his nose,
And giving a nod, up the chimney he rose;
He sprang to his sleigh, to his team gave a whistle,
And away they all flew like the down of a thistle.
But I heard him exclaim, ere he drove out of sight—
“Happy Christmas to all, and to all a good night!”

OF THE FATHER'S LOVE BEGOTTEN

Aurelius Clemens Prudentius, 348-413

*"In the beginning was the Word...The Word was made flesh...and we held his glory,
the glory as of the only begotten of the Father."*

John 1:1, 14

Of the Father's love begotten, ere the worlds began to be,
He is Alpha and Omega, He the source, the ending He,
Of the things that are, that have been, and that future years shall see,
Evermore and evermore!

O that birth forever blessed, when the Virgin, full of grace,
By the Holy Ghost conceiving, bore the Savior of our race;
And the Babe, the world's Redeemer, first revealed His sacred face,
Evermore and evermore!

This is He whom heav'n taught singers sang of old with one accord;
Whom the voices of the prophets promised in their faithful word;
Now He shines, the long expected, let creation praise its Lord,
Evermore and evermore!

O ye heights of heaven adore Him; angel hosts, His praises sing;
Powers, dominions, bow before Him, and extol our God and King!
Let no tongue on earth be silent, every voice in concert sing,
Evermore and evermore!

Christ, to Thee with God the Father, and, O Holy Ghost, to Thee,
Hymn and chant with high thanksgiving, and unwearied praises be:
Honor, glory, and dominion, and eternal victory,
Evermore and evermore!

ISAIAH 40:1-8

ESV

Comfort, comfort my people, says your God.
Speak tenderly to Jerusalem,
and cry to her
that her warfare is ended,
that her iniquity is pardoned,
that she has received from the LORD's hand
double for all her sins.

A voice cries:
"In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD;
make straight in the desert a highway for our God.
Every valley shall be lifted up,
and every mountain and hill be made low;
the uneven ground shall become level,
and the rough places a plain.
And the glory of the LORD shall be revealed,
and all flesh shall see it together,
for the mouth of the LORD has spoken."

A voice says, "Cry!"
And I said, "What shall I cry?"
All flesh is grass,
and all its beauty is like the flower of the field.
The grass withers, the flower fades
when the breath of the LORD blows on it;
surely the people are grass.
The grass withers, the flower fades,
but the word of our God will stand forever.

MATTHEW 2:1-12

ESV

Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the east came to Jerusalem, saying, “Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him.” When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him; and assembling all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born. They told him, “In Bethlehem of Judea, for so it is written by the prophet:

“‘And you, O Bethlehem, in the land of Judah,
are by no means least among the rulers of Judah;
for from you shall come a ruler
who will shepherd my people Israel.’”

Then Herod summoned the wise men secretly and ascertained from them what time the star had appeared. And he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, “Go and search diligently for the child, and when you have found him, bring me word, that I too may come and worship him.” After listening to the king, they went on their way. And behold, the star that they had seen when it rose went before them until it came to rest over the place where the child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy. And going into the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they fell down and worshiped him. Then, opening their treasures, they offered him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh. And being warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they departed to their own country by another way.

STAR IN THE EAST

Southern Harmony, 1854

Hail, the blest morn, see the great Mediator,
Down from region of glory descend!
Shepherds, go worship the babe in the manger,
Lo, for his guard the bright angels attend.

Chorus:

Brightest and best of the sons of the morning!
Dawn on our darkness, and lend us thine aid;
Star in the east, the horizon adorning,
Guide where our infant Redeemer was laid.

Cold on his cradle the dewdrops are shining;
Low lies his bed, with the beasts of the stall;
Angels adore him, in slumbers reclining,
Wise men and shepherds before him do fall.
(chorus)

Say, shall we yield him, in costly devotion,
Odours of Eden and offering divine,
Gems from the mountain, and pearls from the ocean,
Myrrh from the forest and gold from the mine?
(chorus)

Vainly we offer each ample oblation,
Vainly with gold we his favour secure.
Richer by far is the heart's adoration:
Dearer to God are the prayers of the poor.
(chorus)