



Christmas Carols and Stories

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—Imaginary Stories—

Typed by: CQ (unedited and proofread)

Art by: Fleur Celest, Naomi & Leiana

Titles:

Annie Finds A Way

Joyful Joyelle

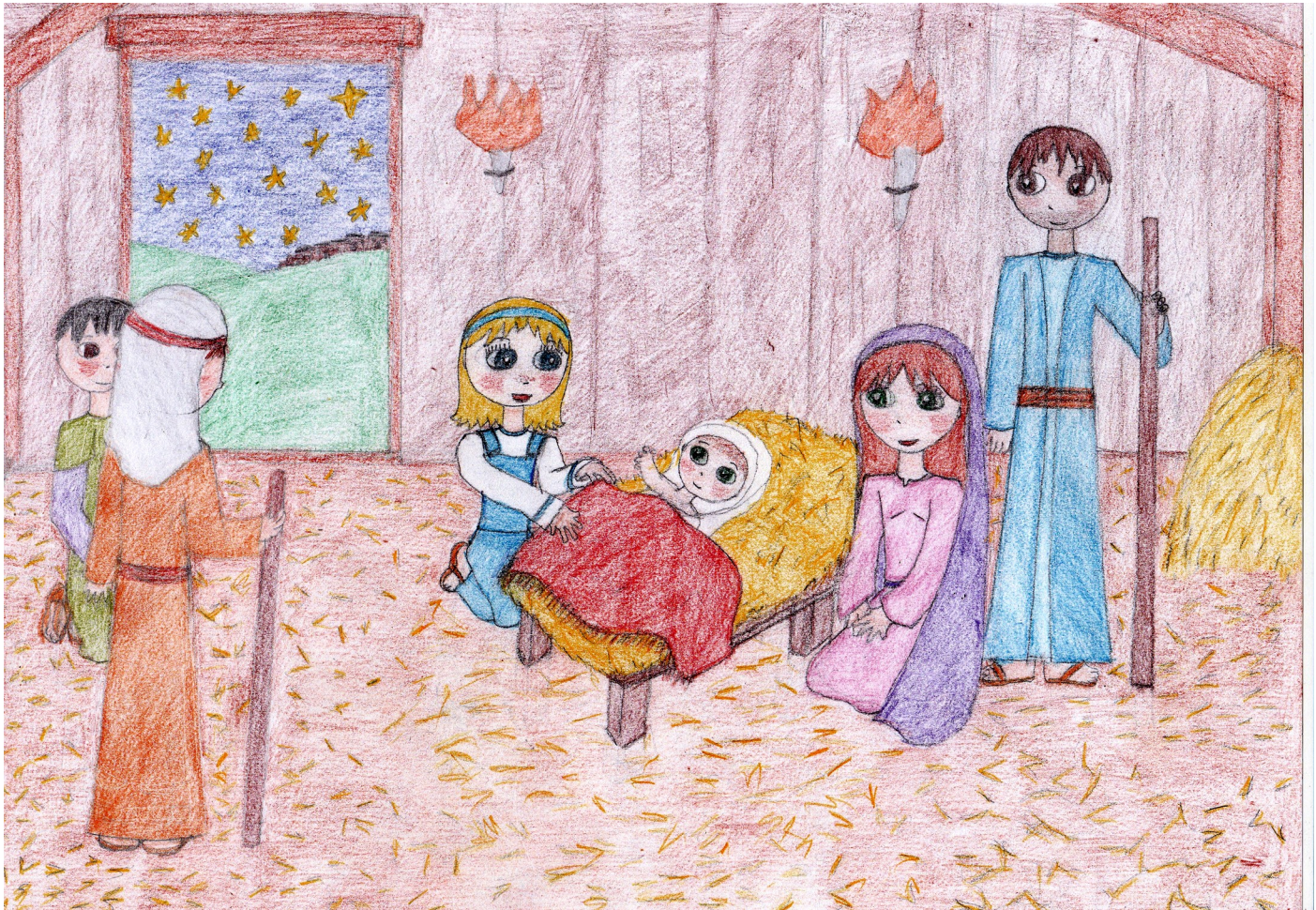
The Donkey who could!

The Drummer's Beat

Noella Sings Noel

Harold can hear

Siren night





Annie Finds a Way

“Away in a manger, no crib for a bed, the little Lord Jesus...” Annie was singing as she lay in her bed at night. She looked over at the little nativity set that she had helped to make and put up with her family. Then she thought of her nice soft pillow and warm blankets.

“I wish I could have been there when Jesus was born,” she thought. “I would have liked to help him have a nice warm bed too. I could have brought Him a blanket and covered Him.”

Annie was thinking about this as she fell asleep.

Then her dream began.

She was living in Bethlehem and was the daughter of the caretakers of an inn. Her job was to clear away the dirty dishes after people had eaten, and to bring bread and water to those who wanted it.

One night she heard the voice of someone, who she later learned was Joseph. She peeked out through a window and saw a lady beside him. They seemed so tired and needed a place to stay. She felt sad that there wasn’t room in the inn on that night for them to stay.



Later on in the evening, after she had gone to bed, she heard some excited voices out in the streets. She heard words like “angels” and “Christ the Lord” and “baby”. She sat up in her bed and wondered what was going on. She felt like there was something very important for her to see and do.

Annie got up and followed one of the shepherds who were telling this exciting news, and asked them what had happened. He pointed to a stable nearby, and said that there was a little baby, born that night, and he was God’s son.

Annie wrapped her shawl around her shoulders and ran quickly to the stable, and peeked in. There she saw just what the man had said. There was a woman, Mary, patting and smiling at a little baby in a manger. She knocked and then quietly entered.

Kneeling down she looked at the little tiny baby. Mary smiled at her and whispered the baby’s name. Annie whispered His name to Him, “Jesus, Jesus”. Then she took her shawl off and gave it to the baby, and placed it on Him to make Him warmer.

She felt so happy that she could see Jesus and that she could give Him something He needed too. After gazing for awhile, she happily skipped away and crept back into her bed.





When she woke the next morning from her dream, she sang the song once again. "...I love thee Lord Jesus...and stay by my bedside till morning is nigh."

It had been a fun adventure, to take a trip to see Jesus when He was born and give a gift to Him.

Later on in the day as she noticed her twin toddler brother and sister she saw they both wanted to play with the dolly that they had been pretending was baby Jesus.

"Hmmm, what should I do?" Annie thought.

"I want to keep giving gifts to Jesus, even if I don't see Him with my eyes here and now. Maybe the little children are like the baby Jesus who I helped in my dream. I know what I can do!" Annie thought and went quickly to her room.

She grabbed her own dolly, and went to share it with the little children. Now they both had one to play with.

"Thank you, Annie," said mother. "That was really kind of you."

Mother gave Annie a big hug and said, "Thank you for making the little ones happy. You're such a kind older sister to them."

Annie smiled, and said,

“I guess still can give gifts to Jesus. If I see someone needs something or even wants something, and it’s good for them, I’ll do what I can do to help them.”

Then she heard Jesus whispering to her heart:

“Yes, Annie! There are lots of ways to show your love for Me. Every time you help and are kind to someone it’s like giving Me a big new present, because it makes Me so happy!”







Joyful Joyelle

Joyelle was sitting in the living room, watching her younger brother playing with cars and trucks. She had a coloring activity of some Christmas coloring pages. There were cheery songs playing.

“Joy to the World” began. It was one of her favorites. Well, it had part of her name in it as well. And she was seldom grumpy too, because that was both her name and the gift Jesus had given to her when she had gotten healed last year from her accident.

She had been playing around in the house, and had a bad fall. She had to wear a cast on her leg for a long time. Now she was healed and could walk and move pretty well. It was hard for her at the time, and it really hurt. But one day she had this experience.

Joyelle had been in her leg cast for about two weeks, and was feeling very glum. It wasn’t comfortable and it hurt sometimes too. Besides, when it came to play time outside, she had to miss out on the fun games that the other children played.



She looked out the window and tried to think of something to be happy about. And then she saw something she had always seen, but a new thought came to her mind.

“Hmm, that tree that I always look at, and is so pretty, and the birds fly often into it too and make their nests, or just sit there and sing... I wonder if the tree ever gets bored of just sitting there? It never gets to fly like the birds, or even run and play like the children are now around it. It can’t even lie down if it wanted to. I’m so blessed.”

“Even though I can’t get around right now very well, and need this time of healing, I can do so many more things than that tree does. Yet, whenever I look at it, the tree is still so beautiful and cheery looking.”

Its branches are always reaching up, like it’s praising the Lord all day and even all night. I wonder what makes it so happy?”

She then pretended to ask the tree, “Why are you so happy, even though there are lots of things you can’t do?”





Joyelle then heard Jesus whispering the answer to her heart:

“It’s happy because I am using it to be just where I need it to be. Imagine if it got up and started walking away. And the bird came back to find its nest and found out the tree was gone! And if the squirrel jumped back with a nut and wanted to add it to its special pile of nuts for the winter, and found there was no more tree there? And what if on a hot day you wanted to sit under the shade of the tree for your snack, and then found out the tree was gone, and you had no shady place to go?”

“See, the trees and the plants are there because I created them. And if they are in a good place and it’s a help to those who live there, then they can grow happily and peacefully. And also, if the tree wanted to move and run and play, then its roots wouldn’t be in the soil, and it wouldn’t get the nourishment it needed, and would wither and dry up.”

“Oh, I see now,” said Joyelle. “Hmmm, so what can I be happy about?” She thought about it for a moment, and then started to list all the things she could do to help others, and that kept her growing and happy, even if she couldn’t walk much right now. After a long praise time she felt so much better.



“Mommy, I’m not sad any more about my accident” she told her mommy. “I just want to be like a praiseful tree, and help others to have what they need, and be where Jesus wants me to be.”

Then she started to sing together with Mommy, “Joy to the World the Lord is come...let heaven and nature sing...”

“Oh! That’s like the trees too, isn’t it mommy, ‘nature’?”

“Yes, that’s true” said mommy.

So if she ever started to feel sad again, she would start to sing her happy song again, and it always cheered her up.

And now as she sat in the living room at Christmas time, she still had the gift of joy, because she learned to try and think about something happy every time she would start to feel sad about something. And she would especially try to sing songs. Everyone thought she was the happiest girl they ever met! They called her “Joyful Joyelle”.





The Donkey who could!

In a mountain village in Peru there lived Pablito, a crippled boy. His job was to help make the food, and to use clay to make pots. He also learned to sew clothes and weave cloth, and could make scarves and vests.

One day his family was invited to spend a few weeks with their uncle who lived in another village. There were lots of things to prepare, and the journey through the mountains would need a good donkey to help carry the supplies.

This family owned a donkey, as well as some chickens and goats and a few other animals. They planned to take the donkey, but would need someone else to help look after their little farm and animals. So a kind neighbor helped them.

The day came and they were packed and ready. Pablito was to ride on the donkey as well, since he couldn't walk. But where was their little donkey? He was no where to be found. At last after a long search he was found sitting under a tree off a ways from the house. Some how he had wondered off when the preparations were being made that morning.

“Ah, there you are!” Pablito’s dad said to the donkey when it was found. “Eeeaw” the donkey responded.





“Why do you look so sad?” the daddy asked.

Again came the response, “Eeeaw”.

Now, if you don’t know how to talk “donkey-ese” you wouldn’t know what he was saying. But the kind old man who knew his donkey well understood that it wasn’t feeling up to the long walk and climb over the mountain trail. Daddy sat beside him and scratched between his ears.

“Let me tell you a story”. He told the donkey—and the listening Pablito, who had now been carried to join them under the tree—the story of the donkey who carried Mary on that long trek to Bethlehem.

Then the family prayed for their journey, and for their donkey to have the strength and willingness to travel, like that donkey of old. As Pablito sat on the now standing donkey, he started to sing:

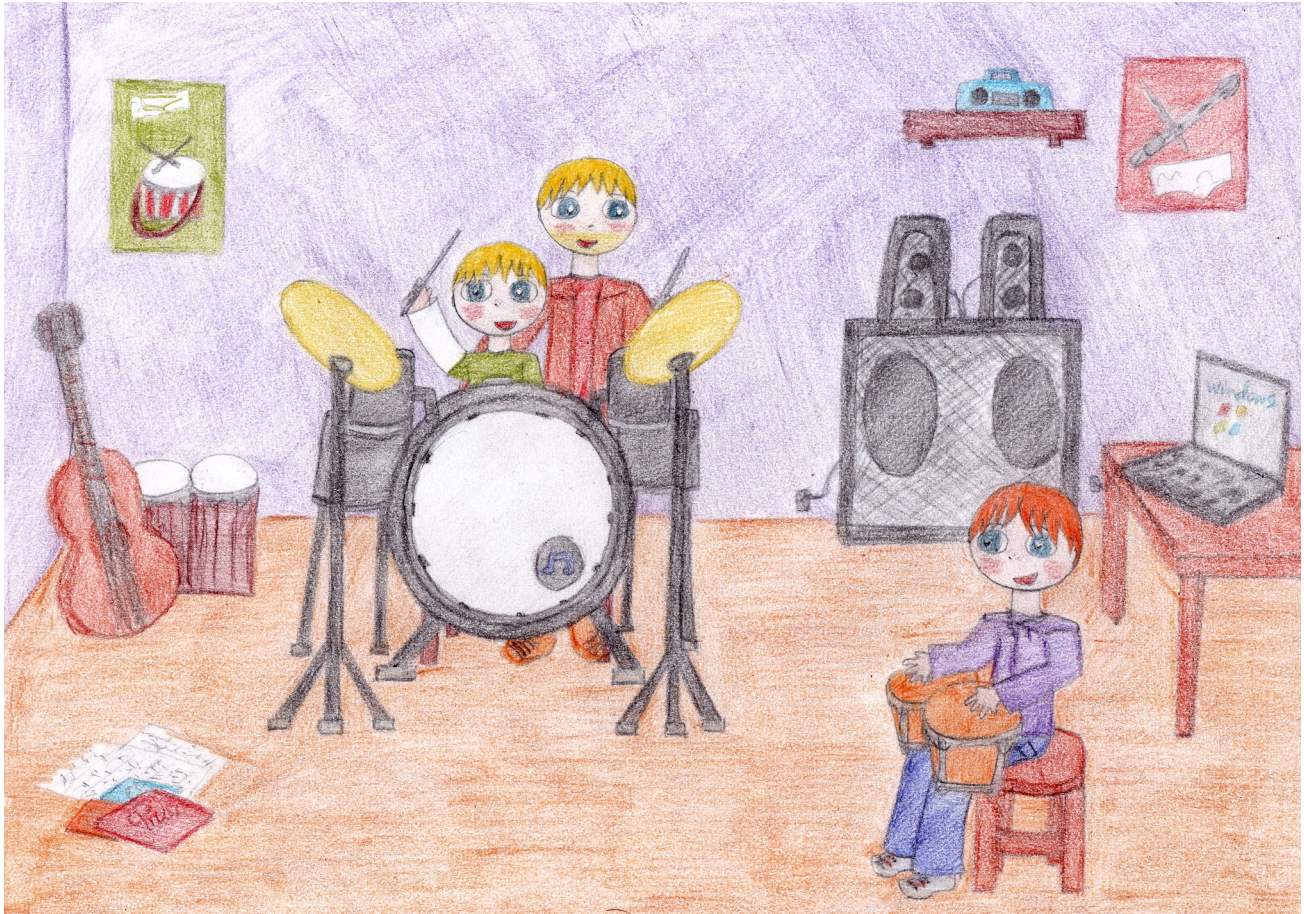
“I said the donkey, shaggy and brown, I carried His mother up hill and down, I carried her safely to Bethlehem town.”

The song seemed to encourage the donkey to start walking, and along with daddy’s snack treats that he gave it, it was walking along happily and willingly.

When they stopped for their first night in the woods, and built their fire, Pablito sat next to Donkey and thanked it for helping to carry him all day. Then he sang the Christmas song again, that had helped encourage them on the trek,

“Jesus our Savior kind and good,
was born in a manger of straw and wood, and the friendly beasts around him stood. Jesus our Savior kind and good.”





The Drummer's Beat

William and Anthony were two boys who liked to play with the drums in their dad's studio. Their daddy was a very good musician and could play many kinds of instruments, both live and on computer to make neat songs. There were slow songs and fast songs, songs to dance to and songs to sing along with.

The big drum set was in the corner of the room and it was always fun to make a good beat on it. There was the high-hat, the cymbals, the bass drum, the tom toms, all the types of drums to complete the set. The boys liked to play and try to learn on it. Maybe some day they would be able to play well along with their daddy and enjoy making live music together.

One day as William and Anthony were playing the drum set together with their daddy, William got a thought. "I wonder what instrument I would like to learn to play most of all? I think they all make such interesting sounds."





That night he had a dream and in it Jesus explained how each instrument could remind us of a different kind of skill that is needed in our life.

Jesus showed him the violin, and said how just like the music that it makes, we should always have a praise on our lips and in our heart.

The bass guitar made a low sound, and Jesus said it was like doing the humble and lowly things, perhaps deeds that don't even seem so far-out or get the most appreciation from others. But doing those humble things are really needed and important, just like the bass guitar adds important sounds to a song.

Next Jesus showed him a piano, and explained that the sounds it can make with so many different piano keys all working together in harmony to make the right chords and notes is like when we help each other. Just pushing one little key at a time wouldn't make the most beautiful sounds, we need to work together and help each other.



Then there was the flute, which seemed kind of small and simple compared to all the other big and more elaborate instruments. But Jesus said that just like the holes are what help it make the right and pretty sounds, so do the empty places in our lives help to make us the special person that we are.

The things that we don't have are like the "holes" in the donut of our lives. Things that we miss or wish we had, or the things that are hard for us, or that we go without, help us to learn new things. If the flute was only a long tube, without the holes and different small, simple parts on it, it wouldn't make the music it does. And Jesus needs small ones too, not just the big people.

Then He showed William the drum set, and explained that the drummer has to keep the right rhythm and beat in order for the song to sound right. It's like doing things at the right time and on time, and not taking too long to obey when He tells us to do things, or not to rush and do things too fast when we are supposed to wait. But to keep on His time beat, and then we'll make the best song, and do a good job for Jesus.





When William woke up he was thinking about the dream and all the things that he could learn from the way each instrument was. So even if he couldn't play the instruments well yet, he could be learning the other things that Jesus told him about, and making a "joyful noise" with his life. –Being praiseful, being humble and doing the lowly jobs, helping each other and working together, being thankful for even the things we don't have and keeping our eyes on the "donuts" and not the "hole" of things we wish we had, obeying quickly and learning to have patience, and being on time

At family time that night William and Anthony, together with Daddy, started to learn to play the song "Drummer Boy". They wanted to be able to sing and play it on the drums for their Christmas show that year. They enjoyed their fun music times together.

I played my drum for Him, pa rum pum pum pum.

I played my best for Him, pa rum pum pum pum,

Then He smiled at me, pa rum pum pum pum, me and my drum.

Me and my drum.



Noella Sings Noel

“Play it again, oh, please play it again, Papa!” said Noella, begging her father to sing and play the song once again. He was an accordion player, who often played in the town square, and people would give coins as they passed by.

Tonight he was home with his family, and they were preparing for the big Christmas meal. It wasn’t just any Christmas meal. This time it was really big! They were hosting a meal for 100 people who didn’t have families to celebrate with.

John, Noella’s father was practicing some carols that he would play while people were eating and celebrating Christmas. Her favorite song, of course, was the one with her name in it, or so she thought, “The First Noel”.

“Perhaps you could stand up with me and help me sing the words tonight. Would you like that?” Noella’s father asked.

At first she felt a bit shy thinking of singing in front of so many people. But then when her mother added the idea, “You could wear your special angel outfit too if you like, since the song does say, ‘the angel’s did sing’.”



This gave her a sense of fun and excitement.

She ate her dinner quickly, while at a table with several others that night, then slipped away to put on her white shiny dress, and strap on her set of wings, and added a golden halo to her head. She looked wonderful!

Noella's father had been playing many songs already, and some others had joined in the singing. Noella walked towards her father, and took her place beside him. It was time for their special performance.

They began to sing:

The first Noel the angel did say,
Was to certain poor shepherds in fields as they lay;
In fields where they lay keeping their sheep
On a cold Winter's night that was so deep
Noel, Noel, Noel, Noel,
Born is the King of Israel







Even though it wasn't sung perfectly, and she forgot some of the words, still the crowd enjoyed every bit of it, and applauded loudly when they were done. It was her Christmas gift to these folks, and to Jesus—to sing of Him and His love that He showed by coming down to Earth that Christmas night so long ago.

That night as she was being tucked in bed, her mother, Annette, asked, “How did you feel, singing up there in front of so many people? Was it hard for you?”

“Well, the hard part was remembering all the words. But once I started singing, and saw how happy my little show was making everyone, I was glad I was up there. I enjoyed it!” Noelle expressed.

“Good for you, my sweet little angel! Your smile while singing was a beautiful gift to those watching. Thank you for helping to spread some Christmas joy—just like the angels did that night in Bethlehem.” Mother commended her with a hug.

“Merry Christmas! And may you dream of angels.”



Harold can hear

Harold lived in the mountains of Switzerland. Every day he got to enjoy the beauty of the mountains, the lovely scenery, and breathe in the fresh air. He helped his father with the farm animals they raised, and helped his mother make fresh butter, cream and cheese.

In the late spring and summer, and early autumn, his favorite thing to do each day was to hike to a spot with a good view of the sunset. He'd open up his snack bag and watch the sun start to go down. He couldn't stay till it was all the way down, of course, as he'd still need the sun's rays to get back to his cozy little house where his family stayed.

There was one thing however that he couldn't enjoy—the sounds of nature. Harold was deaf. But though he couldn't hear, he was happy for the many other things he got to enjoy. He had hard working and kind parents, who saw that he had all that he needed. He lived in a beautiful place with gorgeous surroundings, that displayed a feast for his eyes every day. The animals loved being cared for by him. He was good with them and knew how to care for them properly.





One particularly cold winter, on Christmas Eve, his family was together, setting up decorations and preparing a meal, he thought he heard what he could imagine was a sound. “It couldn’t be”, he thought.

“Maybe it’s something else,” he wondered. But then it came again. First it was just a soft sound, but then it got louder and louder.

Yes, he was hearing! The sound was so beautiful it made him want to move and shout for joy. It was music playing. There were Christmas songs playing for their Christmas festivities. And that was the first time he got to hear what his name sounded like. The song said,

“Hark the Harold, angels sing, glory to the newborn King...”

He didn’t understand the words, and had to learn to speak still. But it was a new beginning.

It had been his Christmas wish last year, that his gift, the only gift he wanted, was to be able to hear. He felt he could do so much more, and be a better help to his family if only he could hear.



It wasn't God's time for him yet, last year, as it gave him time to enjoy many more quiet afternoons alone with God, without anything else interrupting.

God could give so many thoughts and ideas to him, while he sat in silence. But this year the time was right for him to be able to hear and to help in new ways, through all that was to happen, and all he would be needed for.

"Mother, mother" he motioned with his hands.

"I hear sound. I think I am hearing!"

His mother could hardly believe what he was saying. She stopped the music to see if that made a difference. Harold noticed that it went off. When she started playing it again he smiled.

The whole family gathered and danced together to the remaining words, "... with the angelic host proclaim, Christ was born in Bethlehem. Hark the Harold angels sing, Glory to the newborn King!"

It was the best present they all could imagine. They praised God, and had the best celebration ever.





Siren night

In Australia, Christmas is not a cold time with snow covered trees. But some years there are fire-covered trees, and bush fires. It's not an easy time when there are. The firefighters have to work hard to make things safe again. Sometimes there are other emergencies too, and people that are in need on Christmas.

This year, as Sammy lay in his bed, after a simple Christmas meal with his family, though they didn't have much, he was just glad they were safe and fine. But the sirens from the fire engines and ambulances kept him awake. There seemed to be so many emergencies that night.

"I just wish things were quiet, and that everyone was safe..." Sammy thought.

Sammy's mom came in to tell the children a bedtime story, and pray for a good night's sleep. As they started with a prayer, Sammy added, "And dear Lord, please keep everyone else safe tonight, and help the rescue workers to get to those who need help quickly."



Ah, after praying, things seemed to quiet down for a while. There was also a peace in Sammy's heart. He knew the Lord was taking care of the others, as well as his family that night.

"Mommy, you know that song we were singing earlier?—The one that says, 'Silent Night, Holy Night'. I was wondering who wrote that song?"

"Ah that's a good story!" said his mom. And as the children all got settled and comfortable, she began to search the internet. She was surprised to see many stories about it. Some varied here and there, in what may have happened. But one site caught her eye and she read portions to the children.

While we were serving as missionaries in Europe we visited a small little church in Austria. That church was the birthplace of "Silent Night." Here's the story how this most famous of Christmas carols came to be written:

In 1818, a roving band of actors was performing in towns throughout the Austrian Alps.

On December 23 they arrived at Oberndorf, a village near Salzburg where they were to re-enact the story of Christ's birth in the small Church of St. Nicholas.



Unfortunately, the St. Nicholas' church organ wasn't working and would not be repaired before Christmas. (Note: some versions of the story point to mice as the problem; others say rust was the culprit) Because the church organ was out of commission, the actors presented their Christmas drama in a private home.

That Christmas presentation of the events in the first chapters of Matthew and Luke put assistant pastor Josef Mohr in a meditative mood. Instead of walking straight to his house that night, Mohr took a longer way home. The longer path took him up over a hill overlooking the village.

From that hilltop, Mohr looked down on the peaceful snow-covered village. Reveling in majestic silence of the wintry night, Mohr gazed down at the glowing Christmas-card like scene.

His thoughts about the Christmas play he had just seen made him remember a poem he had written a couple of years before. That poem was about the night when angels announced the birth of the long-awaited Messiah to shepherds on a hillside.





Mohr decided those words might make a good carol for his congregation the following evening at their Christmas Eve service. The one problem was that he didn't have any music to which that poem could be sung. So, the next day Mohr went to see the church organist, Franz Xaver Gruber. Gruber only had a few hours to come up with a melody which could be sung with a guitar. However, by that evening, Gruber had managed to compose a musical setting for the poem. It no longer mattered to Mohr and Gruber that their church organ was inoperable. They now had a Christmas carol that could be sung without that organ.

On Christmas Eve, the little Oberndorf congregation heard Gruber and Mohr sing their new composition to the accompaniment of Gruber's guitar.

Weeks later, well-known organ builder Karl Mauracher arrived in Oberndorf to fix the organ in St. Nicholas church. When Mauracher finished, he stepped back to let Gruber test the instrument. When Gruber sat down, his fingers began playing the simple melody he had written for Mohr's Christmas poem.



Deeply impressed, Mauracher took copies of the music and words of "Silent Night" back to his own Alpine village, Kapfing. There, two well-known families of singers — the Rainers and the Strassers — heard it. Captivated by "Silent Night," both groups put the new song into their Christmas season repertoire.

*Silent night! holy night!
All is calm, all is bright,
'Round yon virgin mother and Child!
Holy Infant, so tender and mild,
Sleep in heavenly peace,
Sleep in heavenly peace.*



The Strasser sisters spread the carol across northern Europe. In 1834, they performed "Silent Night" for King Frederick William IV of Prussia, and he then ordered his cathedral choir to sing it every Christmas eve.

Twenty years after "Silent Night" was written, the Rainers brought the song to the United States, singing it (in German) at the Alexander Hamilton Monument located outside New York City's Trinity Church.

In 1863, nearly fifty years after being first sung in German, "Silent Night" was translated into English (by either Jane Campbell or John Young). Eight years later, that English version made its way into print in Charles Hutchins' Sunday School Hymnal. Today the words of "Silent Night" are sung in more than 300 different languages around the world.

When their mom had finished reading about the song, Sammy said, "Listen! I don't hear any more sirens!" It was a happy thought to go to sleep on, all was well now.

The family then ended the night singing together "Silent night" one last time.



