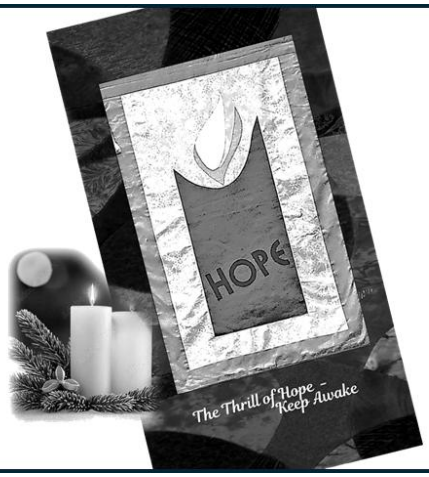

Welcome to Worship

First Congregational United Church of Christ

Menomonie, Wisconsin

First Sunday of Advent
November 29, 2026

Welcome and Announcements

Prelude/Candle Lighting "Breath on Me, Breath of God" Oxana Khramova
(arr. M. Hayes)

Ringing of the Bell

***Call to Worship** (*rise in body, mind, or spirit)

One: In the midst of busyness, bustling, and buzzing, we pause to breathe and release our burdens. We surround ourselves with candles, lights, greenery, and beauty. May these sights and sounds remind us that we are people of faith, guided by the light of the world. Listen for words of hope on this First Sunday of Advent.

Brief pause for silence

One: It is difficult to gather in this place without acknowledging the hurt all around us. There are unjust systems and harmful powers in place that diminish life.

All: **What can we do? Where is our hope?**

One: Be alert. Pay attention. There are whispers of hope all around you:

All: **in a meal delivered, a hand extended, forgiveness granted.**

One: As we live between the already and the not yet, we remember salvation doesn't happen when all is right in the world. The Messiah draws near now, breaking into the present through moments of compassion and flourishing.

All: **In this season of holy waiting and wholly longing, we light the candle of hope.**

Light the first candle

All: **Saying goodbye to the powers that harm and welcoming the coming of Christ. May the hope of God-with-us thrill and inspire.**

***Opening Prayer** (in unison)

Cosmic God, you reveal yourself to us in signs, seasons, and surprises. As we witness the cycles of nature, awaken us to signs of your kin(g)dom among us in acts of courage, compassion, and generosity. Grace us with your presence in the holy darkness. Teach us to be vigilant and patient as we await the coming of Christ, our salvation. Amen.

Opening Hymn "Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus" Hymnal #1

Readings Kristen Billingsley

Mark 13:24-37; Contemporary Readings “Affirmation of Hope” from The Thrill of Hope, “a blessing for care-givers and care-receivers" by Kate Bowler

Special Music “Christmas in the Trenches” Richie Price, Dean Langby
(John McCutcheon)

Message “Side by Side: Keep Awake” Carla Berscheit
Dementia Specialist for Dunn County

Transitional Hymn “In the Bleak Midwinter” Hymnal #36

Prayers of the People

Lord’s Prayer

Our Creator, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen.

Offertory “Blackbird” Richie Price
(Paul McCartney)

***Doxology**

Praise God from whom all blessings flow;
Praise God all creatures here below;
Praise God above ye heavenly host;
Creator, Christ, and Holy Ghost. Amen.

***Prayer of Dedication** (in unison)

Gracious God, in this Advent Season, we wait for the Messiah, offering not only ourselves but our tithes and gifts. May our offerings work to bring about healing, justice, belonging, and the thrill of hope to a weary world. Amen.

***Closing Hymn** “People, Look East” Hymnal #12

***Benediction**

***Sung Benediction** (unison)

God be with you till we meet again;
Loving counsels guide, uphold you,
With a Shepherd’s care enfold you:
God be with you till we meet again.

Postlude “Praise Him! Praise Him!” Oxana Khramova
(arr. M. Hayes)

Today's flowers are from Sally Conklin in memory's of her mother's birthday on December 2nd.

Credits

- “The Thrill of Hope” Advent-Christmas-Epiphany Series © 2026 is an Illustrated Ministry, LLC. product, purchased and used with permission.
- Bowler, Kate. “A Blessing for Care-Givers and Care-Receivers.” Kate Bowler, August 21, 2023. https://katebowler.com/blessings/a-blessing-for-care-givers-and-care-receivers/.

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This Week
Wednesday, December 2: **4pm** Kid's Club, R2; **5:30pm** Chancel Choir; **6:30pm** Bell Choir
Thursday, December 3, 3:30pm Executive Committee, R1
Saturday, December 5, 10am-2pm *Tour of Homes*, various locations

Link to the full church calendar: https://www.menomonieucc.org/monthlycalendar

November is Alzheimer's month. An estimated 7.2 million people have Alzheimer's disease and 6-7 million people have some form of Dementia.

Today we have Carla Berscheit, the Dementia Specialist for Dunn County talking about the disease. She is a valuable resource for families providing them with information on resources through her individual sessions with families, the support groups, and educational opportunities like today.

We would also like to honor Margy Hagaman's legacy for her work with Alzheimer's and related Dementia through the years. She helped establish the first day care for Dementia individuals in Menomonie, was a support group leader, did educational sessions on the disease, volunteered at the current daycare, was a member of the Alzheimer Association, was a participant in research at the University of Wisconsin Madison hospital, and talked with numerous families dealing with the disease. She was an inspiration to all who worked with her. She will be missed.

Mission Statement of First Congregational United Church of Christ in Menomonie, WI

We are called together:
To celebrate God's presence.
To help each person to grow in their relationship with God;
To create a welcoming and supportive community of all God's people, affirming the diversity of race, gender, age, sexual orientation, gender expression, and identity, social and economic status, and disability;
To observe and share life's passages and our faith traditions;
To reach out in love seeking justice and peace;
And to tell the old story of Jesus and His love.

Land Acknowledgement
Here we congregate on Ojibwe, Dakota, Menominee, Potawatomi, and Ho Chunk land. Generations of Indigenous people occupied and provided careful stewardship of this land long before Europeans arrived on these shores. The traumatic dispossession of this land by European immigrants and the displacement of countless individuals produced collective suffering that has repercussions for our Indigenous neighbors today. The original inhabitants of this land–known to some Indigenous peoples as Turtle Island–took seriously the Creator's call to be stewards of air, land, water, and creatures. With gratitude, we acknowledge the lessons we continue to learn from our Indigenous neighbors as we seek to be good stewards and pray for guidance in learning how to make reparations.

ONA Covenant

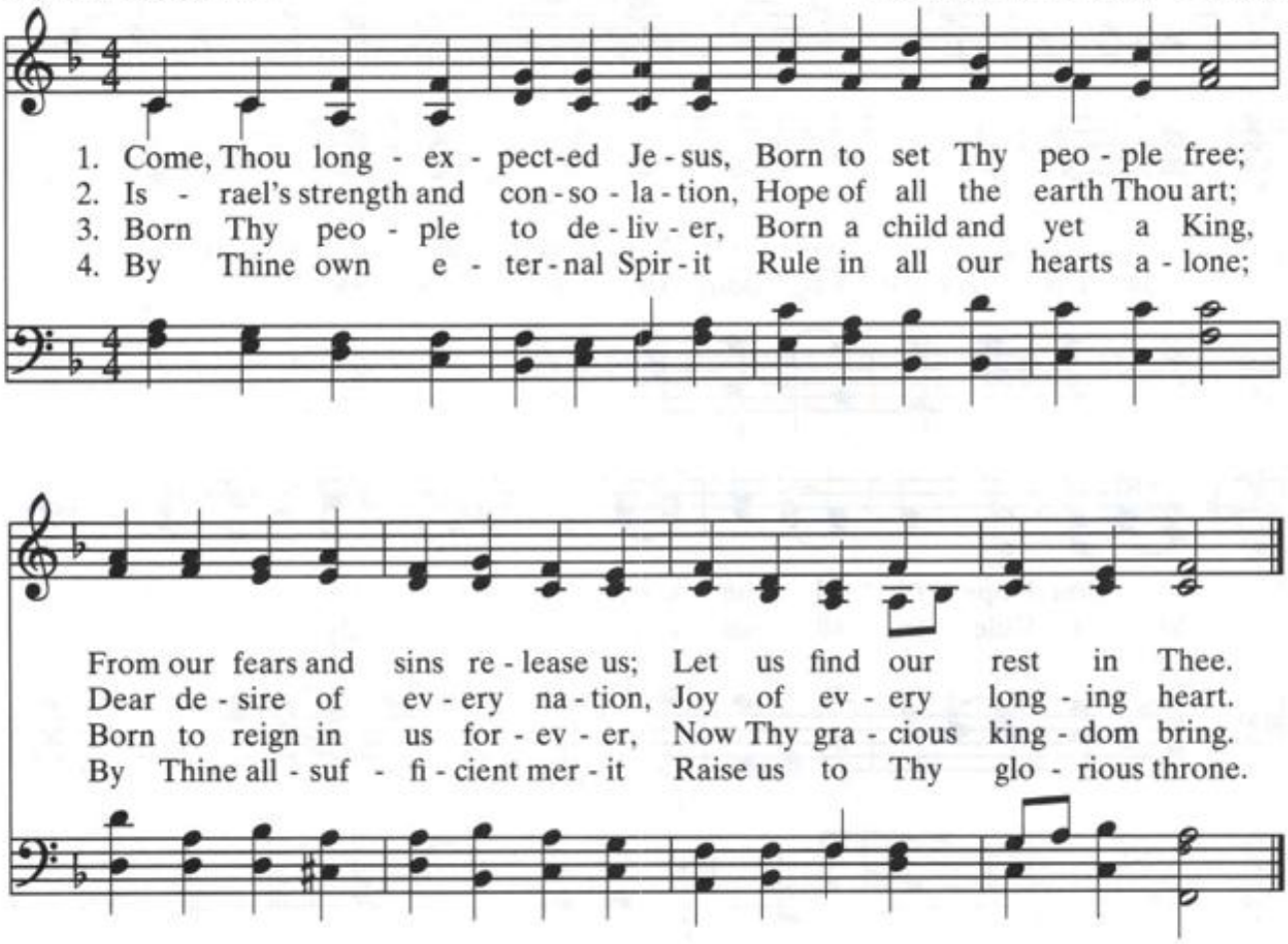
We covenant as a congregation to welcome, celebrate, and include lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and questioning people and their families into the full life of our church. We take this stance publicly and proudly, knowing that silence is inadequate to confront the violent theology that is widespread throughout the Christian church. We covenant to support lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and questioning people and their families with our prayers, words, and actions.

Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus

STUTTGART 8.7.8.7

Charles Wesley, 1744

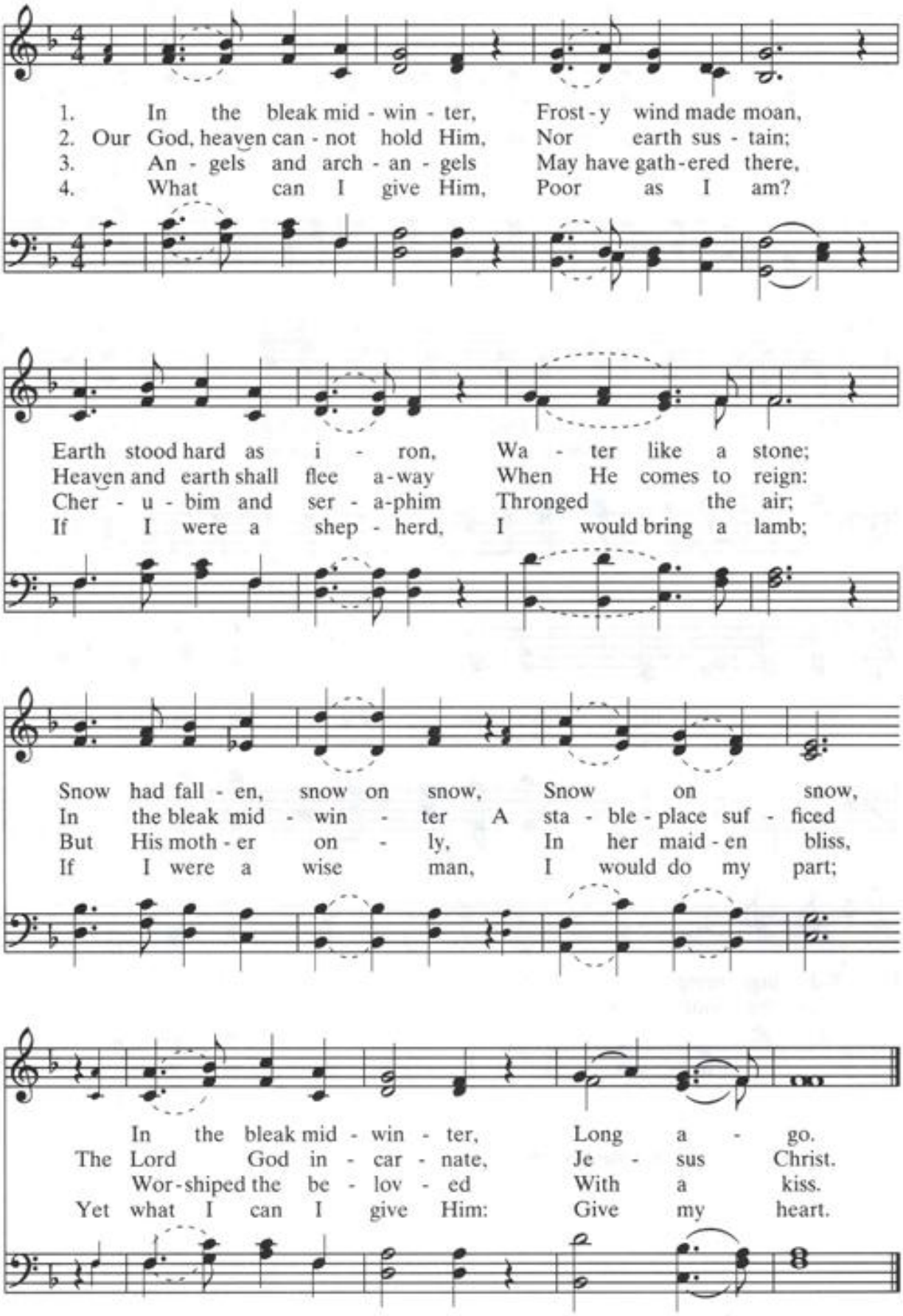
Witt's *Psalmodia Sacra,* 1715; alt.



In the Bleak Midwinter

CRANHAM Irregular

Christina Rossetti, c. 1872; alt. Gustav Theodore Holst, 1906



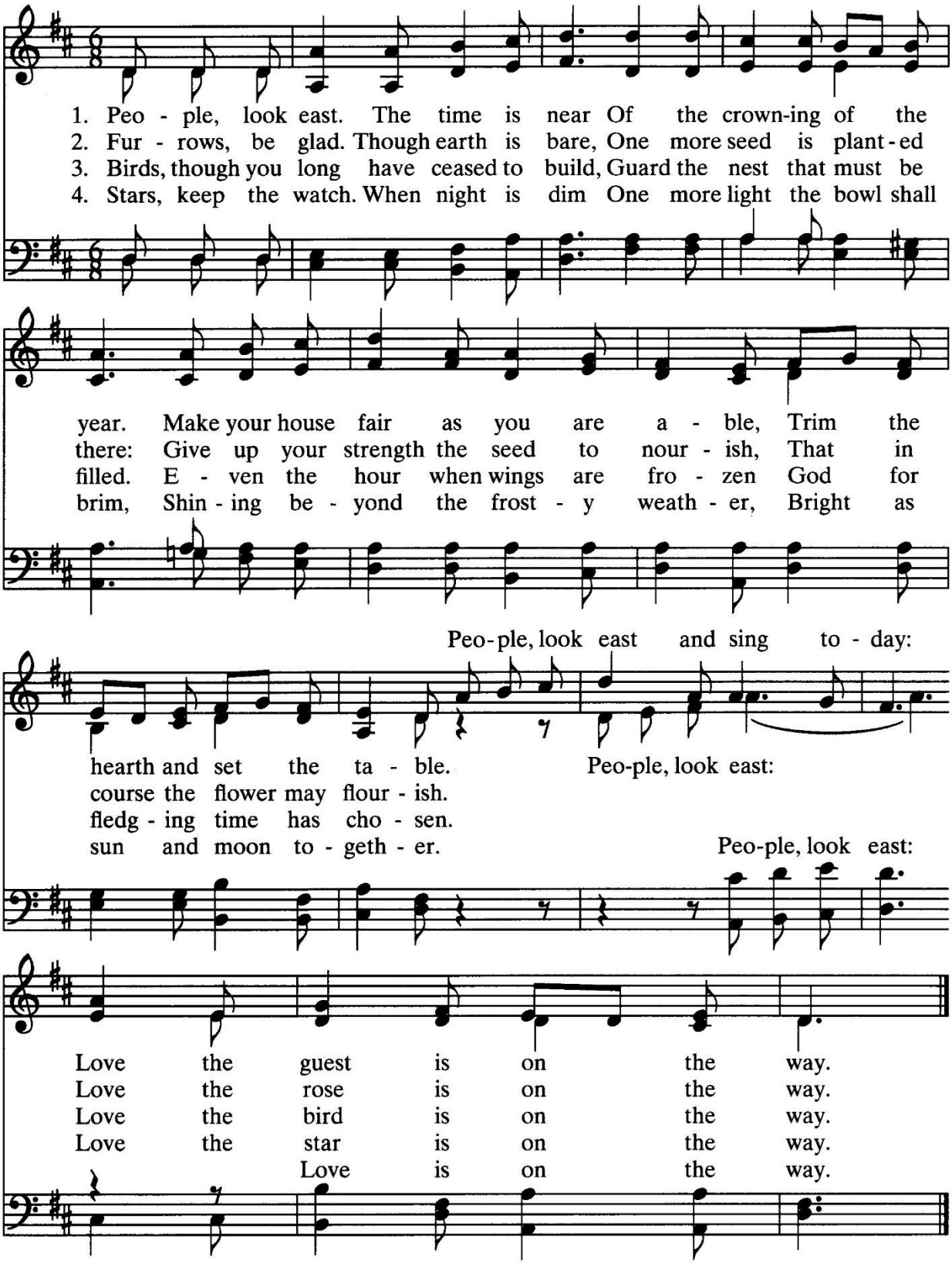
People, Look East

12

Eleanor Farjeon (1881–1965)
As in *Oxford Book of Carols,* 1964

BESANÇON 8.7.9.8.8.7

French folk melody
Harm. Martin Shaw (1875–1958)



5. Angels, announce with shouts of mirth
Christ who brings new life to earth.
Set every peak and valley humming
With the word, the Lord is coming.
People, look east and sing today:
Love the Lord is on the way.

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