

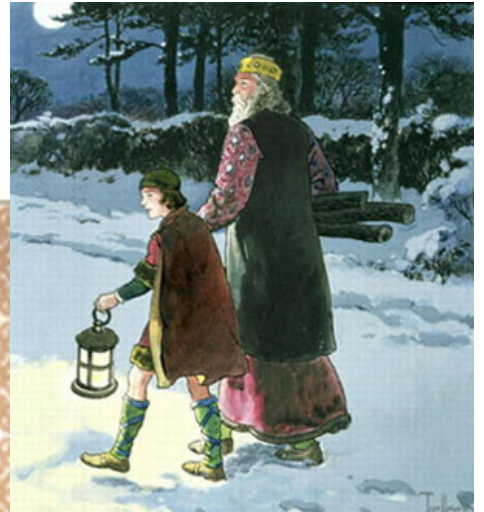
# Good King Wenceslas



X. Good King Wenceslas.

CHORUS.

Good King Wen - ces - las look'd out, On the Feast of  
When the snow lay round a - bout, Deep, and crisp and



**G**ood King Wenceslas

Good King Wenceslas look'd out On the Feast of Stephen  
When the snow lay round about - Deep, and crisp and even:  
Brightly shone the moon that night, Though the frost was  
cruel. When a poor man came in sight - Gathering winter  
fuel.

# Good King Wenceslas

Words: John Mason Neale, 1853; Music: "Tempus Adest Floridum," a 13th Century spring carol  
Sing along with a Traditional Choir @ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SQVUMG6LZGM>

*G* *D G C D*  
Good King Wenceslas looked out,  
*C D G*  
On the Feast of Stephen,  
*G D G C D*  
When the snow lay round a-bout,  
*C D G*  
Deep and crisp and even.

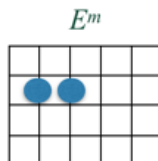
*G* *E<sup>m</sup>*  
Brightly shown the moon that night,  
*C D G*  
Though the frost was cruel,  
*G C D G D*  
When a poor man came in sight,  
*G C G D E<sup>m</sup> C G*  
Gathering winter fu - - - el.

*G D G C D*  
"Hither page and stand by me,  
*C D G*  
If thou knows't it telling.  
*G D G C D*  
Yonder peasant, who is he,  
*C D G*  
Where and what his dwelling?"  
*G E<sup>m</sup>*  
"Sire, he lives a good league hence,  
*C D G*  
Underneath the mountain,  
*G C D G D*  
Right against the forest fence,  
*G C G D E<sup>m</sup> C G*  
By Saint Agnes' foun - tain."

*G D G C D*  
"Bring me flesh and bring me wine,  
*C D G*  
Bring me pine logs hither.  
*G D G C D*  
Thou and I will see him dine,  
*C D G*  
When we bear them thither."



Capo 1<sup>st</sup> fret to play the chord patterns on this sheet.



*G E<sup>m</sup>*  
Page and monarch, forth they went,  
*C D G*  
Forth they went together;  
*G C D G D*  
Through the rude wind's wild lament,  
*G C G D E<sup>m</sup> C G*  
And the bitter wea - ther.

*G D G C D*  
"Sire, the night is darker now,  
*C D G*  
And the wind grows stronger;  
*G D G C D*  
Fails my heart, I know not how;  
*C D G*  
I can go no longer."

*G E<sup>m</sup>*  
"Mark my footsteps good, my page,  
*C D G*  
Tread thou in them boldly;  
*G C D G D*  
Thou shalt find the winter's rage,  
*G C G D E<sup>m</sup> C G*  
Freeze thy blood less cold - - ly."

*G D G C D*  
In his master's steps he trod,  
*C D G*  
Where the snow lay dinted;  
*G D G D*  
Heat was in the very sod,  
*C D G*  
Which the saint had printed.  
*G E<sup>m</sup>*  
Therefore, Christian men be sure,  
*C D G*  
Wealth or rank possessing,  
*G C D G D*  
Ye who now will bless the poor,  
*G C G D E<sup>m</sup> C G*  
Shall yourselves find bles - - sing.

# History

“**Good King Wenceslas**” comes from the life of the historical Saint Wenceslaus I, Duke of Bohemia (907–935), known in the Czech language as *Svatý Václav*.

His mother Drahomira persecuted Christians and is accused of murdering others in her family to maintain power. His grandmother Ludmilla, a devoted Christian woman raised Wenceslaus teaching her grandson the meaning of faith, hope and charity. When Wenceslas was 15 – 18, he assumed his position a ruler of Czechoslovakia. As the young duke attempted to guide the troubled nation, his mother and his twin Boleslaus instituted a pagan revolt. They assassinated Ludmilla as she prayed, then attempted to overthrow Wenceslaus. The teen took charge, put down the rebellion, and in an act of Christian kindness, expelled his mother and brother rather than executing them. The nation was amazed.

With the wisdom of Solomon, the young duke set up a nation built on justice and mercy. He enacted laws in the manner he thought would best serve his Lord. A revival unlike the land had ever seen followed as the Holy Spirit brought many, many to belief in Jesus the Christ.

Wenceslaus loved Christmas. Centuries before gift giving became a part of the holiday, the young leader embraced the joy of sharing his bounty with others; especially the least of these. Each Christmas Eve he sought out the most needy of his subjects and visited them. Wenceslaus with his pages brought food, firewood, and clothing. He never postponed his rounds even in the worst of weather. Like a 10<sup>th</sup> century Santa Claus, young Wenceslaus made the night before Christmas special for scores of families.

Wenceslas is believed to have been murdered by his twin brother when he was about 29 as the family continued its habit of using violence to settle issues of succession.

Wenceslas was considered a martyr and a saint immediately after his death, when a cult of Wenceslas grew up in Bohemia and in England. Within a few decades of Wenceslas's death four biographies of him were in circulation. These hagiographies had a powerful influence on the High Middle Ages conceptualization of the *rex justus*, or "righteous king"—that is, a monarch whose power stems mainly from his great piety, as the source of his princely vigor.

Although Wenceslas was, during his lifetime, only a duke, Holy Roman Emperor Otto I posthumously conferred on [Wenceslas] the regal dignity and title and that is why, in the legend and song, he is referred to as a "king".

In 1853, English hymn writer John Mason Neale (who himself was much involved in serving the least of these) wrote the "Wenceslas" lyrics, in collaboration with his music editor Thomas Helmore, and the carol first appeared in *Carols for Christmas-Tide*, 1853. Neale's lyrics were set to a tune based on a 13th century spring carol “*Tempus adest floridum*” (“The time is near for flowering” or “Spring has unwrapped her flowers”) first published in the 1582 by Finnish song collection Piae Cantion.

“Good King Wenceslaus” reminds the world that the spirit of Christmas giving didn’t begin with Santa Claus, nor should it end there. It can be alive in all who choose to give with love and live by faith.

*From “Stories Behind the Best-Loved Songs of Christmas” by Andrew (Ace) Collins, 2001*