Welcome Home!

Blue Christmas Service

**please light candles for your loved ones as you enter*

December 18, 2022

Words of Explanation & Encouragement

*Hymn

O Little Town of Bethlehem

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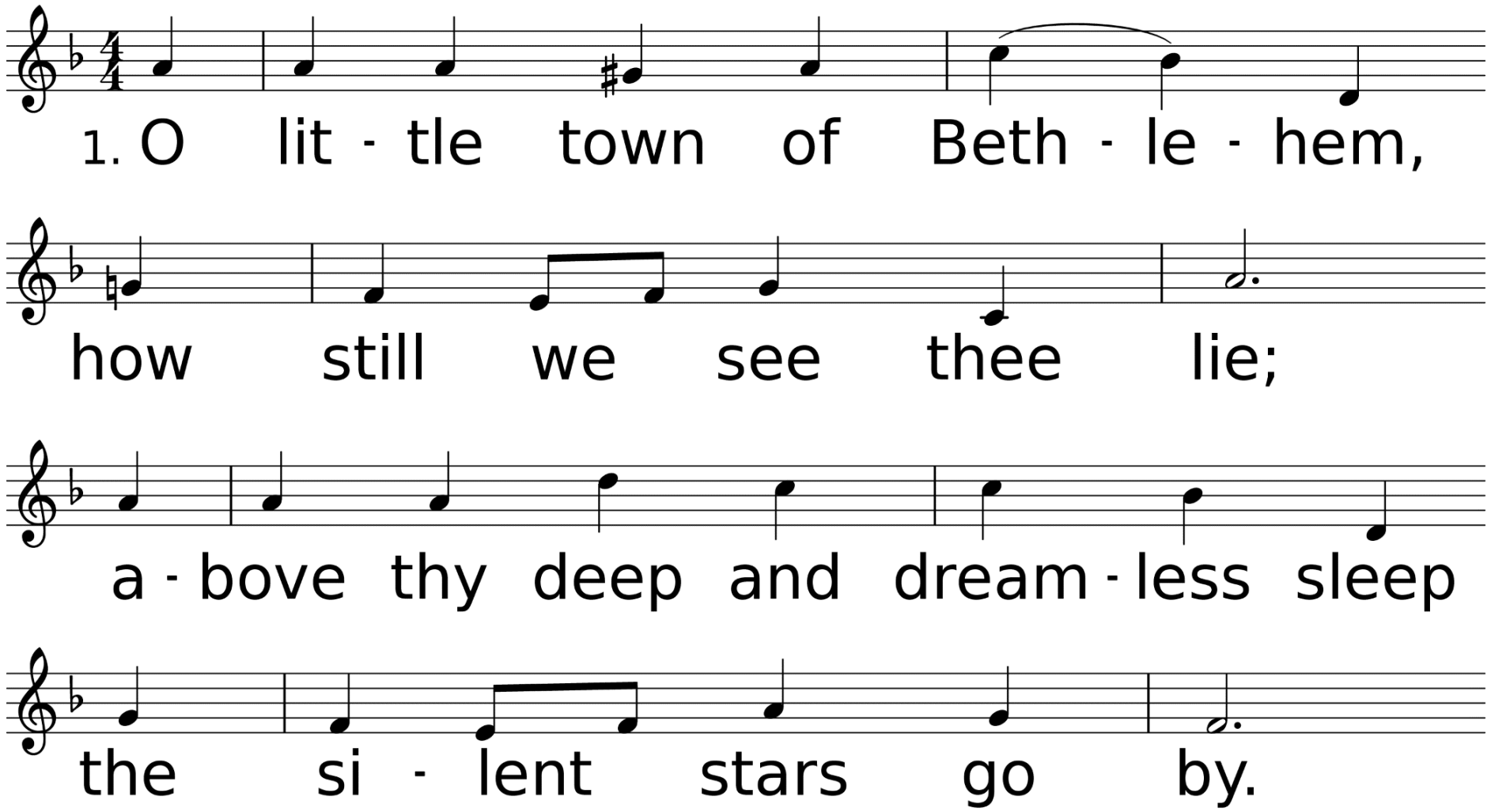
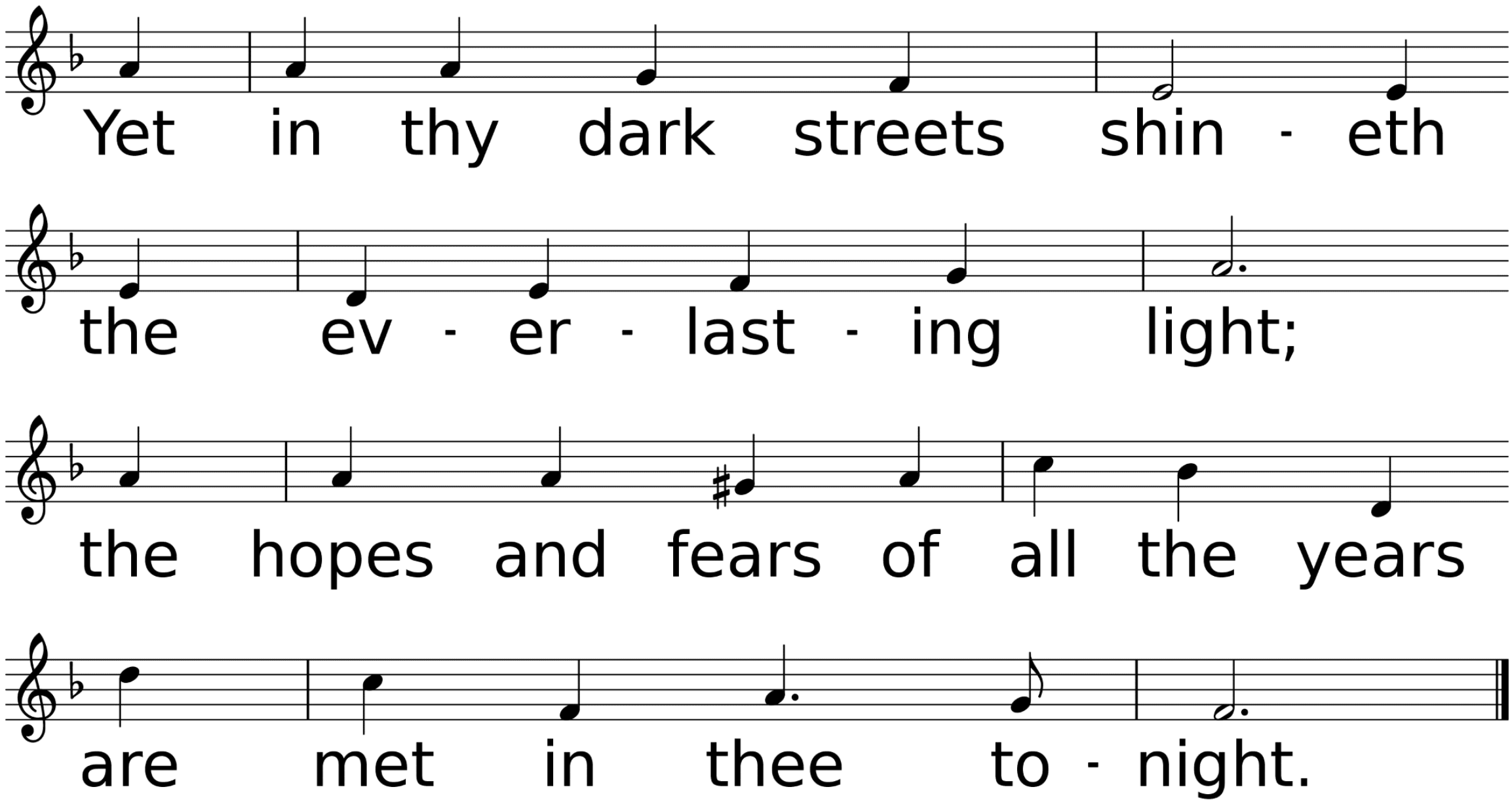
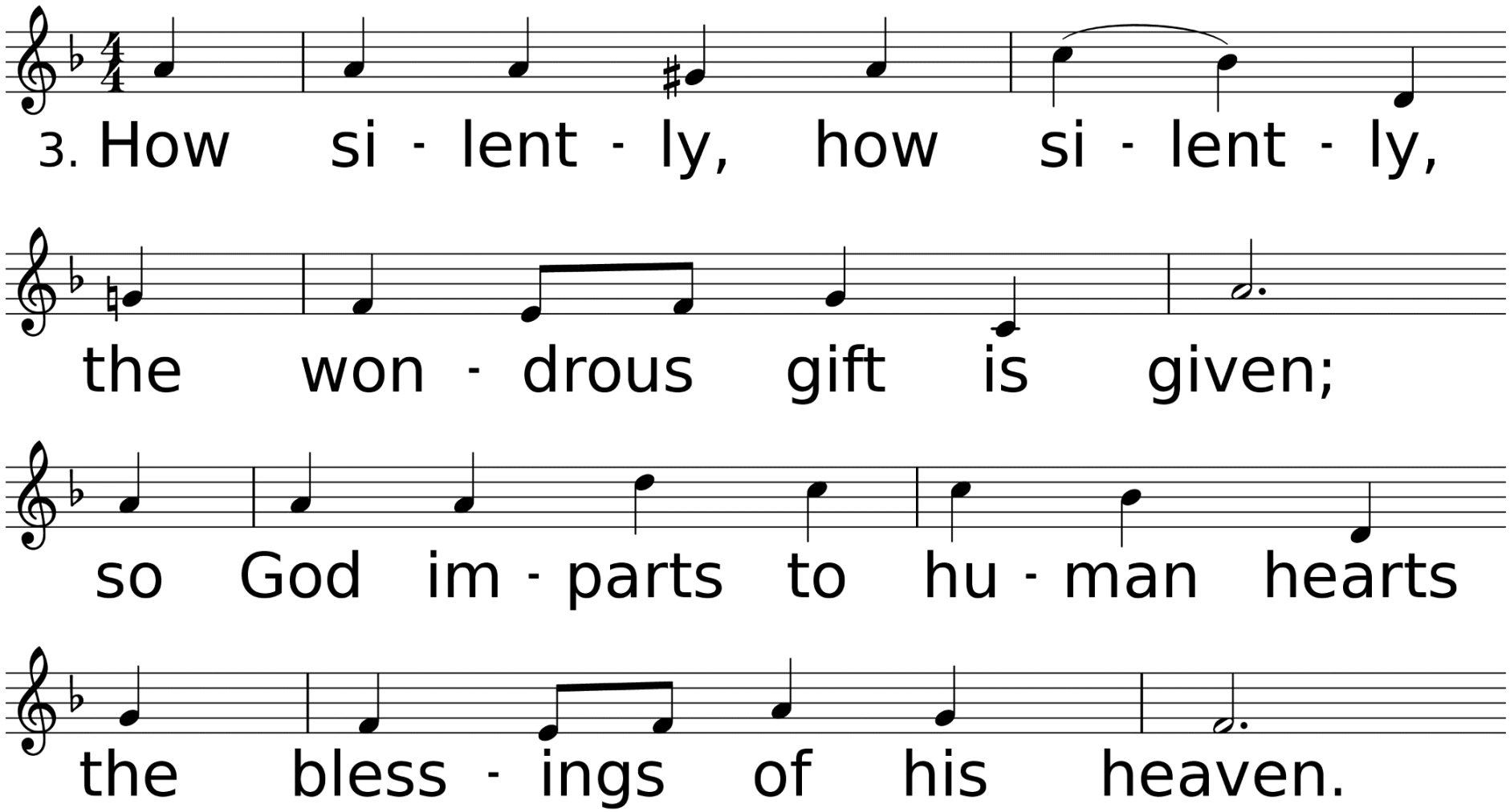
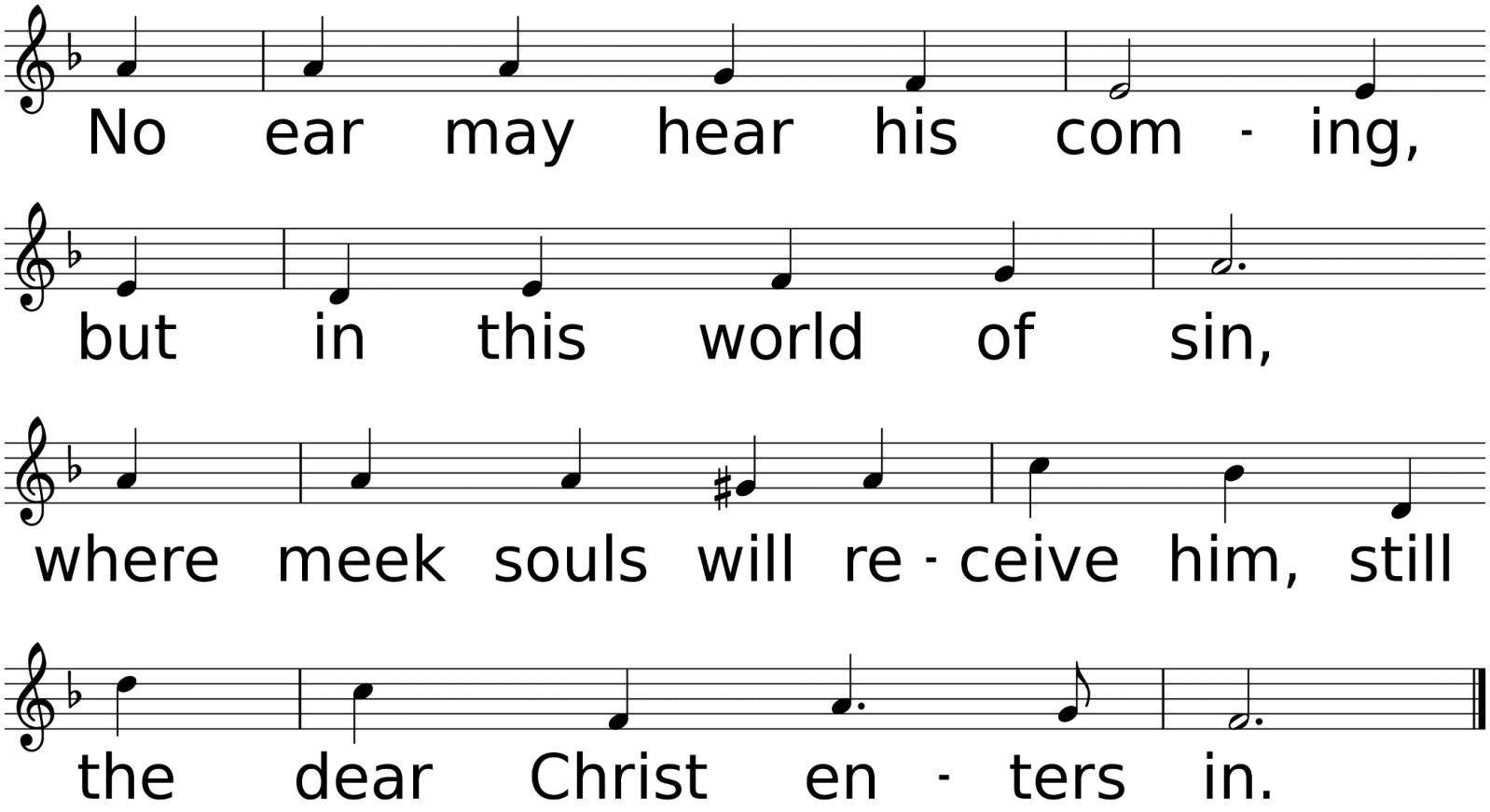
O Little Town of Bethlehem *United Methodist Hymnal #230*

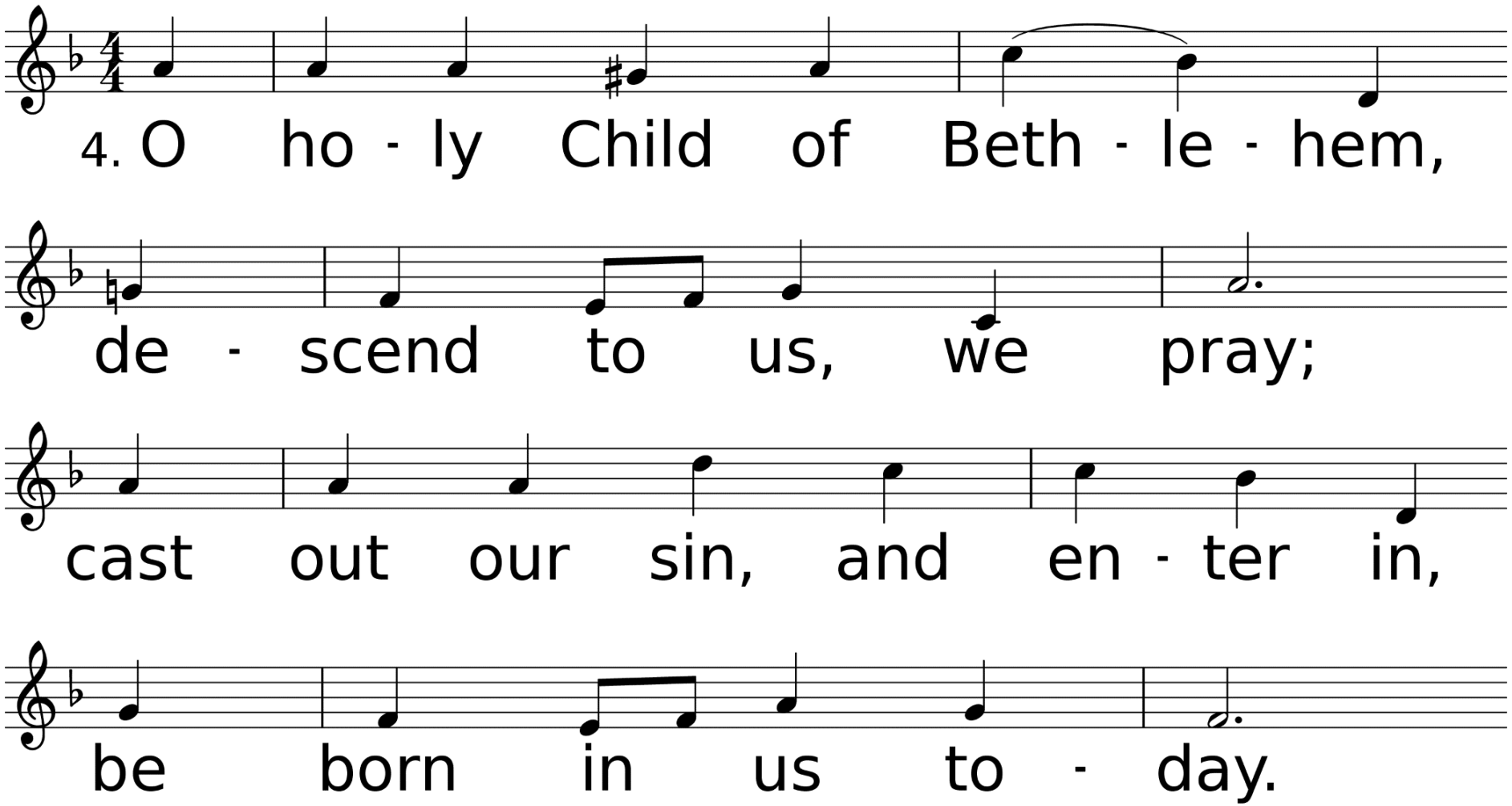


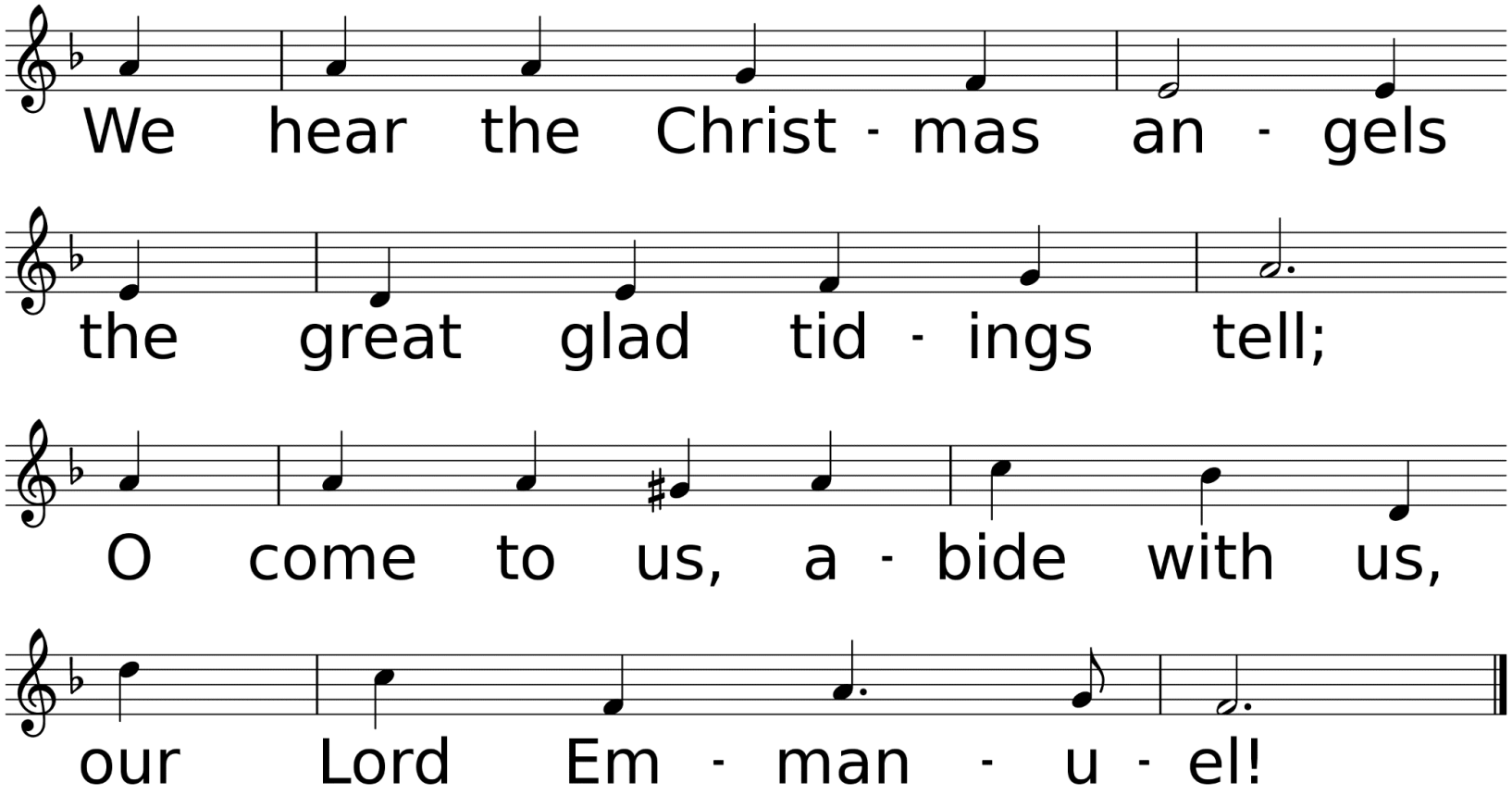
WORDS: Phillips Brooks, ca. 1868
MUSIC (ST. LOUIS 86.86.76.86): Lewis H. Redner, 1868


Yet in thy dark streets shin - eth
the ev - er - last - ing light;
the hopes and fears of all the years
are met in thee to - night.


3. How si - lent - ly, how si - lent - ly,
the won - drous gift is given;
so God im - parts to hu - man hearts
the bless - ings of his heaven.


No ear may hear his com - ing,
but in this world of sin,
where meek souls will re - ceive him, still
the dear Christ en - ters in.


4. O ho - ly Child of Beth - le - hem,
de - scend to us, we pray;
cast out our sin, and en - ter in,
be born in us to - day.


We hear the Christ - mas an - gels
the great glad tid - ings tell;
O come to us, a - bide with us,
our Lord Em - man - u - el!

First Reading
Ecclesiastes 3:1-11

Psalm 22

Leader: My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from helping me, so far from the words of my groaning?

Congregation: O my God, I cry by day but you do not answer, and by night, but I find no rest.

Leader:

In you, our ancestors trusted. They trusted and you delivered them.

Congregation:

It was you who brought me from the womb, you who kept me safe on my mother's breast. Since my mother bore me, you have been my God.

Leader:
Do not be far from me, for trouble is near and there is no one to help.

Congregation:
God does not despise the affliction of the afflicted. God does not hide from me. When I cry to God, God hears me. Thanks be to God.

Second Reading
Isaiah 43:1-3A

*Hymn

Great is Thy Faithfulness

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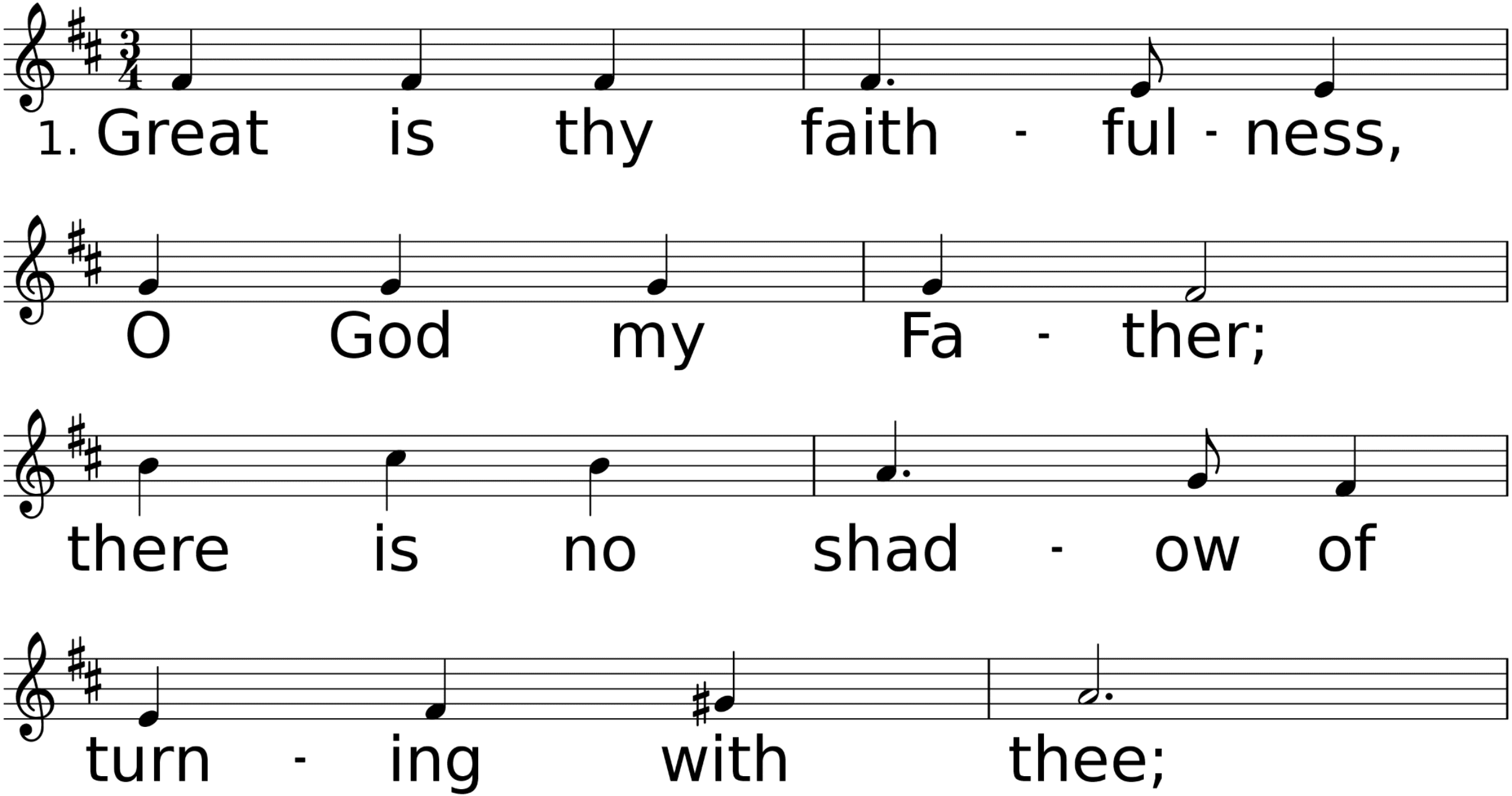
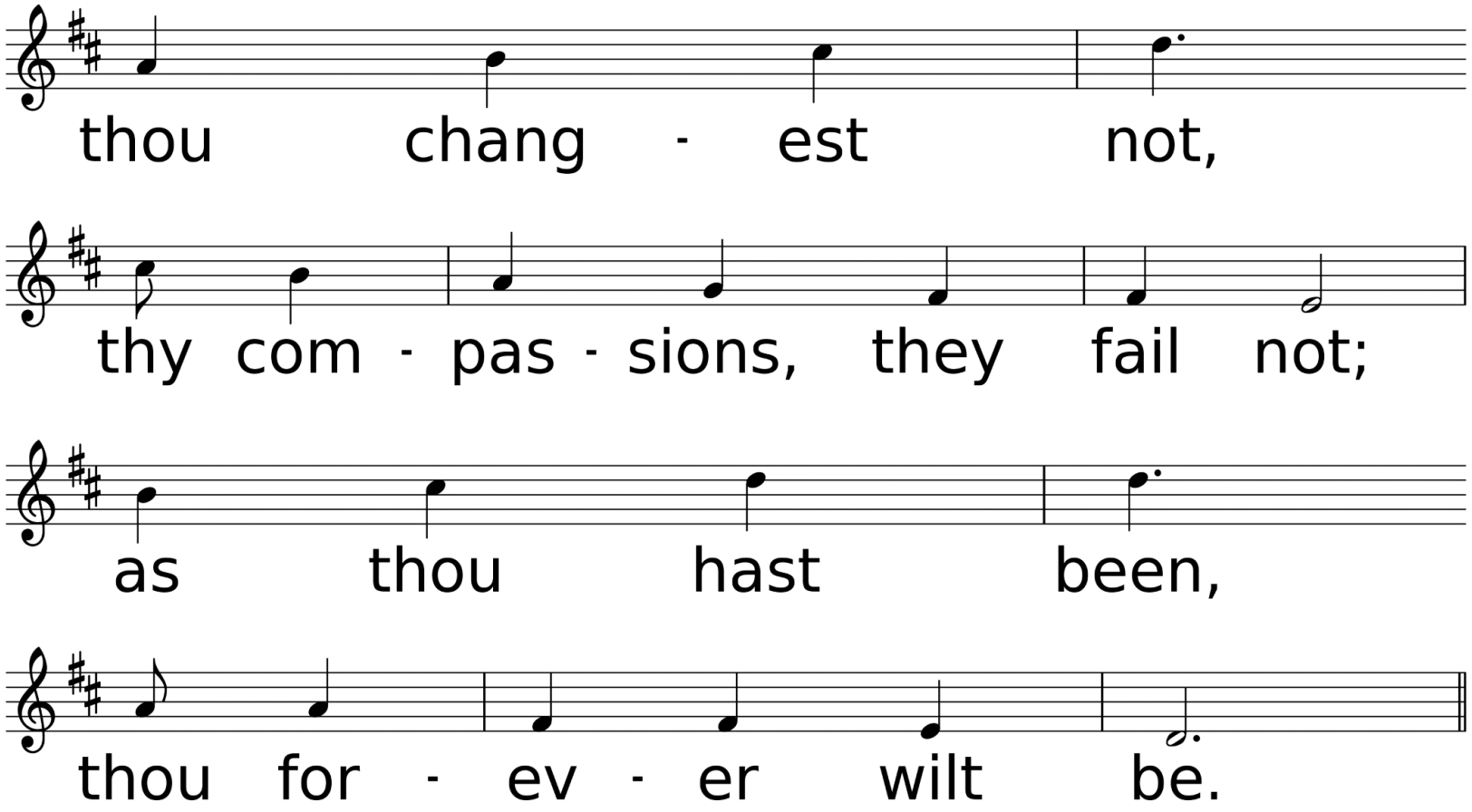
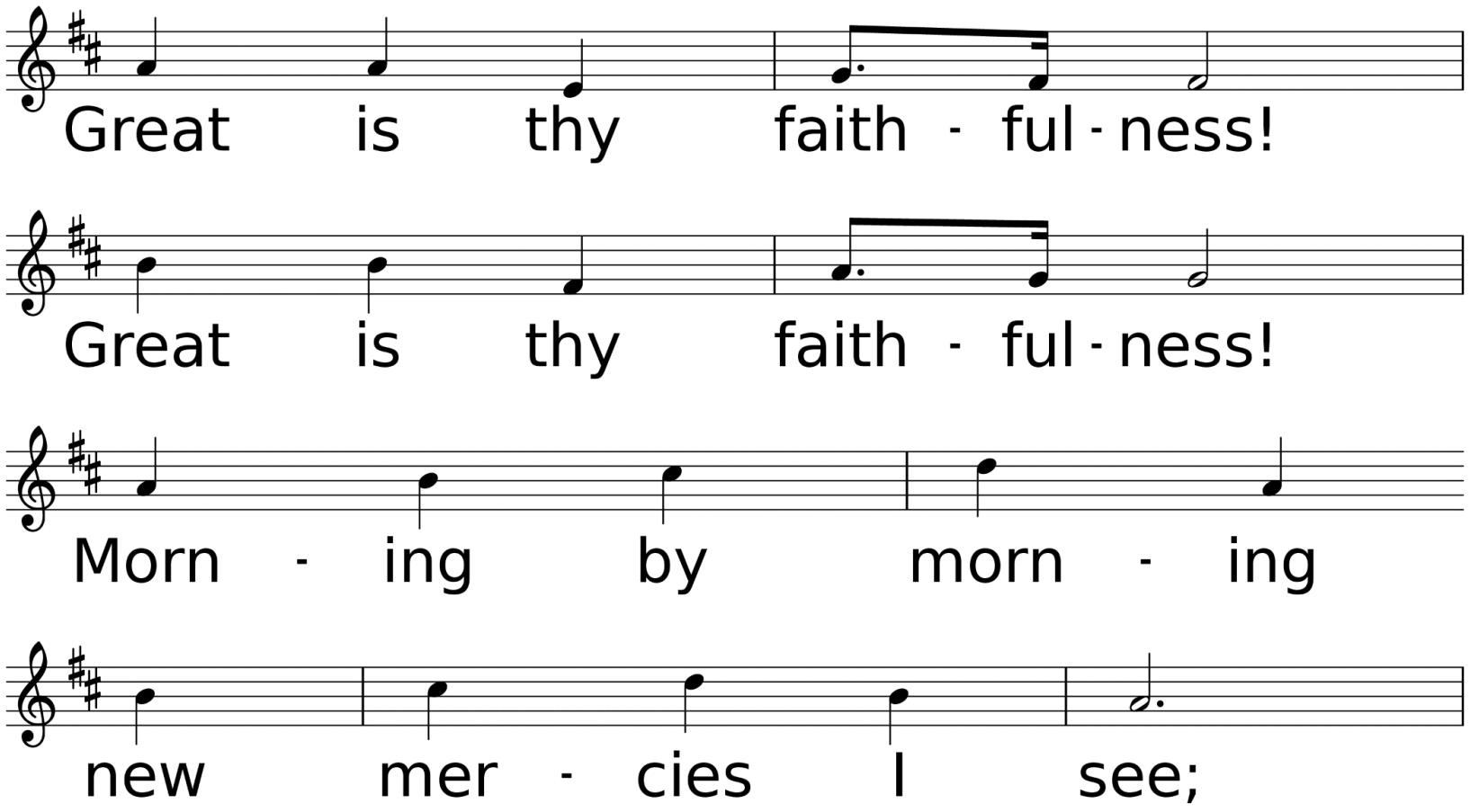
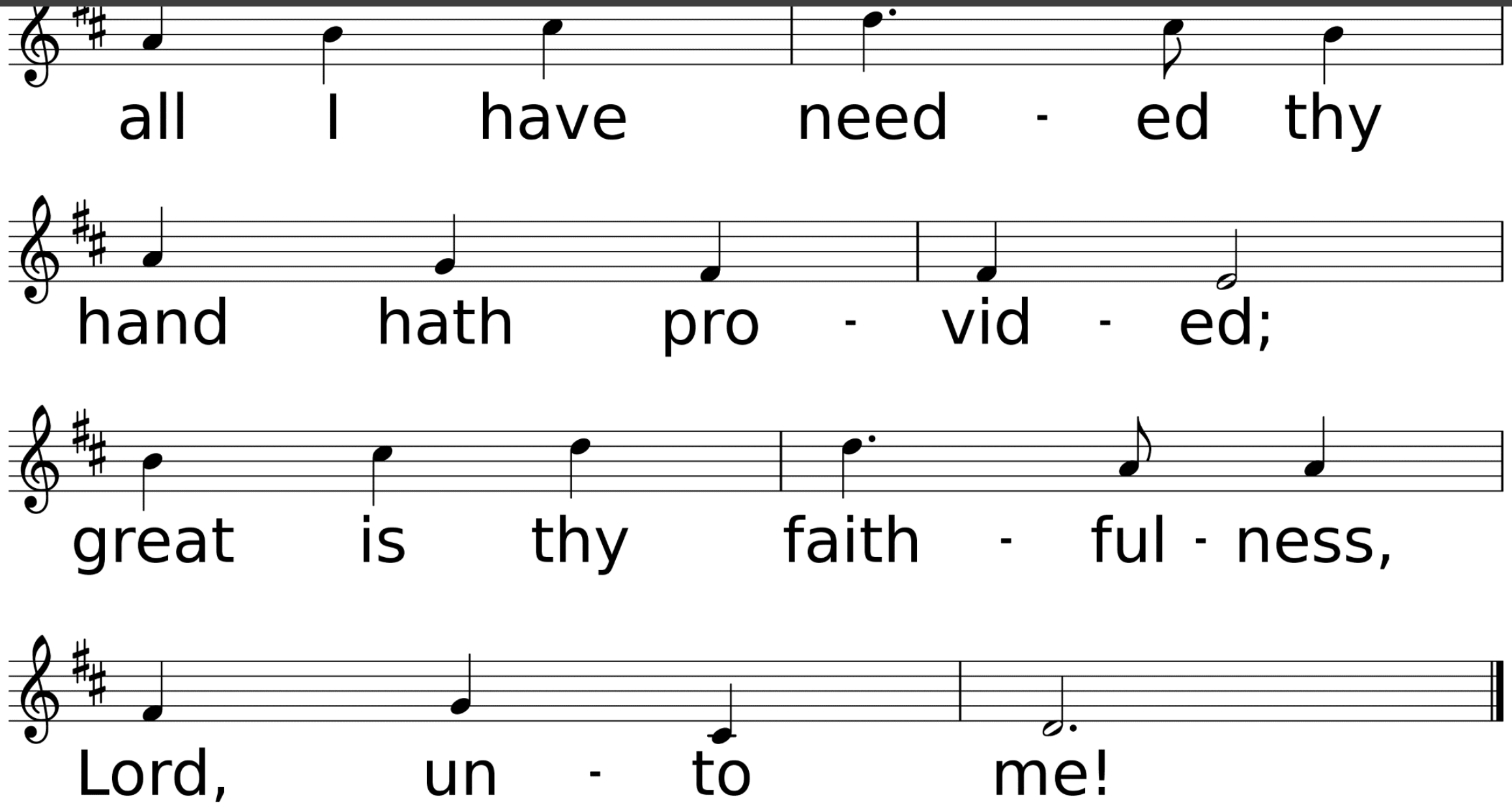
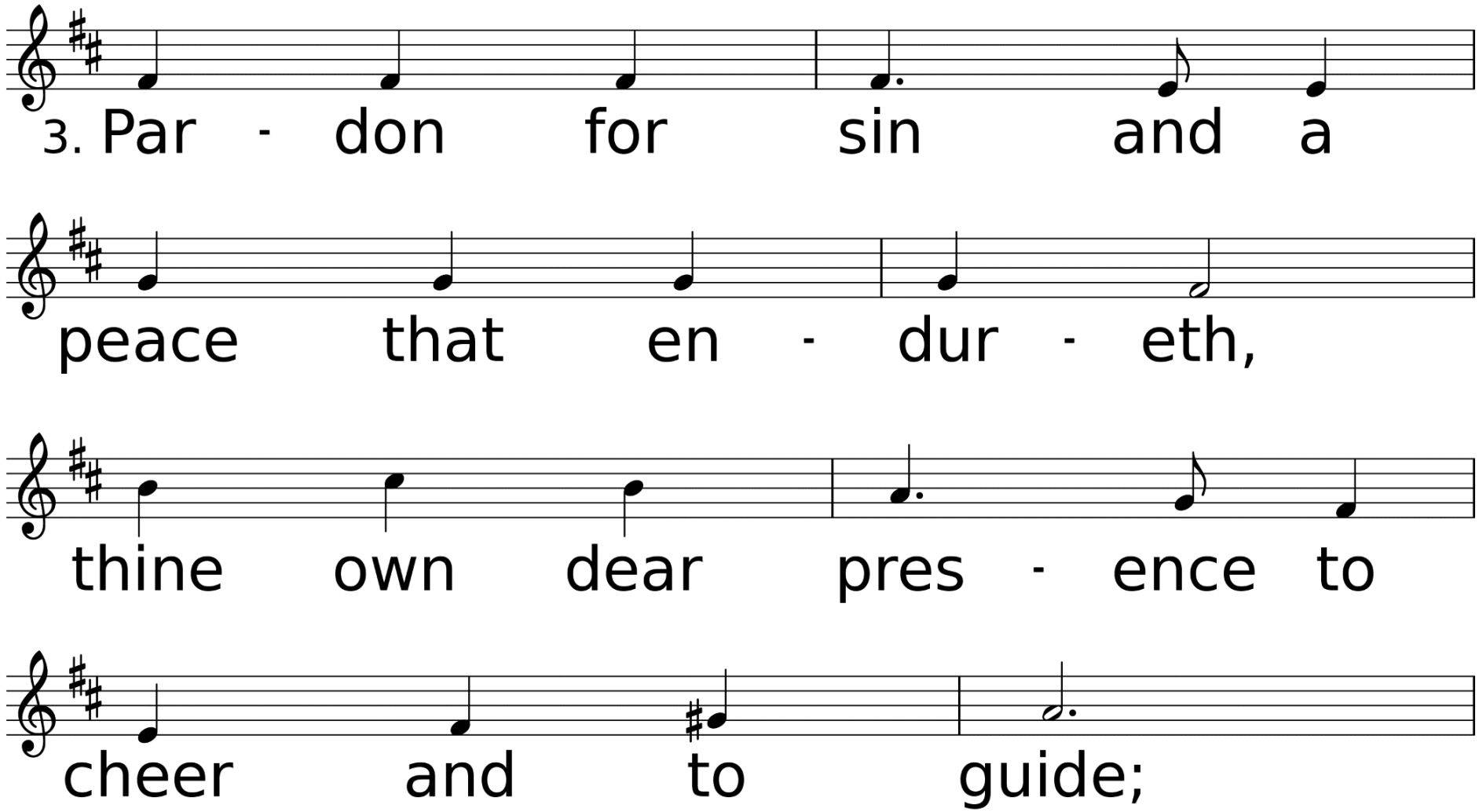
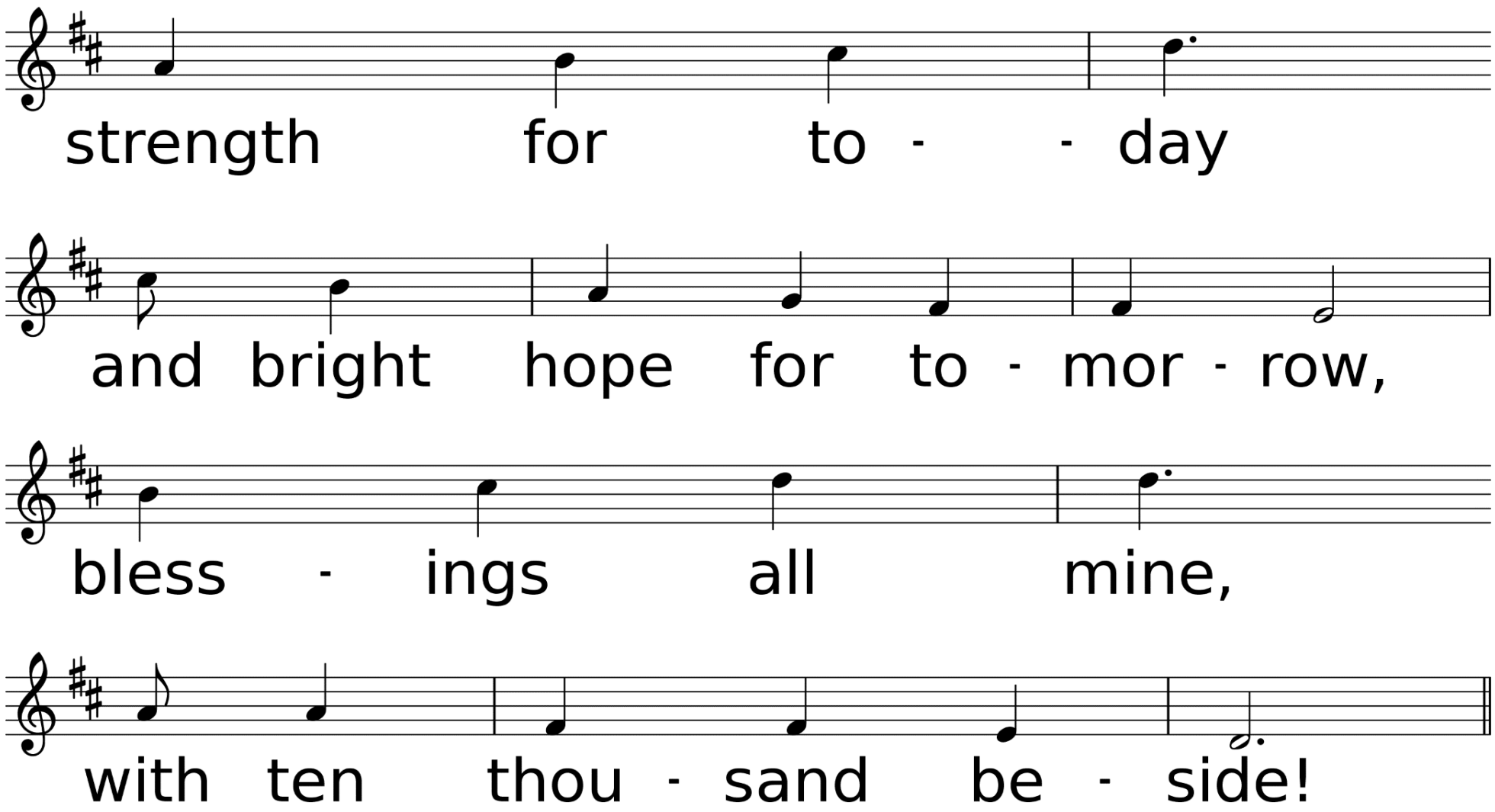

1. Great is thy faith - ful - ness,
O God my Fa - ther;
there is no shad - ow of
turn - ing with thee;

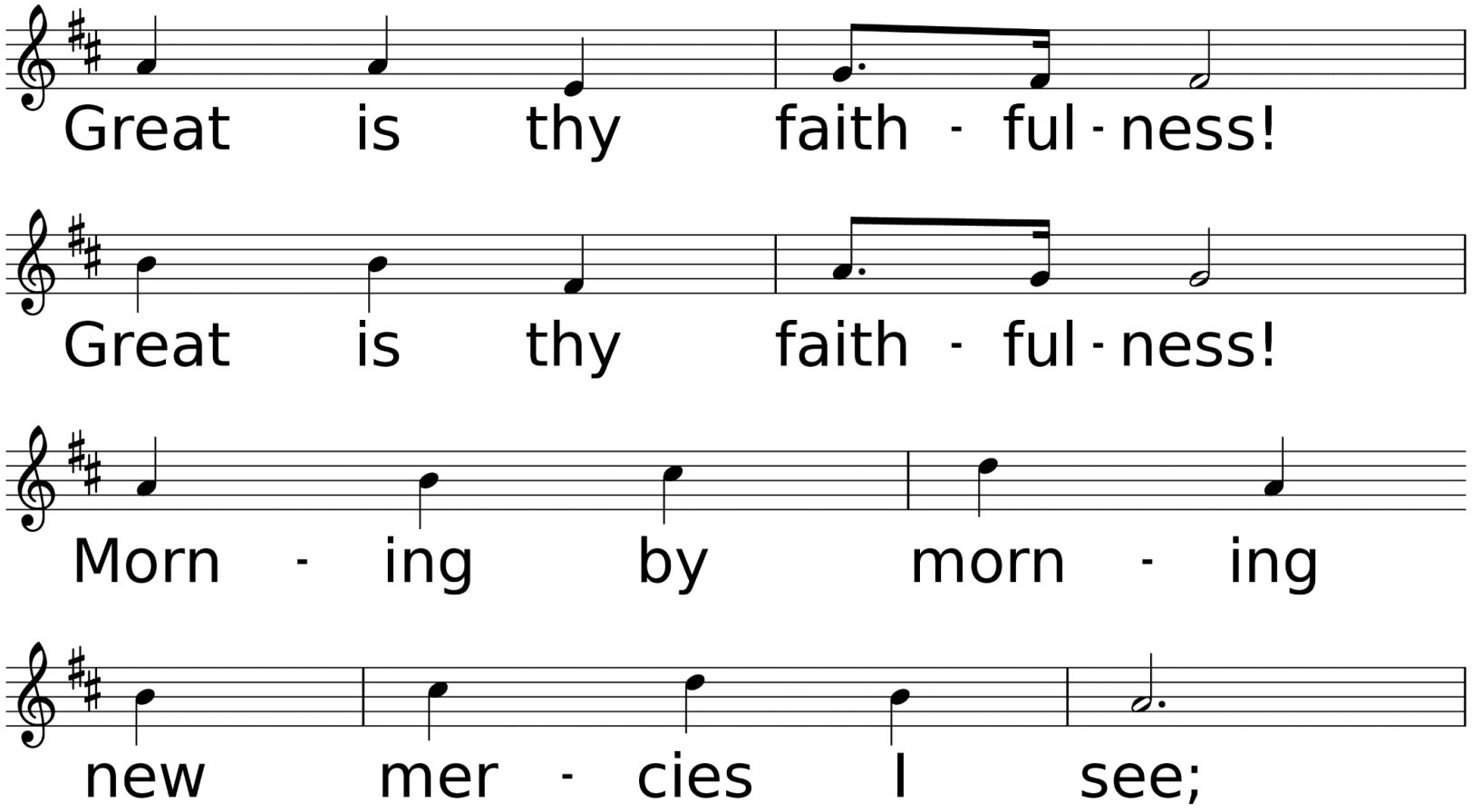

thou chang - est not,
thy com - pas - sions, they fail not;
as thou hast been,
thou for - ev - er wilt be.

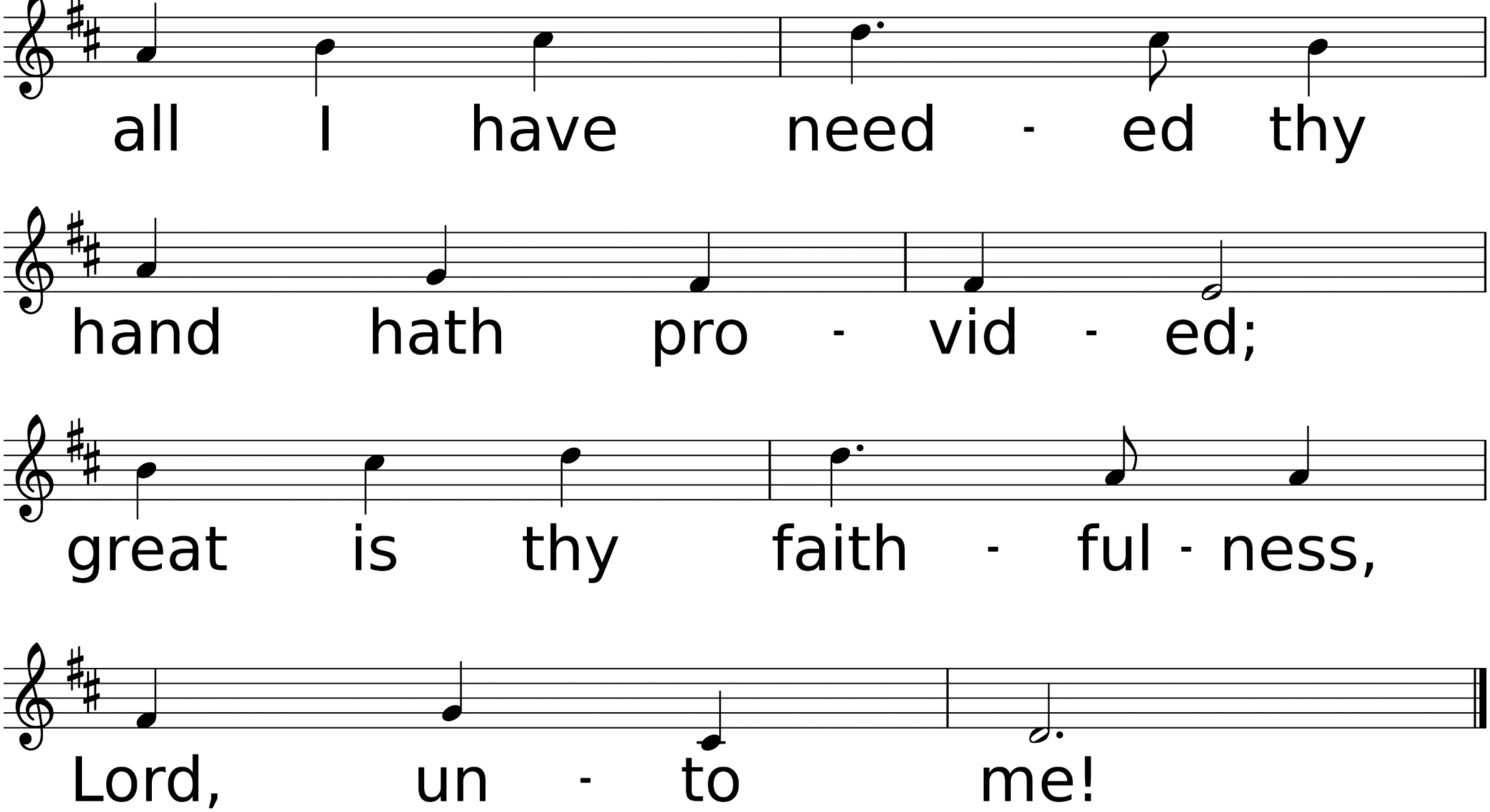

Great is thy faith - ful - ness!
Great is thy faith - ful - ness!
Morn - ing by morn - ing
new mer - cies I see;


all I have need - ed thy
hand hath pro - vid - ed;
great is thy faith - ful - ness,
Lord, un - to me!


3. Par - don for sin and a
peace that en - dur - eth,
thine own dear pres - ence to
cheer and to guide;


strength for to - - day
and bright hope for to - mor - row,
bless - ings all mine,
with ten thou - sand be - side!


Great is thy faith - ful - ness!
Great is thy faith - ful - ness!
Morn - ing by morn - ing
new mer - cies I see;


all I have need - ed thy
hand hath pro - vid - ed;
great is thy faith - ful - ness,
Lord, un - to me!

Litany of Remembrance

First Candle is Lighted

Leader:

We light this first candle to remember those whom we have loved and lost. We pause to remember clearly, their faces and their voices. We embrace and give thanks for the memories that bind them to us in this season of expectation, when all Creation waits for the Light.

Congregation:
We remember them with love. May God's eternal love surround them.

Sung Response

O come, O come, Emmanuel, and ransom captive Israel, that mourns in lonely exile here until the son of God appear.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.

Silent Reflection

Second Candle is Lighted

Leader:

We light this second candle to remember the pain of loss: loss of relationships, loss of trust, loss of jobs, loss of health, loss of faith, the loss of joy, and the loss of “normalcy.”

Leader:
We acknowledge and embrace the pain of the past, O God, and we offer it to You, asking that into our wounded hearts and open hands You will place the gift of peace, shalom.

Congregation:
We remember that through You all things are possible. Refresh, restore, renew us, O God, and lead us into Your future.

Sung Response

O come, thou Wisdom from on high, and order all things far and nigh; to us the path of knowledge show and cause us in her ways to go. Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.

Silent Reflection

Third Candle is Lighted

Leader:

We light this third candle to remember ourselves this Christmas time. We pause and remember the past weeks, months, and for some of us years, that have been heavy with our burdens. We accept and lay before you, God, the sharpness of memory, the sadness and grief, the hurt and fear, the anger and pain.

Leader:
We accept and lay before you the ways we feel we have fallen short, and the times we have spent blaming ourselves, and you, for all that we have suffered. We accept and lay before you the time we have walked alone, in darkness; and in knowledge of our own mortality.

Congregation:

We remember that though we have journeyed far, and that, while lost, we may have turned away from the light, the light itself has not failed. We remember that though winter be upon us and though the night be dark, with the turning of the wheel the dawn will come, and light defeats the darkness.

Sung Response

O come, thou Dayspring, come and cheer our spirits by thy justice here; disperse the gloomy clouds of night, and death's dark shadows put to flight. Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.

Silent Reflection

Fourth Candle is Lighted

Leader:

We light this fourth candle to remember faith, the gift of light and hope that God offers to us in the stories of Christmas, which also began in abandonment, insecurity, and humbleness, and in a poor stable.

Leader:

We remember that the loving God who kept the light shining in the temple and who came to share this life with us promises us comfort and peace.

Congregation:

We remember the One who shares our burdens, who shows us the way to the Light, and who journeys with us into all our tomorrows.

Sung Response

O come, Desire of nations bind all peoples in one heart and mind. From dust thou brought us forth to life; deliver us from earthly strife. Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.

Laying Our Burdens Down

Silent Reflection

Third Reading
Isaiah 40: 1-5, 11, & 28-31

The Prayers of the People

Leader:

God of wisdom, we come to you this Christmas Season tired, in turmoil, and in pain. As the nights have grown longer, so has darkness grown and wrapped itself around our hearts. In this season of longest night, we ask your healing blessings upon all that we carry in our hearts —

Congregation:
Lord, hear our prayer.

Leader:

God of mercy and compassion, there are those among us who are grieving over what might have been. Death or loss or terrible hurt has changed our experience of Christmas. We remember that once it was a special day for us, too, but someone or something precious has gone away from us in this life.

Congregation:
Lord, hear our prayer.

Leader:

We have lost a beloved, a job, a goal, a cause, a dream. We find ourselves adrift and alone. We are weary from the journey, and we have found no room at the inn. We come to you seeking rest, and peace, and shelter from the storm.

Congregation:
Lord, hear our prayer.

Leader:

God of love, in this Christmas Season we embrace and offer up to you all that used to be which is now lost to us, and cannot be again. With celebration all around us, memories of what was, and fears of what may be, weigh heavy on our hearts. Please hold us close in your embrace, be near to us this night, until the light returns and morning comes.

Congregation:
Lord, hear our prayer.

Leader:

Keep watch, dear Lord, with those who work, or watch, or weep this night, and give your angels charge over those who sleep. Tend the sick, Lord; give rest to the weary, bless the dying, soothe the suffering, pity the afflicted, shield the joyous; and all for thy love's sake.

Congregation:
Lord, hear our prayer.

*Hymn

It Came Upon a Midnight Clear

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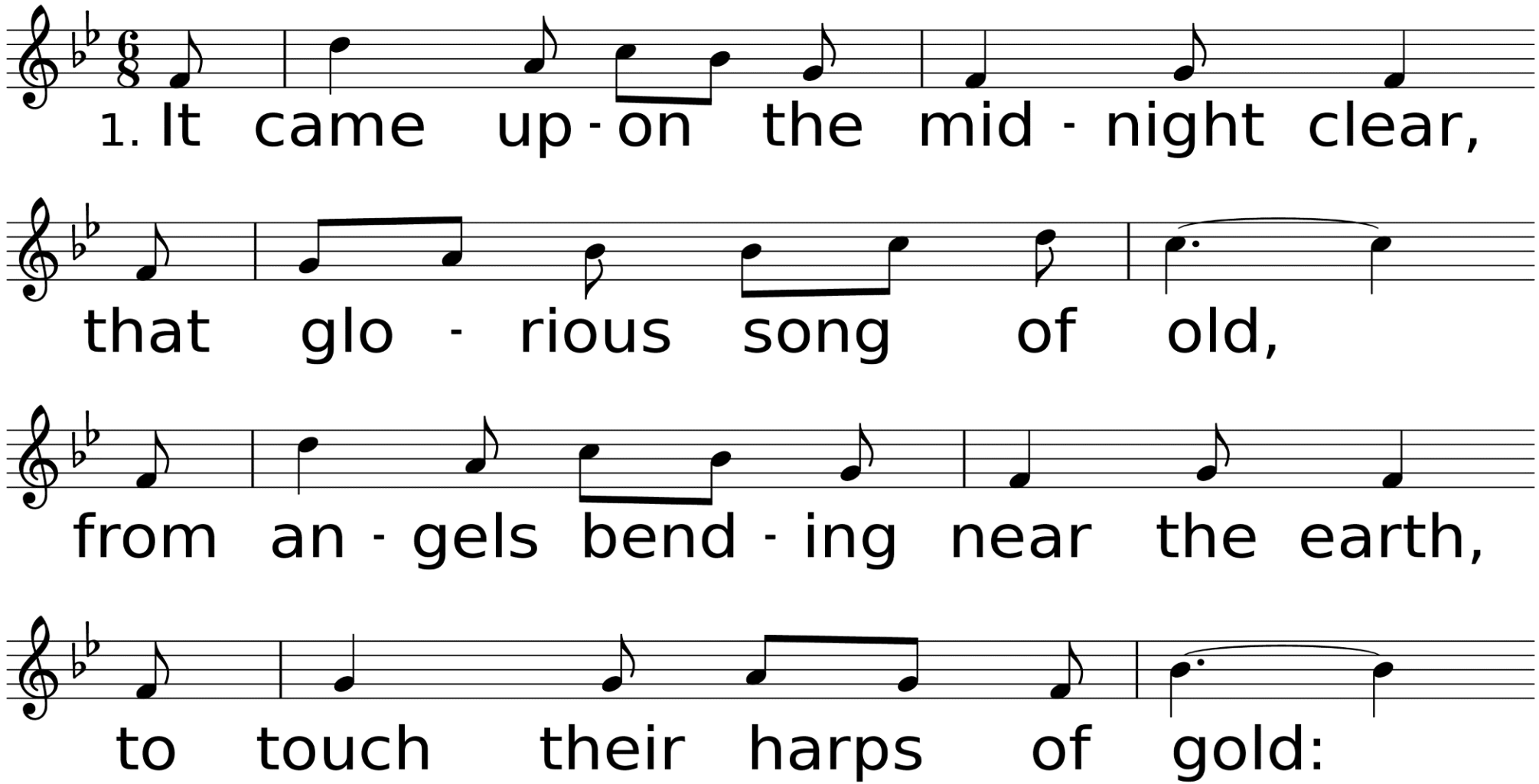
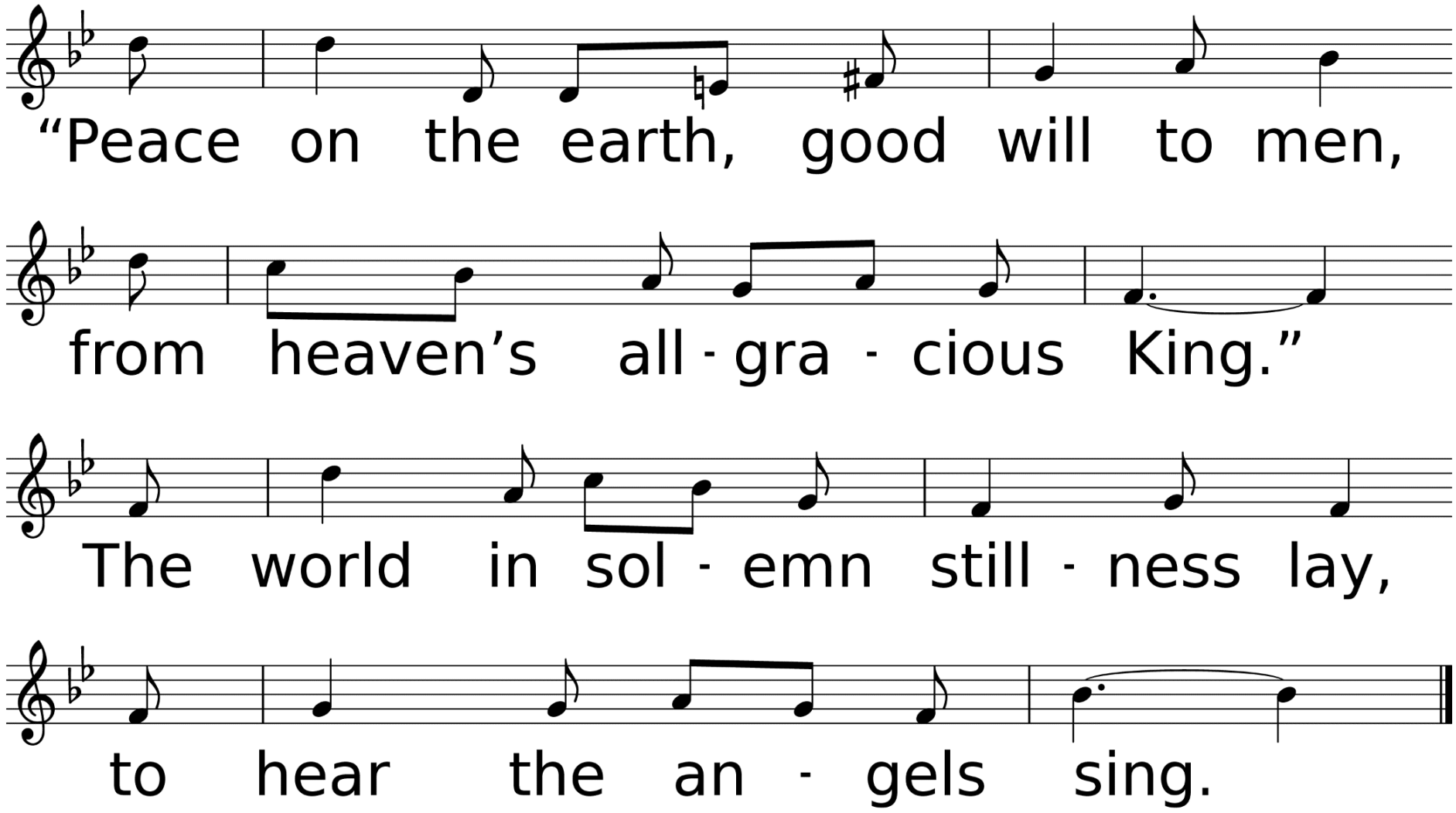
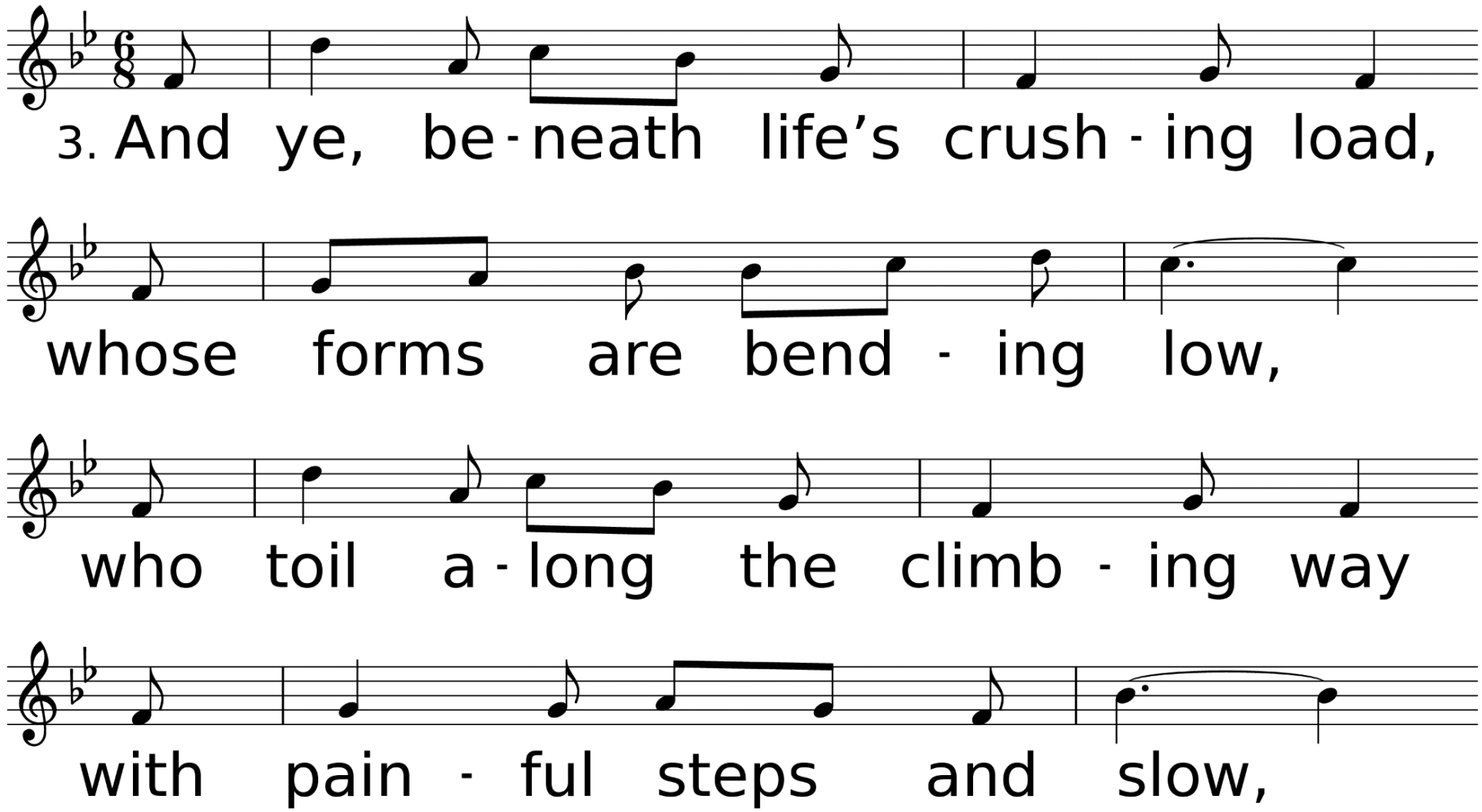
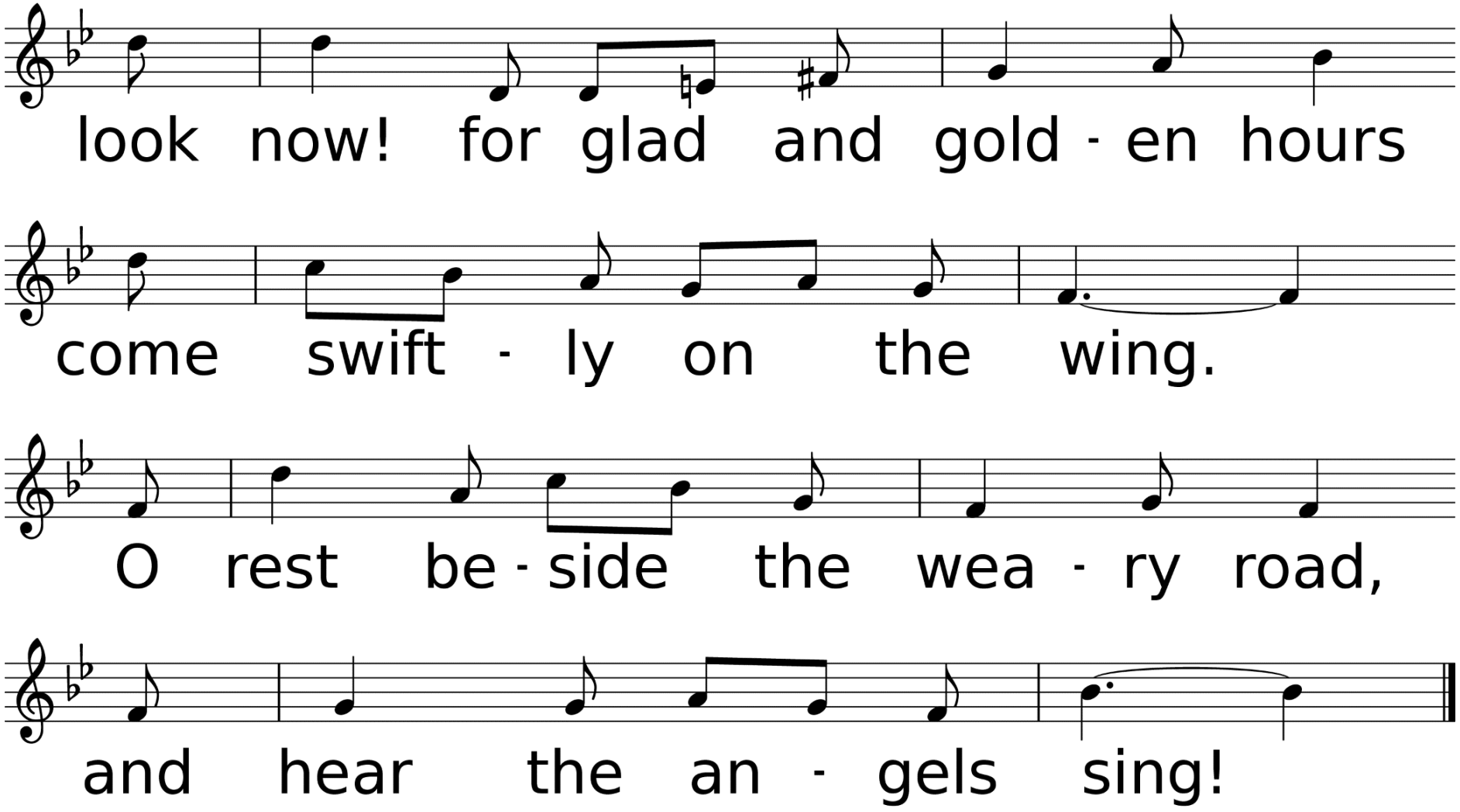
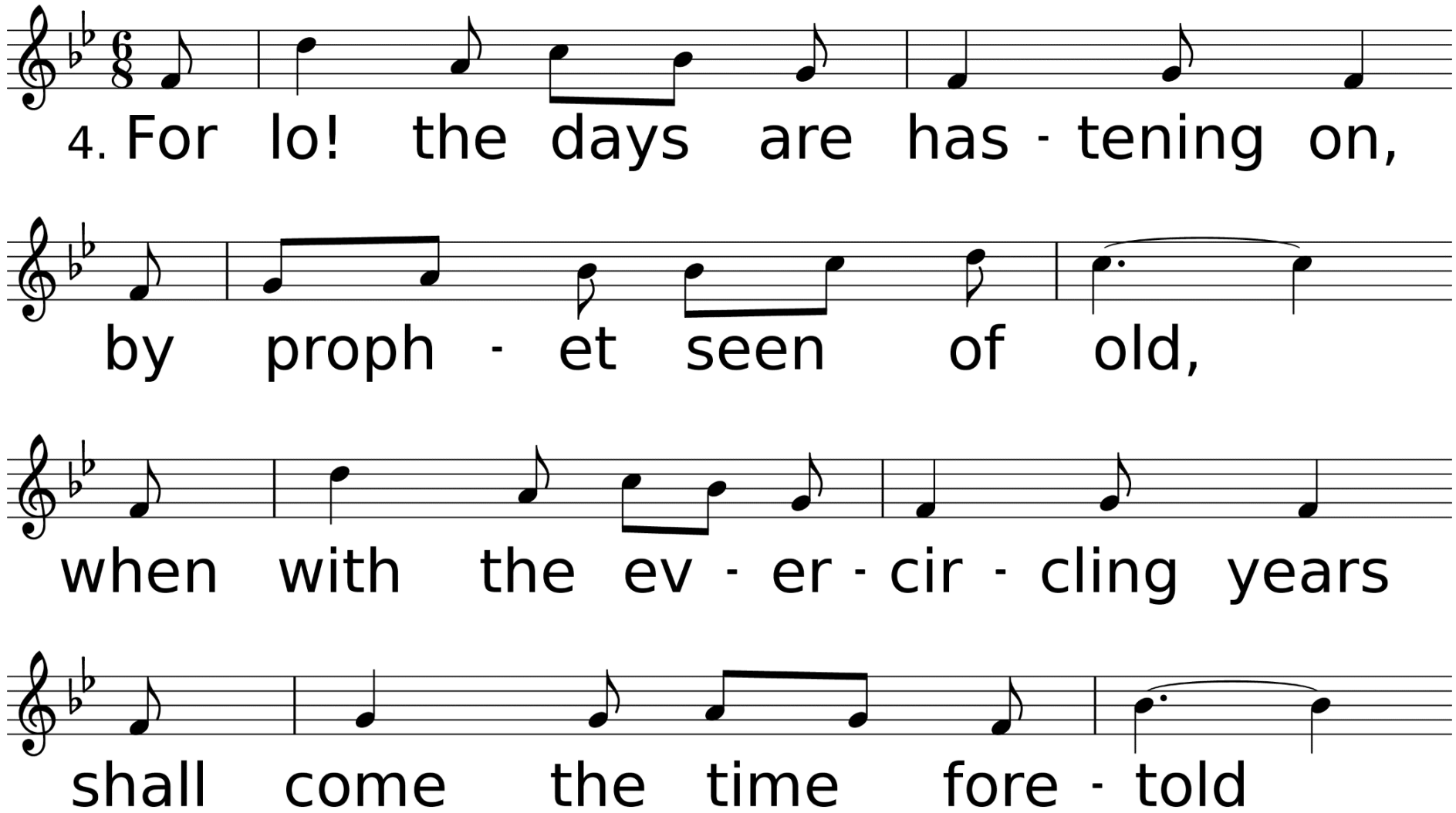


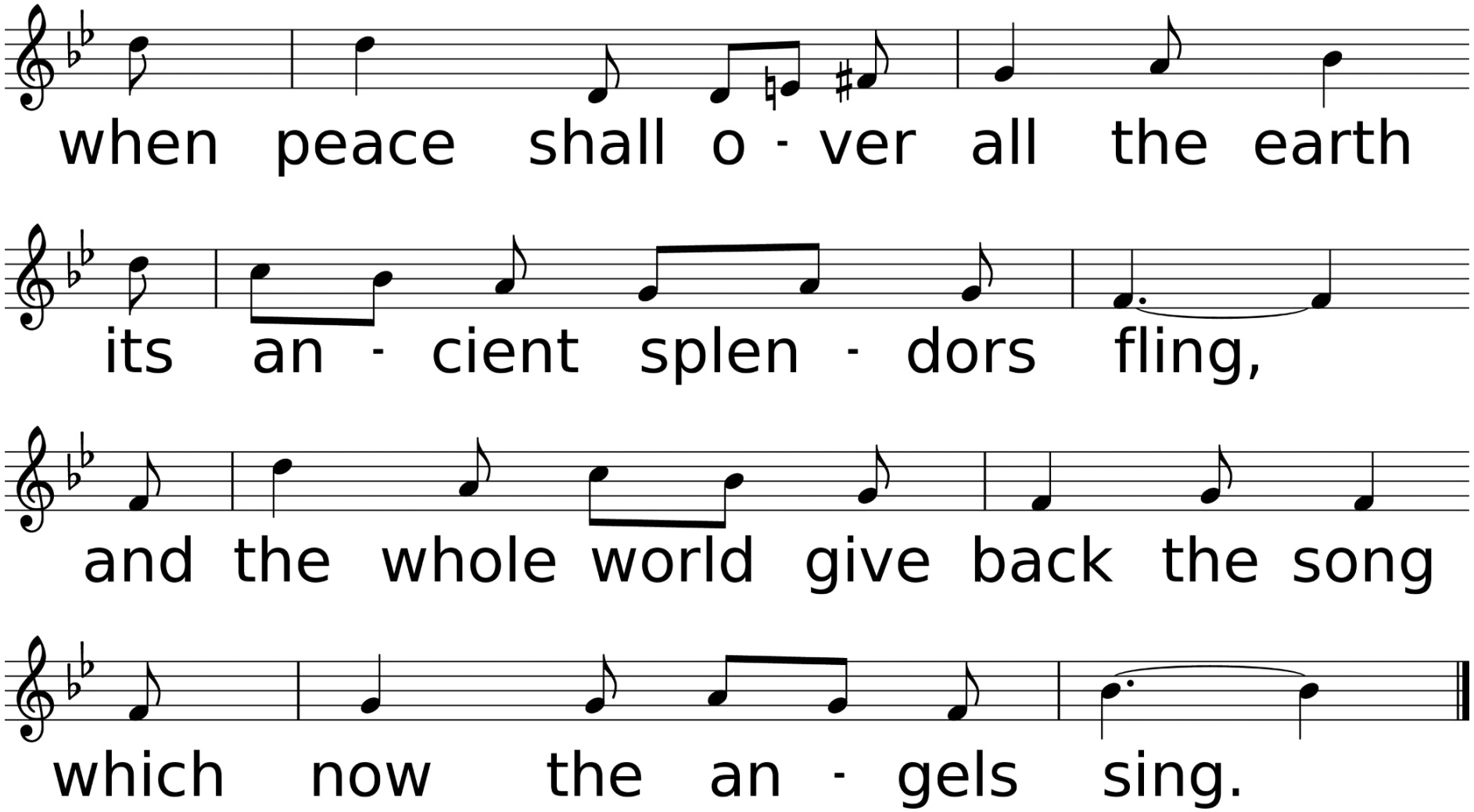
WORDS: Edmund H. Sears, 1849 (Lk. 2:8-14)
MUSIC (CAROL, CMD): Richard Storrs Willis, 1850


"Peace on the earth, good will to men,
from heaven's all - gra - cious King."
The world in sol - emn still - ness lay,
to hear the an - gels sing.


3. And ye, be - neath life's crush - ing load,
whose forms are bend - ing low,
who toil a - long the climb - ing way
with pain - ful steps and slow,


look now! for glad and gold - en hours
come swift - ly on the wing.
O rest be - side the wea - ry road,
and hear the an - gels sing!


4. For lo! the days are has - tening on,
by proph - et seen of old,
when with the ev - er - cir - cling years
shall come the time fore - told


when peace shall o - ver all the earth
its an - cient splen - dors fling,
and the whole world give back the song
which now the an - gels sing.

Fourth Reading
Luke 2:1-7

Devotional

Psalm 121

I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from where comes my help. My help comes from the Lord, who has made heaven and earth. He will not suffer thy foot to be moved; he that keeps us will not slumber; behold, the God that keeps Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep. The Lord is our keeper; the Lord is my shade upon thy right hand. The sun shall not defeat me by day nor the moon at night. The Lord shall preserve me from all evil and shall sustain my soul. He shall preserve my going out and my coming in, from this time forth and forevermore.

*Hymn

O Come, All Ye Faithful

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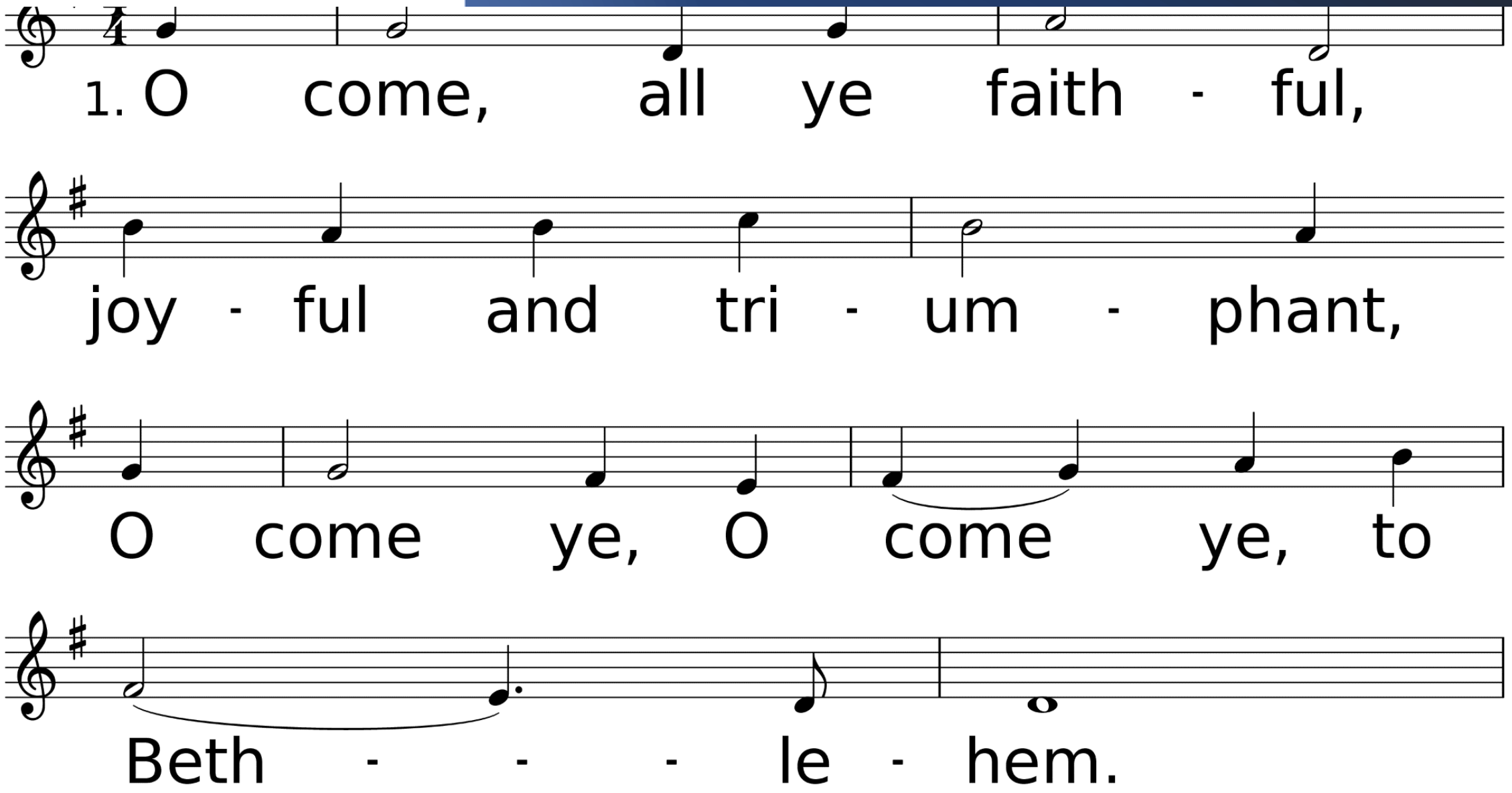
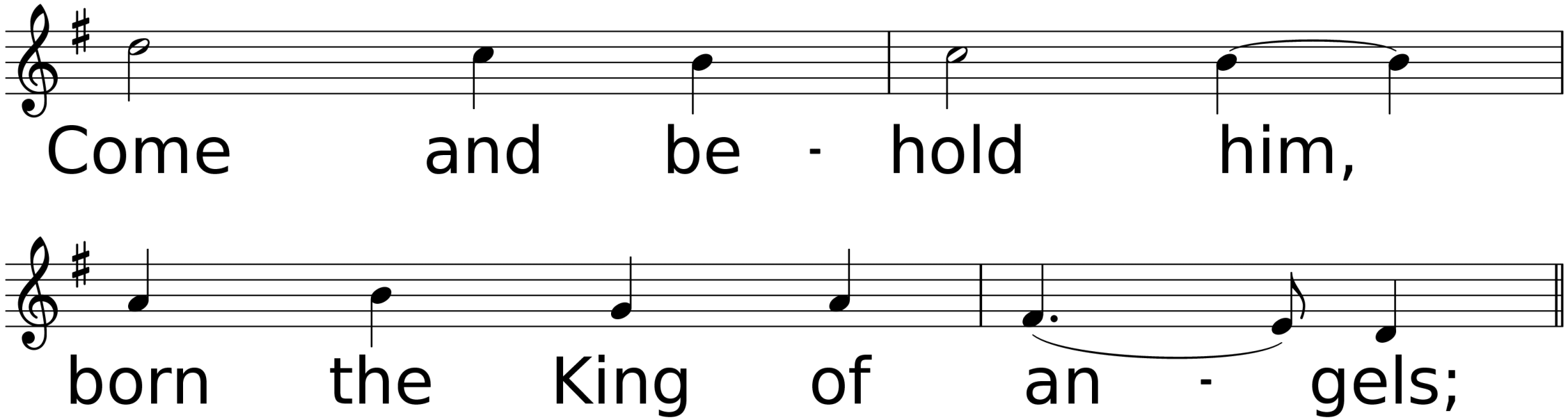
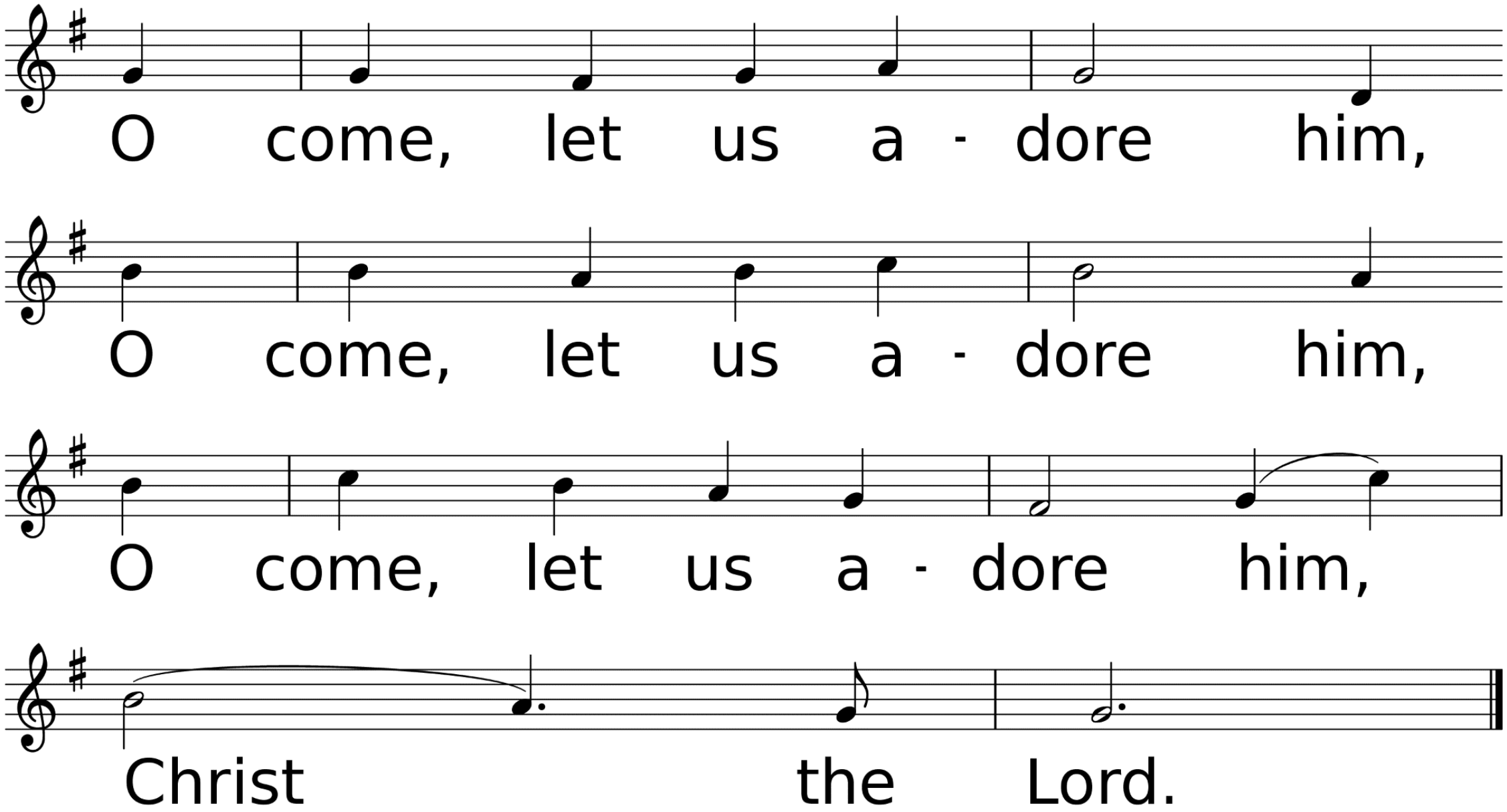
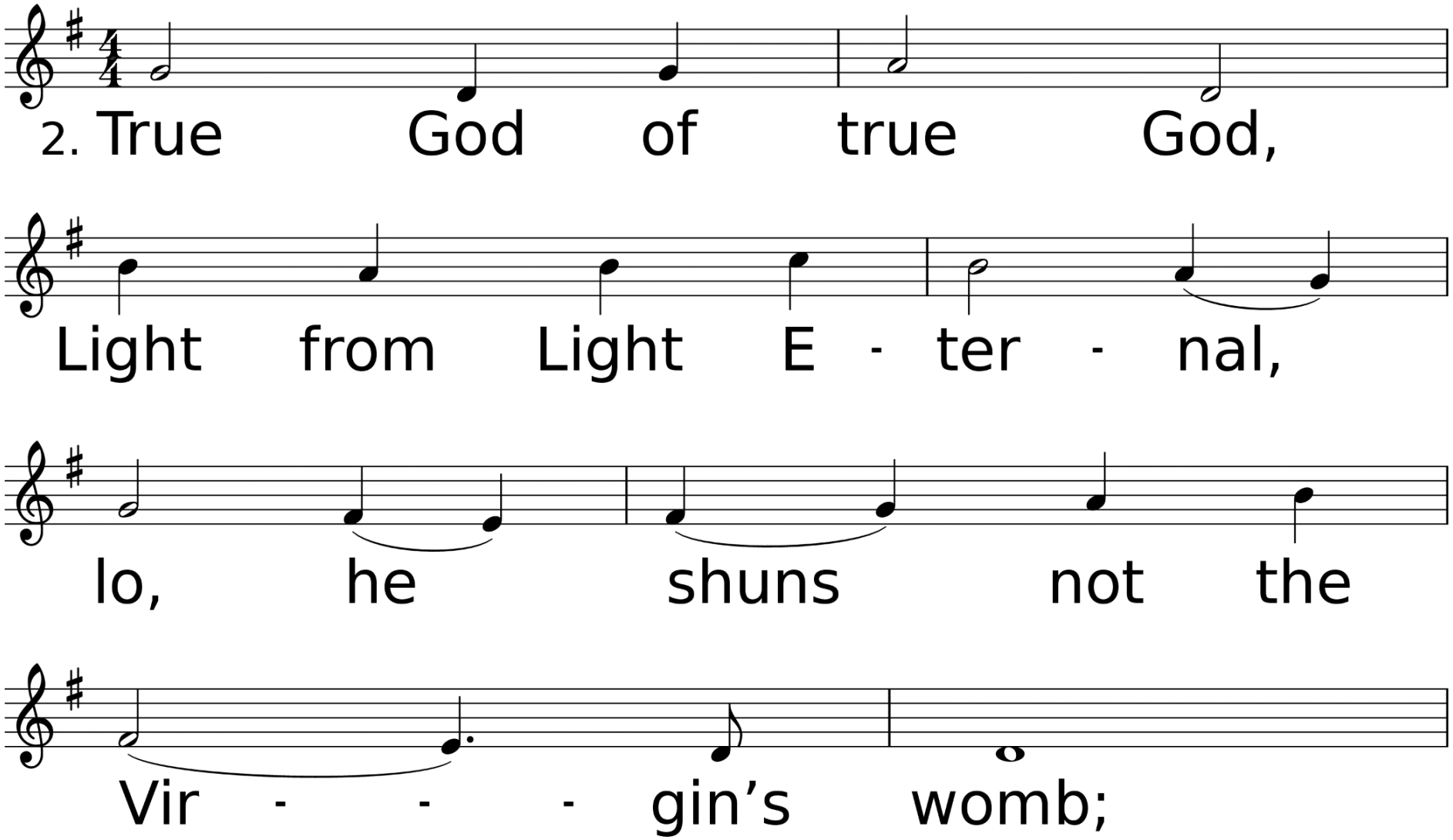

1. O come, all ye faith - ful,
joy - ful and tri - um - phant,
O come ye, O come ye, to
Beth - - - le - hem.

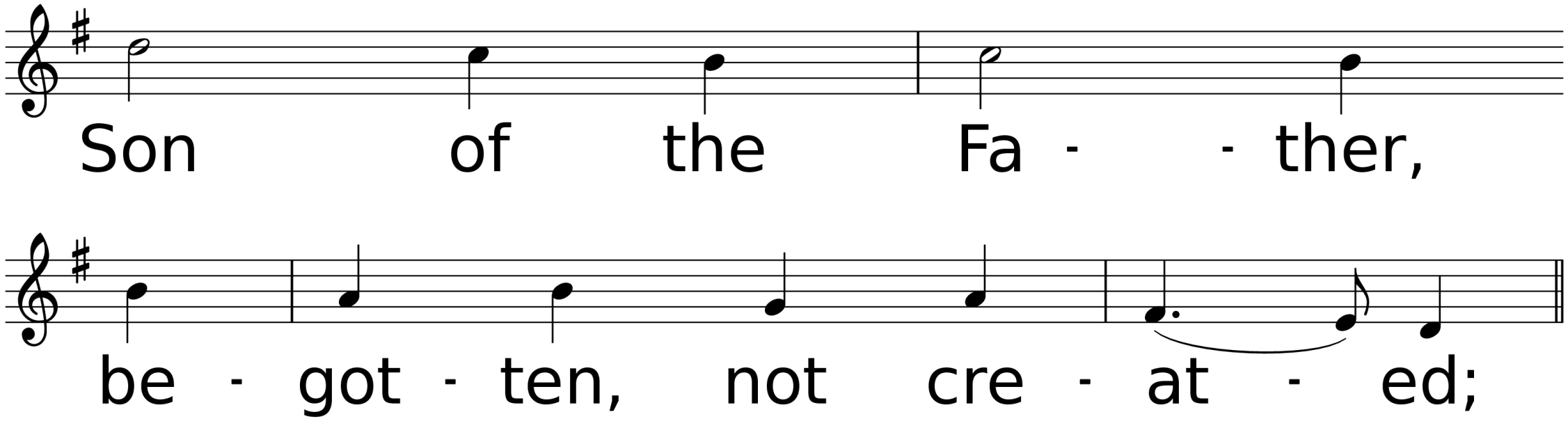

Come and be - hold him,
born the King of an - gels;

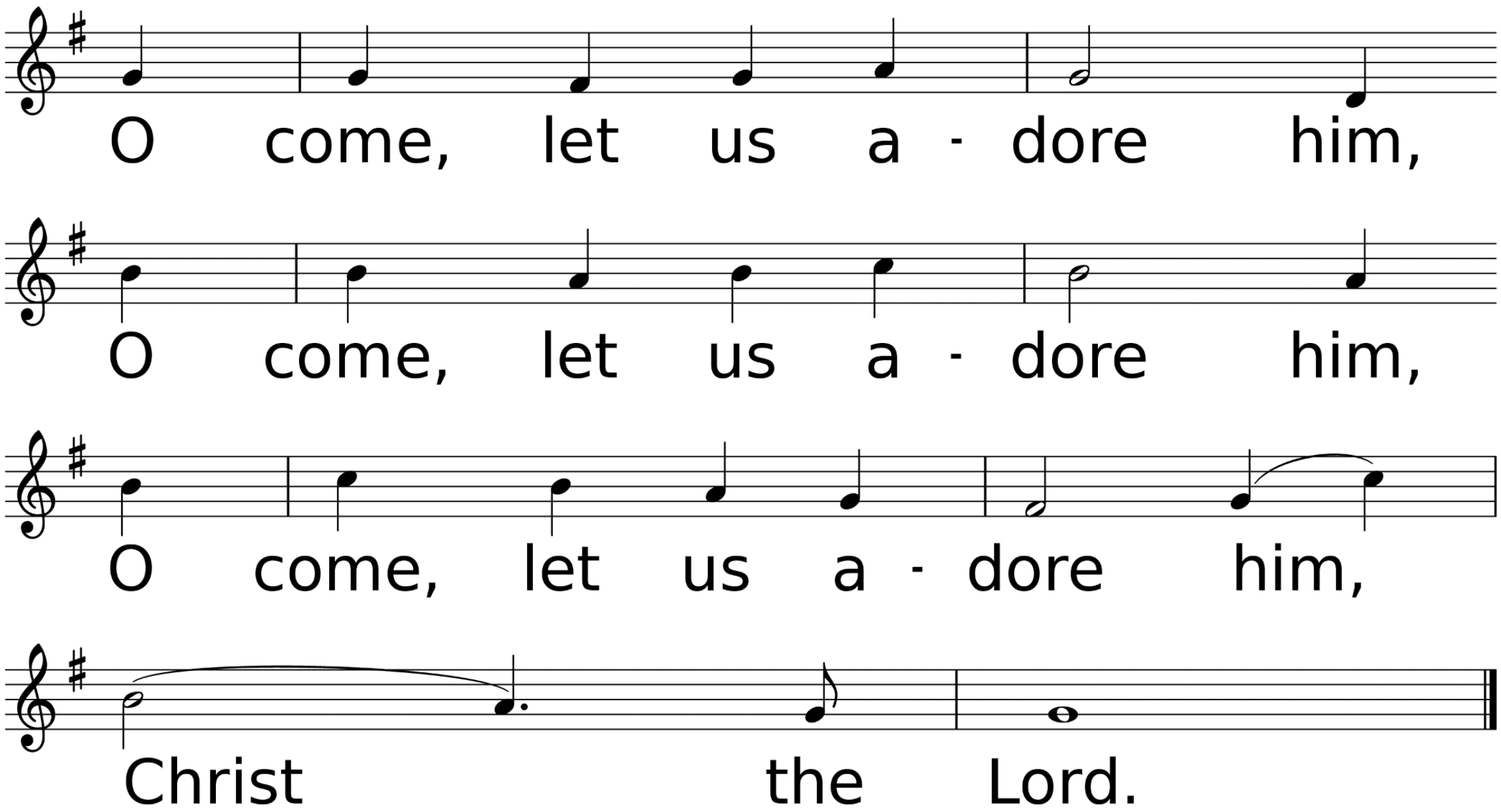

O come, let us a - dore him,
O come, let us a - dore him,
O come, let us a - dore him,
Christ the Lord.

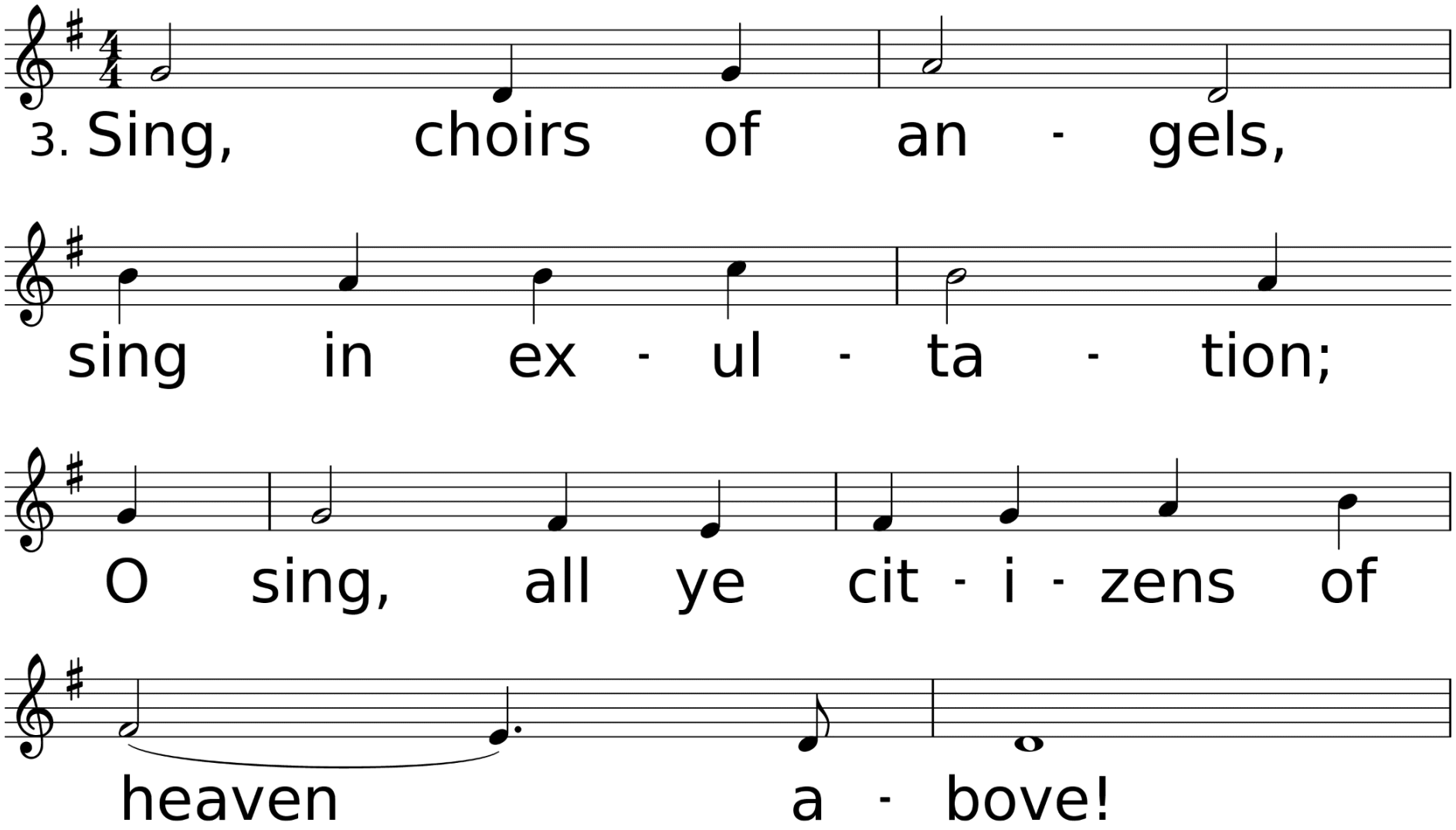

2. True God of true God,
Light from Light E - ter - nal,
lo, he shuns not the
Vir - - - gin's womb;

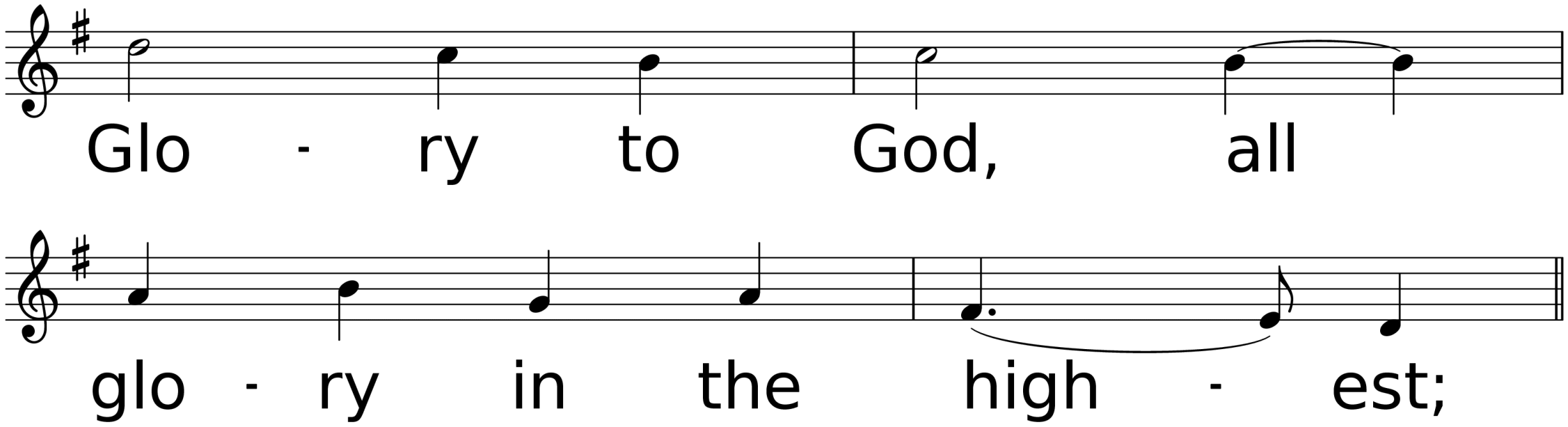
O Come, All Ye Faithful

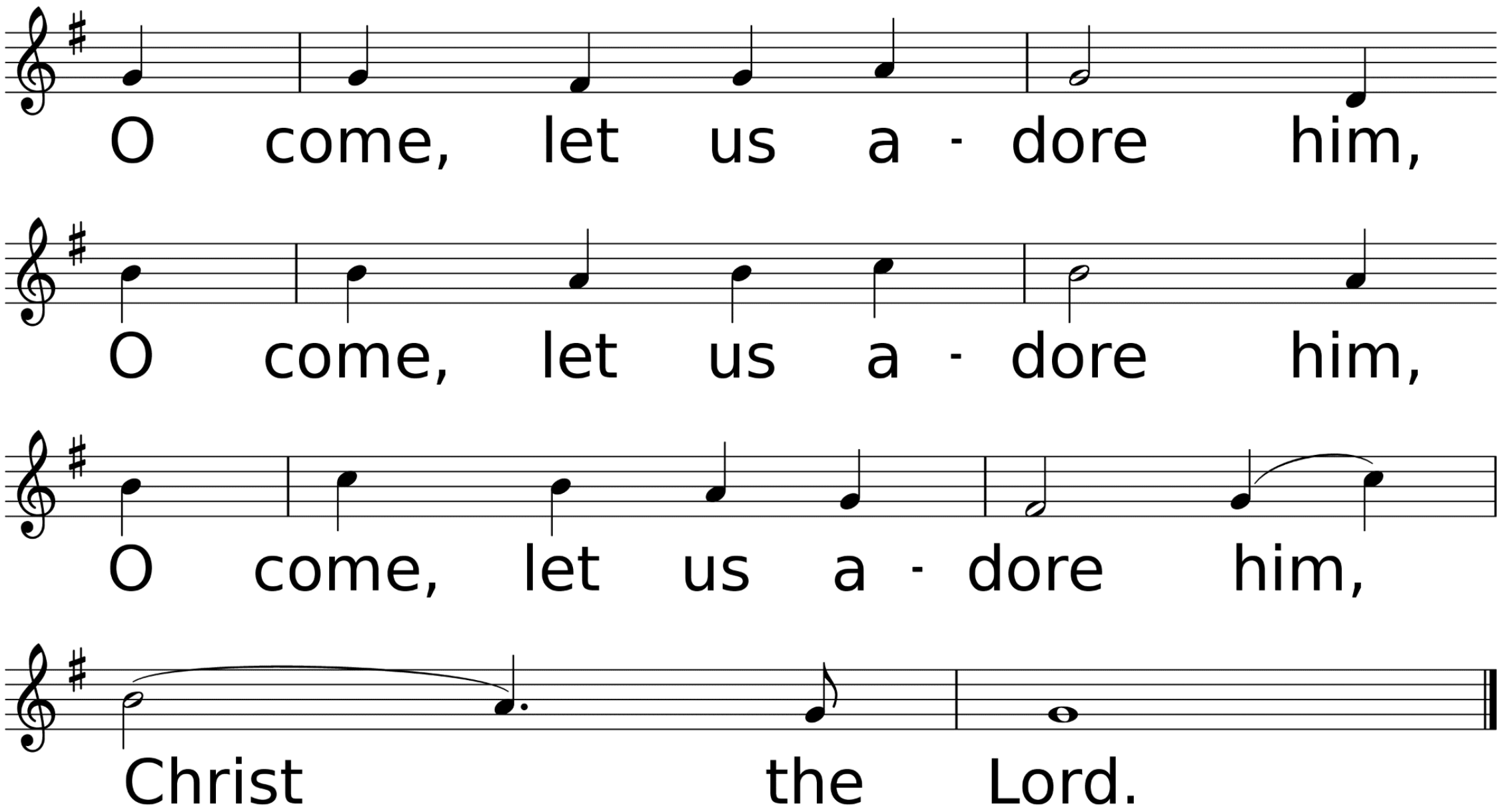
United Methodist Hymnal #234




O come, let us a - dore him,
O come, let us a - dore him,
O come, let us a - dore him,
Christ the Lord.


3. Sing, choirs of an - gels,
sing in ex - ul - ta - tion;
O sing, all ye cit - i - zens of
heaven a - bove!


Glo - ry to God, all
glo - ry in the high - est;


O come, let us a - dore him,
O come, let us a - dore him,
O come, let us a - dore him,
Christ the Lord.

*Prayer

Another day will come, O God. I know not what it may bring forth, but make me ready, God, for whatever it may be. If I am to stand up, help me to stand bravely. If I am to sit still, help me to sit quietly. If I am to lie low, help me to rest peacefully. And if I am to do nothing, help me do it gallantly. Make these words more than words, and give me the Spirit of thy Peace.

Amen.

*Blessing & Dismissal

Thank you for Joining us. We invite you to attend our other Special Christmas Services this holiday season:

Christmas Eve Candlelight & Communion Services
Saturday, December 24th at 5:30 PM
Sanctuary & Online

Christmas Day Service
Sunday, December 25th at 10:00 AM
Sanctuary & Online

Merry Christmas