

'Silent Night'

A Reflection



SLIDE ONE – HOLDING SLIDE

LEADER'S NOTES

Around this time every year, we begin to hear songs and carols that are very familiar to us. So familiar that sometimes we forget to listen to the messages they contain.

Today we're going to focus on one such carol and the fascinating story connected to it.

Let's see how many of you can guess the carol by the lyrics on the next screen.



SLIDE TWO

*'All is calm, all is bright,
Round yon virgin mother and child;
Holy infant so tender and mild.
Sleep in heavenly peace.'*

It's 'Silent Night', one of the most popular carols across the world, having been translated into over 200 languages. Maybe the fact that 'Silent Night' is known and loved in so many countries explains why the carol helped to bring peace during one of the bloodiest wars the world has ever experienced.

Q. Can anyone guess which war I'm referring to?

A. World War One

Many of you will have heard of the famous Christmas truce, which occurred between German and British soldiers on 24 December 1914. Many soldiers recorded this extraordinary event in letters sent home from the front line.

These letters explain how, as Christmas Eve night drew in, British soldiers watched in surprise as German troops began to place makeshift Christmas trees on the ridge of the German trenches. Soon after enemy soldiers waved to each other and shouted Christmas greetings. Then a few German soldiers came gingerly over the top of the trenches to retrieve their dead and wounded comrades from the battle field. British soldiers followed their example, until 'No Man's Land' was cleared of the dead and dying.

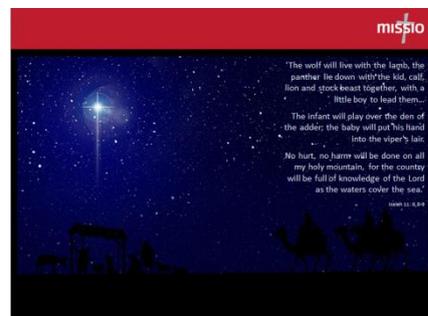
Although the pause in fighting had brought a welcome sense of calm, both sides were still divided. Then through the cold, starry night a German soldier began to sing 'Stille Nacht'.



What followed was both sides singing more well known carols, some sung at the same time in both German and English. Then soldiers ventured over the top of the trenches again, this time to exchange smiles, show photographs of loved ones, and even play football together.

SLIDE THREE

It is fitting that 'Silent Night' started this peaceful chain of events as this carol reminds us that the birth of Jesus fulfilled the prophecies of many in Israel; prophecies that spoke of a saviour who could bring peace and calm into the most unlikely situations. This is captured well in the words on screen, written by the prophet Isaiah, 700 years before the birth of Jesus. *Invite a student to read the scripture on slide.*



'The wolf will live with the lamb, the panther lie down with the kid, calf, lion and stock beast together, with a little boy to lead them...

The infant will play over the den of the adder; the baby will put his hand into the viper's lair.

No hurt, no harm will be done on all my holy mountain, for the country will be full of knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.'

Isaiah 11: 6,8-9

'Silent Night' also highlights a mystery of the Christian faith – that God became one of us and entered our world as a vulnerable baby, dependent on the care of those around him and especially the care of his mother, Mary.

God continues to set us the same mission of caring for His children and all His creation through the love we show to the world and all the people within it. From his birth, Jesus helped us to recognise that everyone is a child of God, made in His image, and worthy of love and respect.

This is what happened on Christmas Eve 1914, when the message of 'Silent Night' brought together enemy soldiers, who by Christmas Day morning, were playing football as friends.

As followers of Christ, we are to witness this same love through our words and actions. This is what it means to be a missionary: someone sent out by God to make Christ's love known on earth, not just at Christmas but all year round.

As our closing prayer let's listen to 'Silent Night'. As you listen to (and maybe sing?) the carol, reflect on its message and think about how you can bring God's peace into the world today. You could do this in a practical way, for example by challenging opinions that make enemies of those who are different or by praying for peace in a war-torn country.

We recommend you use one of the following YouTube clips:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yVcZdGt5qvo> Silent Night Official Lyric Video 3.52

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-pEndgvJe2s> Chris Tomlin - Silent Night (Live/Lyrics And Chords) ft. Kristyn Getty