



Union Baptist Church of Cincinnati
405 West Seventh Street
Cincinnati, OH 45203
(513) 381-3858
www.union-baptist.net
Rev. Dr. Orlando Yates, Pastor

“IT CAME UPON THE MIDNIGHT CLEAR”
Edmund H. Sears, 1810-1876

Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, ‘Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom His favor rests.’ (Luke 2:13)

The peace of Christmas, proclaimed by the heavenly chorus, is one of God’s greatest gifts to mankind. “God was reconciling the world unto Himself” (2 Corinthians 5:19). This message of reconciliation involves us on three different levels: Peace with God, peace with our fellowmen, and peace within ourselves. It is this blessed concept that Edmund Sears wanted to emphasize in his unusual carol.

In the second stanza Sears stressed the social aspects of the angels’ message—the hope of Christians spreading peace and good will to others who are burdened and painfully toiling. The hymn was written in 1849, a time preceding the Civil War when there was much tension over the question of slavery, the industrial revolution in the North and the frantic gold rush in California. The final verse looks forward optimistically to a time when all people will enjoy the peace of which the angels sang.

This carol is one of the finest ever written by an American. After graduation from Harvard Divinity School, Edmund Sears spent most of his life in small pastorates in the East.

- *It came upon the midnight clear, that glorious song of old, from angels bending near the earth to touch their harps of gold: “Peace on the earth, good will to men, from heav’n’s all gracious King!” The world in solemn stillness lay to hear the angels sing.*
- *And ye, beneath life’s crushing load, whose forms are bending low, who toil along the climbing way with painful steps and slow, look now! For glad and golden hours come swiftly on the wing: O rest beside the weary road and hear the angels sing.*
- *For lo, the days are hast’ning on, by prophet bards foretold, when with the ever circling years comes round the age of gold when peace shall over all the earth its ancient splendors fling, and the whole world give back the song which now the angels sing. AMEN.*

Amazing Grace
366 Inspiring Hymn Stories for Daily Devotions
By Kenneth W. Osbeck

“And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.”
Matthew 28:18 – 20

