



UNIVERSITY
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

**Christmastide
Devotionals**

**The Fourth Day of Christmas
December 28, 2020
"Silent Night, Holy Night"**

Whenever I hear the hymn "Silent Night," a portal opens to Christmases of my past. Unlike Charles Dickens' tale, there are no ghosts or regrets; only memories of love and being loved. I remember my maternal grandmother, framed in Christmas Eve candlelight, singing in the choir of Rosen Heights Baptist Church. I hear my mother's voice emanating from the kitchen, declaring all to be calm and bright as she "fixes" our Christmas dinner. I can picture a piano bench, my paternal grandmother holding me in her lap. She guides my fingers to play each note of the melody. As we strike each key, we sing the words together. "Si - lent night! Ho - ly night!"

Regarding this hymn's origin, fact and legend have become intertwined. Both agree it began with a poem written in 1815 by Joseph Mohr, an Austrian priest. On Christmas Eve, three years later, Father Mohr handed organist Franz Xaver Gruber his poem and asked him to compose a melody to be sung at that night's mass. And so it was. In this hurried and disordered fashion, one of our most beloved Christmas hymns was born. It is sung around the world in 140 languages. There are twenty-five English translations. In our own Presbyterian Hymnal, stanzas 1-3 are attributed to John Freeman Young, and stanza 4 to Jane Montgomery Campbell. For my prayer I offer the last stanza of Alexander Krischnig's translation.

Prayer

*Silent night, holy night!
Son of God, our comfort,
may you bring peace to the world,
and may you reign here:
Jesus, our Redeemer!
Jesus, our Redeemer! Amen.*

Karen

Karen Greif
Parish Associate

Listen: "Silent Night, Holy Night"