

Beneath a Dark, Familiar Sky

Shepherds learn of Christ's birth and go to worship him

Christmastide, Years ABC

1. Beneath a dark, familiar sky
the silent air was stirred;
a sudden rush like many wings
announced a startling word:
a word more distant than the stars
above the stony ground
and closer than the beating hearts
that marked the sudden sound.

2. The shepherds rose to face the sky,
then turned and fell face down;
this night it seemed that Life itself
was pressing towards the ground
to take, to hold, to celebrate
the substance of the earth
and gather all creation in
a reconciling birth.

3. The stars aligned to point a path,
the shepherds rose and ran,
swept up in an epiphany
they longed to understand.
This longing also gathers us
to rise and go with them,
and find our way among the ways
that meet in Bethlehem.

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Beneath a Dark, Familiar Sky

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George Frideric Handel (1685–1759)

arr. Albert Blackwell

Acc. *Introduction*

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1. Be - neath a dark, fa - mil - iar sky the si - lent air was stirred; a
2. The shep-herds rose to face the sky, then turned and fell face down; this
3. The stars a - ligned to point a path, the shep - herds rose and ran, swept

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sud - den rush like ma - ny wings an - nounced a start - ling word: a
night it seemed that Life it - self was pres - sing toward the ground to
up in an e - pi - pha - ny they longed to un - der - stand. This

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word more dis - tant than the stars a - bove the ston - y ground and clos - er than the
 take, to hold, to cel - e - brate the sub - stance of the earth and ga - ther all cre -
 long - ing al - so ga - thers us to rise and go with them, and find our way a -

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beat - ing hearts that marked the sud - den sound, and clos - er than the beat - ing hearts that
 a - tion in a re - con - cil - ing birth, and ga - ther all cre - a - tion in a
 mong the ways that meet in Beth - le - hem, and find our way a - mong the ways that

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Interlude/Conclusion

marked the sud - den sound, — that marked the sud - den sound.
 re - con - cil - ing birth, — a re - con - cil - ing birth.
 meet in Beth - le hem, — that meet in Beth - le - hem.

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