SILENT NIGHT

The Christmas Carol Silent Night (Stille Nacht) was first performed on Christmas Eve, 1818 at St. Nicholas parish church in Oberndorf, a village in the Austrian Empire (present-day Austria). By the 1840s the song was well known across the region and was reportedly a favourite of Frederick William IV of Prussia.

In 1859, the Episcopal priest John Freeman Young, of Trinity Church, New York City, wrote and published the English translation that is most frequently sung today.

Since its inception the song has been translated into over 140 languages and was declared an intangible cultural heritage by UNESCO in 2011.

Stille Nacht (1818)

Stille Nacht, heilige Nacht,
Alles schläft; einsam wacht
Nur das traute hochheilige Paar.
Holder Knabe im lockigen Haar,
Schlaf in himmlischer Ruh!
Schlaf in himmlischer Ruh!

Stille Nacht, heilige Nacht,
Hirten erst kundgemacht
Durch der Engel Halleluja,
Tönt es laut von fern und nah:
Christ, der Retter ist da!
Christ, der Retter ist da!

Stille Nacht, heilige Nacht,
Gottes Sohn, o wie lacht
Lieb' aus deinem göttlichen Mund,
Da uns schlägt die rettende Stund'.
Christ, in deiner Geburt!
Christ, in deiner Geburt!

English Version (1859)

Silent night! Holy night!
All is calm, all is bright
Round yon virgin mother and child!
Holy infant, so tender and mild,
Sleep in heavenly peace!
Sleep in heavenly peace!

Silent night! Holy night!
Shepherds quake at the sight!
Glories stream from heaven afar,
Heavenly hosts sing Alleluia!
Christ the Saviour is born!
Christ the Saviour is born!

Silent night! Holy night!
Son of God, love's pure light
Radiant beams from thy holy face
With the dawn of redeeming grace,
Jesus, Lord, at thy birth!
Jesus, Lord, at thy birth!
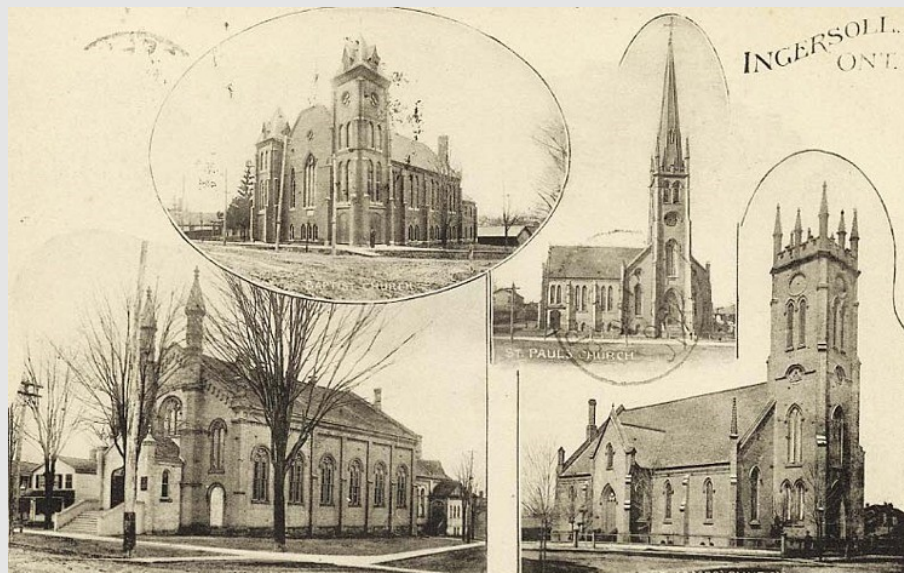
A multi-denominational song, Silent Night is a popular Christmas Carol sung at churches across the county. *Image credit: J. Gruska PC—0136, Oxford Historical Society*