

The First Nowell

Words: Traditional English carol of Cornish origin

Music: Bob Chilcott (A new commission from the Church of England) 2023

1. The first Nowell the angels did say
Was to certain poor shepherds in fields as they lay;
In fields where they lay keeping their sheep,
On a cold winter's night that was so deep.

Refrain:

Nowell, Nowell,
Nowell, Nowell,
Born is the King of Israel.

2. They looked up and saw a star
Shining in the east, beyond them far;
And to the earth it gave great light,
And so it continued both day and night:

Refrain

3. And by the light of that same star,
Three Wise Men came from country far;
To seek for a king was their intent,
And to follow the star wherever it went:

Refrain

4. This star drew nigh to the north-west;
Over Bethlehem it took its rest,
And there it did both stop and stay
Right over the place where Jesus lay.

Refrain

5. Then entered in those Wise Men three,
Full reverently upon their knee,
And offered there in his presence,
Their gold and myrrh and frankincense:

Refrain

6. Then let us all with one accord
Sing praises to our heavenly Lord,
That hath made heaven and earth of nought,
And with his blood humankind hath bought:

Refrain

'Nowell' is an Early Modern English name for Christmas – from the French name for the season, 'Noël'. It appears in the refrain (or chorus) of many traditional carols.

