

# A Manger Carol

*for Treble, SAB, and SATB Choirs, Handbells, and Orchestra*

by Douglas Mears

## Instrumentation

2 Flutes  
2 Oboes  
English Horn  
2 Clarinets in B $\flat$   
2 Bassoons  
2 Horns in F  
Timpani  
Orchestra Bells  
Handbells  
Percussion  
Wind Machine, Suspended Cymbal, Mark Tree  
Harp  
Celesta  
Treble Choir  
SAB Choir  
SATB Choir  
Strings

## Text

How dark was the stable where Jesus was born?  
How cold was the manger that was his first home?  
It was dark as the black winter sky up above.  
It was cold as the heart that has known no love.  
*Kyrie eleison.*

How light was the stable where Jesus was born?  
How warm was the manger that was his first home?  
It was light as the star on that first Christmas morn.  
It was warm as the heart in which Jesus is born.  
*Gloria in excelsis Deo.*

Love was born in that manger so warm and so bright.  
Love is born once again in our hearts Christmas night.

## Notes

*A Manger Carol* was composed in 1985 for Connie Creveling, Director of Music, and the choirs of Bethesda United Methodist Church in Bethesda, Maryland. It was originally written for unison children's choir, SAB youth choir, SATB adult choir, handbells, and organ. It has also been scored for choirs with orchestra. Michael Cockett's stirring text presents the theme of darkness and light, two images beautifully contrasted by the birth of Christ. When the shepherds and the wise men peered into the cold, dark manger, they saw a glorious light radiating from the newborn Savior. The Apostle John describes this Light saying, "In Him was life, and that life was the light of men." As the carol begins, Cockett's text describes the darkness of the stable, and the musical themes are presented in a minor tonality with the SATB choir responding "Kyrie eleison" (*Lord have mercy*). When the lyrics shift, now describing the light of Christ, the same themes are presented in a major key with the choir responding "Gloria in excelsis Deo" (*Glory be to God on High*). In a wonderfully unique way, *A Manger Carol* presents the joyful, Good News of Christmas: "In him was life, and that life was the light of the world. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness cannot overcome it."