

A New Father, Awe-Struck

MUELLER 11.11.11.11 ("Away in a Manger")

A new father, awe-struck; a mother so mild;
A stable; a manger; a dear, newborn child—
God, as we imagine that family so blessed,
We sometimes forget they were poor and oppressed.

A woman—considered to have no real worth—
Said, yes! She would bear your own Son here on earth.
We hear her bold singing! Her faithful words soar:
“God humbles the rich and God lifts up the poor.”

As Joseph and Mary began a new home,
They suffered oppression from rulers in Rome.
Then, fleeing from Herod to save their son’s life,
They looked for a land free from violence and strife.

We hear in our own day the cries of the poor;
We see in Aleppo the terror of war.
In women and children and men who must flee,
We glimpse, Lord, your life as a young refugee.

When some say that only the wealthy have worth,
O God, we recall where you lived here on earth.
May we in your church serve the poor and distressed;
For, working for justice, we give you our best.

Biblical references: Luke 2:1-20; 22-24; Leviticus 12:6; Matthew 2:13-18;
Luke 1:46-55; Matthew 25:31-46 and Micah 6:8.

Tune: James Ramsey Murray, 1887.

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Hymn Note: This hymn begins with a traditional image of a manger scene, and becomes a prayer that we may look deeper— at our loving God who chose to come into this world as someone who was poor, powerless, in danger, and a refugee. It is a prayer for the church to work for justice as our gift to Jesus. Permission is given for free use of this hymn by churches that support refugee relief efforts.

*Praying for the day when the fighting in Aleppo will be history and not a tragic current event, here is a substitute second line for the fourth verse:
“We see in your world, God, the terror of war.”

Carolyn Winfrey Gillette is the author of over 300 hymns that have been sung by thousands of congregations around the world, and are found in 18 books and thousands of web sites, including www.carolynshymns.com which includes several other hymns about refugees. Her hymns have been featured in *Christian Century* magazine, *The New Yorker*, *National Public Radio* and *PBS-TV*. She and her husband Bruce are the co-pastors of Limestone Presbyterian Church in Wilmington, Delaware, USA.