



# Here We Come A-wassailing

## A SAMPLE "GO FORTH" INITIATIVE

*Here we come a-wassailing  
Among the leaves so green;  
Here we come a-wand'ring  
So fair to be seen.  
Love and joy come to you,  
And to you your wassail too;  
And God bless you and send you  
a happy New Year.*

**Wassailing?** What the heck is wassailing? A brief history:

- **Anglo-Saxon greeting:** The term "wassail" comes from the Old English "wæs hæl," meaning "be in good health." The tradition began as a New Year's toast where one person would say "Wassail!" and others would reply "Drink hail!".
- **Harvest festivals:** The practice may have originated as a harvest or festival, possibly before Christianity spread to Britain.
- **Medieval wassailing:** By the Middle Ages, wassailing had evolved into a practice of visiting neighbors to pass around a "wassail bowl" and wish them good health.
- **Orchard wassailing:** A specific tradition of wassailing orchards emerged around the 14th century, intended to scare away evil spirits and ensure a good harvest.
- **Christmas carolling:** During the Tudor period, the practice evolved into the Christmas custom of wassailing from house to house, singing songs in exchange for drinks or gifts. By the Victorian era, the tradition adapted to be less raucous with wassail recipes appearing in cookbooks and the door-to-door singing fading slightly in some areas.

### CORAC Carolling

OK, maybe you break out in hives at the mere thought of singing in public. Or wonder if your rusty tenor could hold its own in chorus. Or maybe you're already a seasoned pro with pipes like an Angel. Whatever the case, rest assured that caroling is a surefire way to bring people together, spread some joy, and celebrate the season of Christmas with our neighbors through the gift of song. And we aim to make it a thing again!

## Here We Come A-waissaling *(continued)*

Here are some suggestions for a fruitful outing:

- **Who** - It should be fairly easy to assemble a caroling party of singers anywhere there is a large family, a group of friends, an existing team, or any organization like CORAC in close proximity.
- **When** - Feel free to head out any time, however caroling traditionally happens on the three Thursdays before Christmas and on Christmas Eve.
- **Where** - There's no need to go any further than the houses in your own neighborhood, but you might also consider visiting nursing homes, schools, orphanages, or any other institution that makes sense. Let the Spirit lead!
- **What** - When it comes to a caroling hitlist, be prepared for a little healthy debate, and be aware that there are more options than "Good King Wenceslaus." Here are a few others to consider:

### **Catholic/Christian staples**

- Oh Holy Night
- Silent Night
- O Come, All Ye Faithful
- Joy to the World
- It Came Upon a Midnight Clear
- Hark! The Herald Angels Sing
- The First Noel
- Away in a Manger
- Angels We Have Heard on High
- What Child Is This?

### **Cultural favorites**

- Jingle Bells
- It's the Most Wonderful Time of the Year
- All I Want for Christmas Is You
- It's Beginning to Look a Lot Like Christmas
- Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer
- Jingle Bell Rock
- The Christmas Song
- White Christmas
- Silver Bells
- Holly Jolly Christmas

- **Other details** - Since Christmas is the feast of lights, you may want to equip all your singers with candles (weather permitting). You can use real candles for a more traditional vibe, or consider many of the battery powered options that are readily available. You may also consider taking a manger crib or figures of Our Lady and the Child. These could be fixed securely on a shelf set on a pole, which one of the singers carries. This custom of bearing the images with the carol singers, so obviously Catholic, was flourishing in this country as late as the middle of the nineteenth century.

God bless, and happy caroling!

