

# Onward, Christian Soldiers

START

Onward, Christian soldiers, marching as to war, with the cross

of Jesus going on before! Christ, the royal Master,

leads against the foe; Forward into bat - tle, see his ban -

ner go! Onward, Christian sol - diers, marching as to

war, with the cross of Jesus going on be - fore!

END

# Lyrics

1. Onward, Christian soldiers,  
marching as to war,  
With the cross of Jesus  
going on before!  
Christ, the royal Master,  
leads against the foe;  
Forward into battle,  
see his banner go!

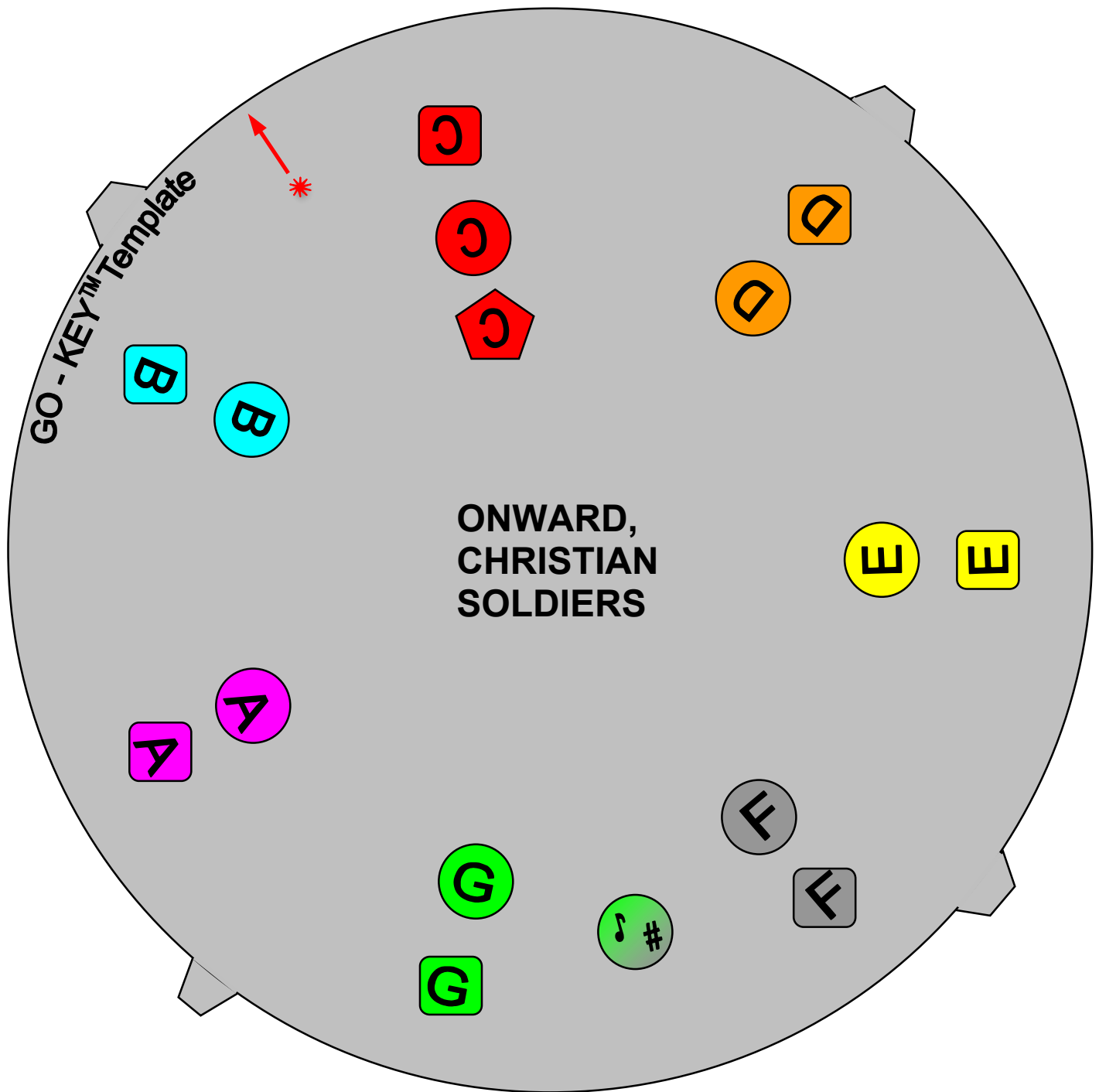
## Refrain:

Onward, Christian soldiers,  
marching as to war,  
With the cross of Jesus  
going on before!

2 At the sign of triumph  
Satan's host doth flee;  
On, then, Christian soldiers,  
on to victory!  
Hell's foundations quiver  
at the shout of praise;  
Brothers, lift your voices,  
loud your anthems raise! [Refrain]

3 Like a mighty army  
moves the church of God;  
Brothers, we are treading  
where the saints have trod;  
We are not divided;  
all one body we,  
One in hope and doctrine,  
one in charity. [Refrain]

4 Onward, then, ye people,  
join our happy throng,  
Blend with ours your voices  
in the triumph song;  
Glory, laud, and honor,  
unto Christ the King;  
This thro' countless ages  
men and angels sing. [Refrain]



## History and Origin

**"Onward, Christian Soldiers"** is a 19th-century English hymn. The words were written by Sabine Baring-Gould in 1865, and the music was composed by Arthur Sullivan in 1871. Sullivan named the tune "St Gertrude," after the wife of his friend Ernest Clay Ker Seymer, at whose country home he composed the tune. The Salvation Army adopted the hymn as its favoured processional. The piece became Sullivan's most popular hymn. The hymn's theme is taken from references in the New Testament to the Christian being a soldier for Christ, for example II Timothy 2:3 (KJV): "Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ." The lyric was written as a processional hymn for children walking from Horbury Bridge, where Baring-Gould was curate, to Horbury St Peter's Church near Wakefield, Yorkshire, at Whitsuntide in 1865. It was originally entitled, "Hymn for Procession with Cross and Banners." According to the Centre for Church Music, Baring-Gould reportedly wrote "Onward, Christian Soldiers" in about 15 minutes, later apologising, "It was written in great haste, and I am afraid that some of the lines are faulty." He later allowed hymn-book compilers to alter the lyrics. For example, The Fellowship Hymn Book, with his permission, changed the phrase "one in hope and doctrine" to "one in hope and purpose." For the 1909 edition of Hymns Ancient and Modern, he changed the fifth line of the same verse from "We are not divided" to "Though divisions harass." Baring-Gould's original words are used in most modern hymnals.

Baring-Gould originally set the lyrics to a melody from the slow movement of Joseph Haydn's Symphony in D, No. 15. This was printed in 1871 in an English church periodical, the Church Times. The hymn did not receive wide acceptance, however, until Sullivan wrote the tune "St. Gertrude" for it. Sullivan quoted the tune in his Boer War Te Deum, first performed in 1902, after his death. Another hymn sung to the St. Gertrude tune is "Forward Through the Ages", written by Frederick Lucian Hosmer (1840–1929) in 1908.

When Winston Churchill and Franklin Roosevelt met in August 1941 on the battleship HMS Prince of Wales to agree the Atlantic Charter, a church service was held for which Prime Minister Churchill chose the hymns. He chose "Onward, Christian Soldiers" and afterwards made a radio broadcast explaining this choice. We sang "Onward, Christian Soldiers" indeed, and I felt that this was no vain presumption, but that we had the right to feel that we were serving a cause for the sake of which a trumpet has sounded from on high. When I looked upon that densely packed congregation of fighting men of the same language, of the same faith, of the same fundamental laws, of the same ideals ... it swept across me that here was the only hope, but also the sure hope, of saving the world from measureless degradation.— Winston Churchill

The song has been sung at many funerals, including at the funeral of American president Dwight D. Eisenhower at the National Cathedral, Washington, D.C., March 1969. Apart from its obvious martial associations, the song has been associated with protest against the established order, particularly in the case of the civil rights movement.

Largely because of its association with missionaries of various types, the song is sung in a number of movies and television shows. The 1939 film, Stanley and Livingstone, depicts Dr. David Livingstone (played by Sir Cedric Hardwicke) spiritedly leading a choir of African people in this anthem. The piece appears in several other films, including Major Barbara, Mrs. Miniver, Elmer Gantry, A Canterbury Tale, The Russians Are Coming, the Russians Are Coming, M\*A\*S\*H, Taps, Reds, Striptease, The Bushbaby, The Ruling Class, Walker, Androcles and the Lion, Flyboys and First Reformed, It is also sung or played in episodes of TV series, including Little House on the Prairie, Boardwalk Empire, The Simpsons, The Ren & Stimpy Show, Little Britain, Upstairs, Downstairs, Lark Rise to Candleford and Dad's Army.