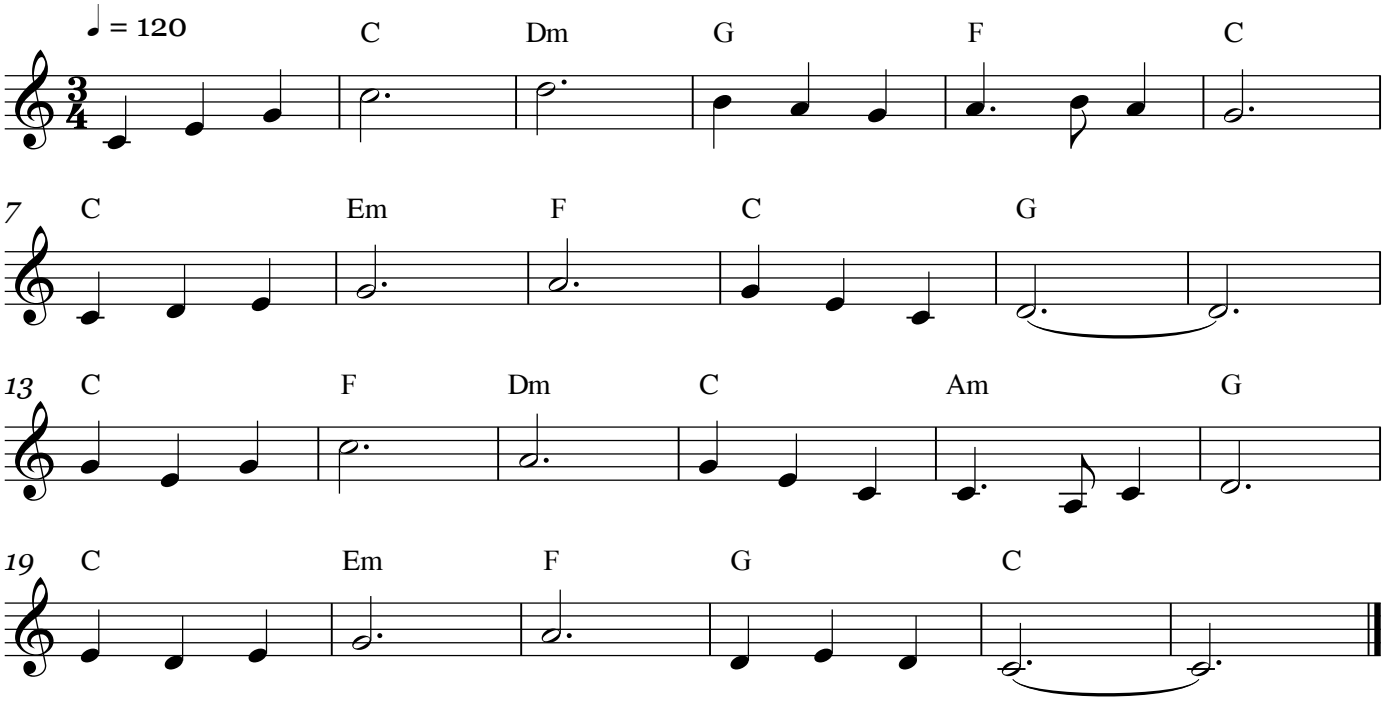
Morning Has Broken

(Leanabh an Aigh; Child in a Manger; Bunessan)

tune: Scottish Gaelic Traditional



Mary MacDonald (1789-1872) was a Gaelic-speaking poet who lived near Bunessan (a small village on the Ross of Mull in the south of the island of Mull, on the west coast of Scotland). She wrote the lyrics for the Christmas hymn "Leanabh an Aigh" ("Child of Joy") and set them to a traditional tune.
In 1888, Lachlan MacBean included it in his book "Songs and Hymns of the Gael", translating the title into English as "Child in a Manger" and giving the melody the name "Bunessan". The tune has been used since for other lyrics; probably the most well-known are those to "Morning Has Broken", written in 1931 by Eleanor Farjeon (1881-1965), and popularized by Cat Stevens (those lyrics are still under copyright). To this day, there is a memorial cairn to Mary MacDonald that stands above the main road about one mile east of Bunessan village.

arranged by Diane Moss, 2008. Group Tunes for Crystal Mountain Folk Harp Festival, June 2008