

IN THE SUMMER OF 2006, TENSIONS IN AMERICA'S WAR IN IRAQ were mounting, and the prospects for a quick end were looking dismal. It was not apparent how the United States could justify the continued violence and the needless loss of life. It was becoming apparent that the war had been based on false premises from the start.

My own son had served his time in the armed forces in the Middle East, like other young men and women we had known, and had recently returned to pick up his college and civilian life where he'd left off back in September 2001. Others, sadly, were not so lucky. Thousands of Americans had died, their numbers ironically approaching the toll of victims from the 9/11 attacks themselves.

On the Interstate one afternoon I fell in behind a minivan whose rear window carried a homemade message in shoe polish, the sort of thing sports fans and newlyweds do. But this one did not read "Go Panthers" or "Just Married." It was a plea, a plainly lettered prayer for the world to see:

COME HOME SAFE MICHAEL

No comma, no correct "-ly" adverb. People didn't need those things to get it. Here was a family with a son or a husband, a brother, a friend, away at war. Someone they loved was far off in a strange land, daily at risk from suicide bombers, IEDs, air strikes, all sorts of sudden and unseen threats. Lives full of promise, laboring in dangerous fields. Who would not pray in every language they knew that their loved one would come home unharmed? Who on the other side would not be praying the same?

In this season of solstice turning, of Christmas grace, of Hanukkah miracles, of Eid-al-Fitr celebrations, we reflect on what it means to end old dispensations and prepare for new ones. Perhaps 2007 will bring better things for us all. Peace, random kindness, goodwill.

You can sing this song, "Come Home Safe Michael," as it's written, with the names that I've supplied, or you can substitute your own. You can use names from the sobering list of American losses at www.antiwar.com/casualties. You can sing it unadorned or with the old folksong "Wild Mountain Thyme" overlaid, as in this arrangement.

However you sing it, remember the sons and daughters the world over who are engaged in the senseless business of war, and the families back home waiting for the day when it will all be over.

Blessings of the new year to you and yours,

BARBARA BRANNON
DECEMBER 2006

Come Home Safe Michael

Barbara Brannon

G7




Descant 2d verse
Will you

1. Come home
2. Come home

Voice

Piano

C A m F C F



go, --- lassie, ---go? And we'll all go to -ge - ther to pull wild moun - tain

safe, Mi- chael, from the fields where you are plow- ing; There are stones a - mong the
safe, Ste - ven, from the fields that you are sow - ing; There is dan - ger where you're

Pno.

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Come Home Safe Michael

C A m F G G7 C F G7

thy-me --- all a - round the pur - ple hea - ther; Will ye go, - - - - - las - sie, - - - - -

fur - rows strong to break your disk and har - row, Come home safe, _____ Mi - chael, come home
go - ing, there are e - vil winds a - blow - ing, Come home safe, _____ Ste - ven, come home

Pno.

C F C G C

Refrain

go?

soon. Come home safe, Mi - chael, we have faith, Mi - chael, and we
soon.

Pno.

F C E7 Dm A m G7 C G7 C

pray for you, Mi - chael, come home soon. _____ Come home safe,

Pno.

Come Home Safe Michael

A m
C
F
C
F
c
A m

Mi- chael, from the fields that you are tur- ning; ev' ry day our hearts are year - ning for to

Pno.

F
G
G7
C
F
G
G7
C

see your glad re - tur- ning; come home sa - fe, Mi- chael, come home soon.

Pno.

3. Come home safe, Virginia,
 From the fields where you are planting;
 There is blood upon the mountain,
 In the valley death is haunting;
 Come home safe, Virginia,
 Come home soon. (*Refrain*)

Descant Oh, the summertime has come
 And the trees are sweetly blooming;
 And the wild mountain thyme
 Grows around the purple heather;
 Will ye go, lassie, go?

4. Come home safe, Jason,
 From the fields where you wander;
 For the sky is red with arrows
 And the clouds are dark with thunder,
 Come home safe, Jason,
 Come home soon.

*I will build my love a tower
 By yon pure crystal fountain
 And it's there I will bring
 All the flowers of the mountain;
 Will ye go, lassie, go?*

5. Come home safe, our sisters,
 From the fields that you are tending;
 There are thorns among the vineyards,
 There is sorrow neverending,
 Come home safe, our sisters,
 Come home soon.

*If my true love will not come
 I will surely find another
 To pull wild mountain thyme
 All around the purple heather;
 Will ye go, lassie, go?*

6. Come home safe, our brothers,
 From the fields that you are tilling;
 We have had enough of killing,
 Our sad destiny fulfilling,
 Come home safe, our brothers,
 Come home soon. (*Refrain*)

*I will range through the wilds
 And the deep land so dreary
 And return with the spoils
 To the bower of my dearie;
 Will ye go, lassie, go?*

7. Come home safe, our children,
 From the fields where you are reaping;
 Can you hear the mothers weeping
 For the soldiers in their keeping?
 Come home safe, our children,
 Come home soon.

*Oh, the autumn-time is coming
 And the leaves will soon be falling
 And the blossoms of the winter
 Soon with wither on the mountain;
 Will ye go, lassie, go?*