Westminster
Presbyterian Church
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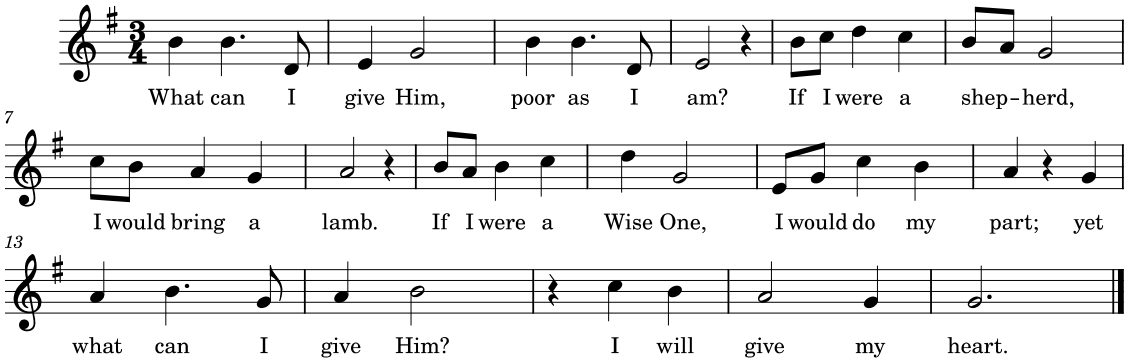
Fourth Sunday in Advent
Commitment Sunday
December 17, 2023

Welcome and Announcements — **Rev. Dr. Enikö Ferenczy**

Let us open our hearts and minds to the rhythm of the gathering music as it centers us in God's presence for worship.

Minute for Mission for the Christmas Joy Offering — **Linda Barbu**

Advent Prelude — **"What Can I Give Him"** — ***Jubilate Music Group***



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Becoming Present — **An Advent Ritual** — **Shelley Peterson**

Leader: The faith narrative is careful to show us a lineage from King David to Jesus. It is no ordinary lineage; it is one that began in the shepherding of sheep, of leading and delivering the people in search of a home. Mary's womb becomes part of that lineage of love, offering the world the gift of God's presence "in the flesh." As we enter the story of the birth of Love Among

Us, we are invited to be present with love. We may think the perfect gift is outside our reach to give, but in reality, we have all that we need … the heart's love and presence.

What can I give Him, poor as I am?
If I were a shepherd, I would bring a lamb;
If I were a Wise [One], I would do my part;
Yet what can I give Him: I will give my heart.
Reader: We unwrap a present on this last Sunday of Advent
with great anticipation for the gift that God will reveal.
People: We open our hearts as we open the gift!

The gift is unwrapped…

Reader: The promise of Joy is the Divine Gift we receive.
People: And what will we do with it?

The box is opened and the candle from it is placed on the Advent wreath and lit.

Reader: The gift of love is the essence of the birth of Christ.
The Holy One wanted to be so present to us that God's Spirit became flesh
in order to inhabit the gifts of touching, healing, comforting, and challenging.
Love is the clarion call to us as Jesus' disciples.
The more love we put into the world, the better the world will be.

People: We light this Candle of Love as a sign that we will be
Present with Love in the world.

The congregation joins into song.

What can I give Him, poor as I am?
If I were a shepherd, I would bring a lamb;
If I were a Wise [One], I would do my part;
Yet what can I give Him: I will give my heart.

Prayer of Presence

Let us pray:

Holy Living Light of God,
you are our Loving Presence.

Let this love grow in our lives each day,
so we can be a Present of Love to others.
Unwrap and open our hearts.
May it be so.
Amen.

Opening Hymn No. 104 "O Lord, How Shall I Meet You" *Valet will ich dir geben

Prayer of Illumination Rev. Dr. Enikö Ferenczy

Scripture Readings

***Psalm 89:1-4** (Inclusive Language Translation)*

Forever I will sing the wonders of your love, O God,
proclaiming your faithfulness to all generations!
I'll tell them that your love stands firm forever,
your fidelity is fixed in the heavens.
"I have made a covenant with my chosen;
sworn an oath to David, my faithful one:
'I will establish your line forever,
and make your throne firm throughout all generations.'"

Gospel Reading — *Luke 1:26-38 (CEB)*

26 When Elizabeth was six months pregnant, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a city in
Galilee, 27 to a virgin who was engaged to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David's house.
The virgin's name was Mary. 28 When the angel came to her, he said, "Rejoice, favored one! The
Lord is with you!" 29 She was confused by these words and wondered what kind of greeting this
might be. 30 The angel said, "Don't be afraid, Mary. God is honoring you. 31 Look! You will
conceive and give birth to a son, and you will name him Jesus. 32 He will be great and he will be
called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of David his father. 33 He
will rule over Jacob's house forever, and there will be no end to his kingdom."

34 Then Mary said to the angel, "How will this happen since I haven't had sexual relations
with a man?"

35 The angel replied, "The Holy Spirit will come over you and the power of the Most High will
overshadow you. Therefore, the one who is to be born will be holy. He will be called God's Son.
36 Look, even in her old age, your relative Elizabeth has conceived a son. This woman who was
labeled 'unable to conceive' is now six months pregnant. 37 Nothing is impossible for God."

38 Then Mary said, "I am the Lord's servant. Let it be with me just as you have said."
Then the angel left her.

Sermon **Being Present with Love** **Rev. Dr. Enikö Ferenczy**

Hymn No. 693 **"Though I May Speak"** ***Gift of love***

Commitment to Partnership in God's Mission in 2024 **Rev. Dr. Enikö Ferenczy**

(We invite you to bring forward your pledge cards and place them in the basket.)

Litany of Commitment

Generous God, you have made a world for us and given us incomparable gifts:
air and water, family and friends, your steadfast love and forgiveness,
and for Jesus, our friend, teacher and life-giver.

For all the gifts and wonders you have given us,
we thank you. We worship you with renewed gratitude.

Giver of life,
You created us to love one another as Christ has loved us.
We are eager to participate in your mission,
furthering the ministry and service of this congregation.

We are called to be your stewards
so we commit to thoughtfully shoulder our personal share of responsibility,
and to witness to the good news of Christ
with our hearts and hands and voices.

Gracious one,
We are confident in your love and care for us.

Grant us generous hearts and courageous spirits
to do the things you call us to do.

We join with our church family in committing faithfully
and sowing bountifully in the year ahead.
Be our guide. Hold us up when we stumble.
May your Holy Spirit lead us in joyful song and fill us with eager anticipation.

You are our vision, O God.
Lead us in your ways to witness to the beauty and truth in all. Amen.

Commitment Hymn No. 757 "Today We All Are Called to Be Disciples *(verses 1,4)* ***Kingsfold***

Sharing of Joys and Concerns **Shelley Peterson**

Prayer of the People

The congregation joins in song.

Right here and right now we open our senses
to see and perceive the gifts we've been given,
to know and believe that what we must do
is open our hearts to let all gifts flow through.

Leader: There is a saying that says, "love hurts." Indeed, when we open ourselves to the gift of love for others, we risk the chance that our compassionate hearts will break for the world we live in. But the alternative — isolation and apathy — carries a great cost.
We ourselves become the lonely ones,
we ourselves are left with an atrophy of the heart, rather than its expansion.
Being the gift of presence can complicate life, but in the end,
it is the only way to survive this human life.

We will begin our prayers with three questions, each followed by a short silence.
Focusing intentionally on thoughts and memories can be a kind of prayer, bringing our lives into a conversation with the Holy.
I invite you to take a deep breath and close your eyes if you are comfortable doing that.

The first question is this: Who was a gift of presence to you this week?

Did you experience their attention in a way that felt like a special connection?
Take a moment to recall this in your mind's eye, seeing it emerge like opening a gift. If you cannot recall such a moment, it is OK… this week you will notice these moments more deeply.

[pause for a bit]

The second question is this: How did you offer yourself as a gift of presence? What did it feel like to extend your attentiveness and availability beyond yourself? Did you notice how it made a difference to someone else for you to be truly present to them?

[pause for a bit]

The third question is this: Is it possible that God's presence is felt more acutely in these moments when we truly tend to one another? What could you do this coming week that would allow God's gift of Joy to flow through you to someone else? It may be as simple as finding opportunities to speak an encouraging word. Or as complex as actually lifting up someone's circumstances through volunteering or donating.

[pause for a bit]

The congregation joins in song.

Right here and right now we open our senses
to see and perceive the gifts we've been given,
to know and believe that what we must do
is open our hearts to let all gifts flow through.

In this prayerful, present moment, we train our attention on those who are in distress.
We pray this week for …

[continue with the prayer concerns of your community and the world]

In this prayerful, present moment we ask you, Christ Jesus, the Greatest Gift of All,
to help us savor our journey toward the celebration of Christmas.
Help us recognize and create moments of sweet presence
rather than filling the voids with the things that do not last.
Help us to stop, notice what we are experiencing,
and accept it with open hearts and minds.
In doing this, we allow you to meet us
in the right here, right now, right where we are.

Through the power of your Spirit and in the name of Jesus the Christ,
who taught us to pray, saying:

Our God in heaven, holy is your name.
Your kin-dom come,
Your will be done, on earth as is in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial
and deliver us from evil.
For the kin-dom, the power and the glory are yours.
Now and forever. Amen.

Closing Hymn No. 110** **"Love Has Come"** ***Bring a torch

Benediction **Rev. Dr. Enikö Ferenczy**

Postlude **"A Star, A Song"** ***Hal Hopson***

Westminster Choir

The service continues with fellowship.

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*Liturgy is from the Worship Design Studio for Advent 2023.
Prayers were adapted from Marcia McFee.
*Hymns are from the Glory to God Hymnal.
*Music: Tom Shaw, organ
*Sunday Service flowers/treats: Candy Relle

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To continue to assure the safety of all, the offering plate is located on a table in the back of the sanctuary. If you are moved to support our ministry, we invite you to place your gifts in the plate.

GIVE NOW

You may also give online through our website by clicking on the "GIVE NOW" button at the bottom of the home page. Your generosity helps us to fulfill our calling to engage in God's transformative mission in our community.

We offer our gifts of money, talents, time, and energy—the gifts of our lives in gratitude for God's relentless love and grace for all. These gifts represent our commitment to heed God's call and join God in God's mission of healing and transforming our world.

Upcoming Events

Sunday, Dec. 17

- Worship Service– 10 am – Mackey Hall
- Wooster Friends Meeting – 10.30 am – The Meeting Place

Monday, Dec. 18

- Troop 61 – 6 pm – Mackey Hall

Thursday, Dec. 21

- Dance and Exercise – 8.30 am – The Meeting Place

Friday, Dec. 22

•Scouts overnight in The Meeting Place

Sunday, Dec. 24 – Christmas Eve

- Wooster Friends Meeting – 10.30 am – The Meeting Place
- **Christmas Eve: Being Present with Light**
  Candle Light Service with Communion – 7 pm – Mackey Hall

Monday, Dec. 25 – Christmas

Tuesday, Dec. 26 – Office is closed.

Sunday, Dec. 31

- Joint service at First Presbyterian Church – 10.15 am
  Christmas 1: Being Present with Assurance
  Rev. Dr. Enikő Ferenczy preaching

Westminster Presbyterian Church
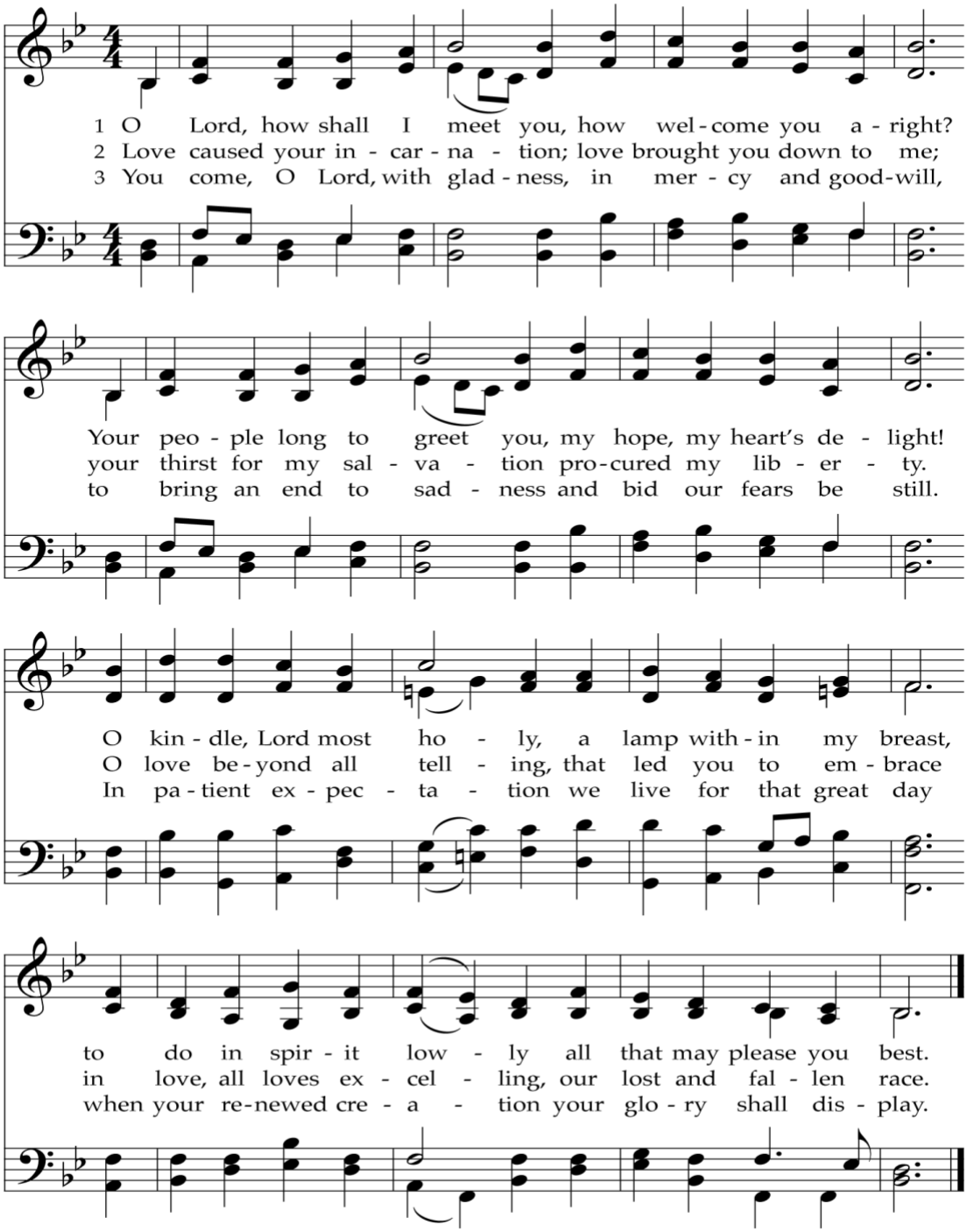
Pastor Rev. Dr. Enikő Ferenczy
Minister of Music Rev. Dr. Thomas Shaw
Office Administrator Rev. Dr. James Henery
Tech/Media Administrator Jack Veney
AV Assistant/Event Steward Tony Mendiola

Office Hours: Monday through Friday, 10 a.m.-2.p.m.

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Westminster Presbyterian Church strives to be a safe place for all people to worship regardless of ethnicity, creed, age, cultural background, gender identity, or sexual orientation.

O Lord, How Shall I Meet You 104
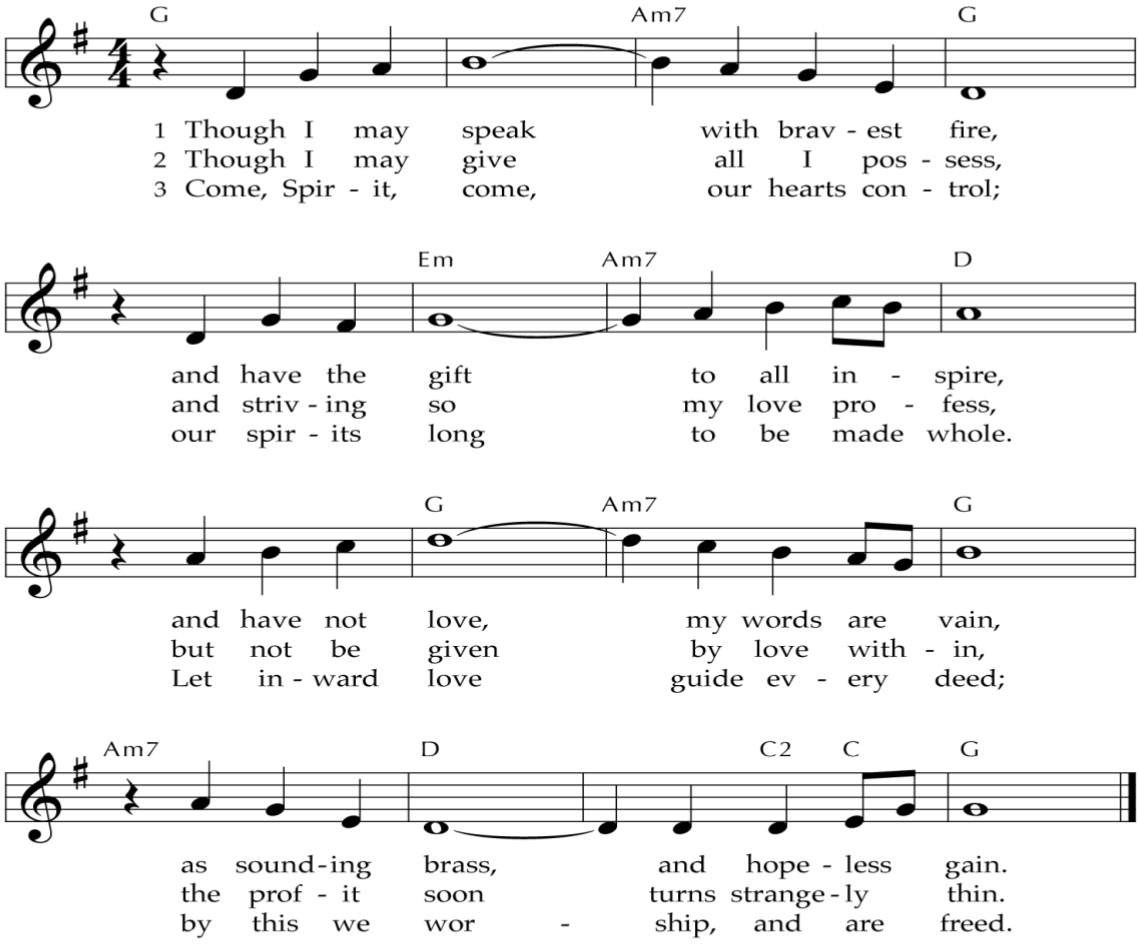


Though many Advent hymns address Christ with entreaty and invitation, this more contemplative text considers how an individual prepares for and responds to Christ's coming. It also brings together a recollection of the First Coming with an anticipation of the Second Coming.

TEXT: Paul Gerhardt, 1653; trans. Catherine Winkworth and others, 1863, alt.
MUSIC: Melchior Teschner, 1614; harm. William Henry Monk, 1861

VALET WILL ICH DIR GEBEN
7.6.7.6.D

Though I May Speak 693

The Gift of Love
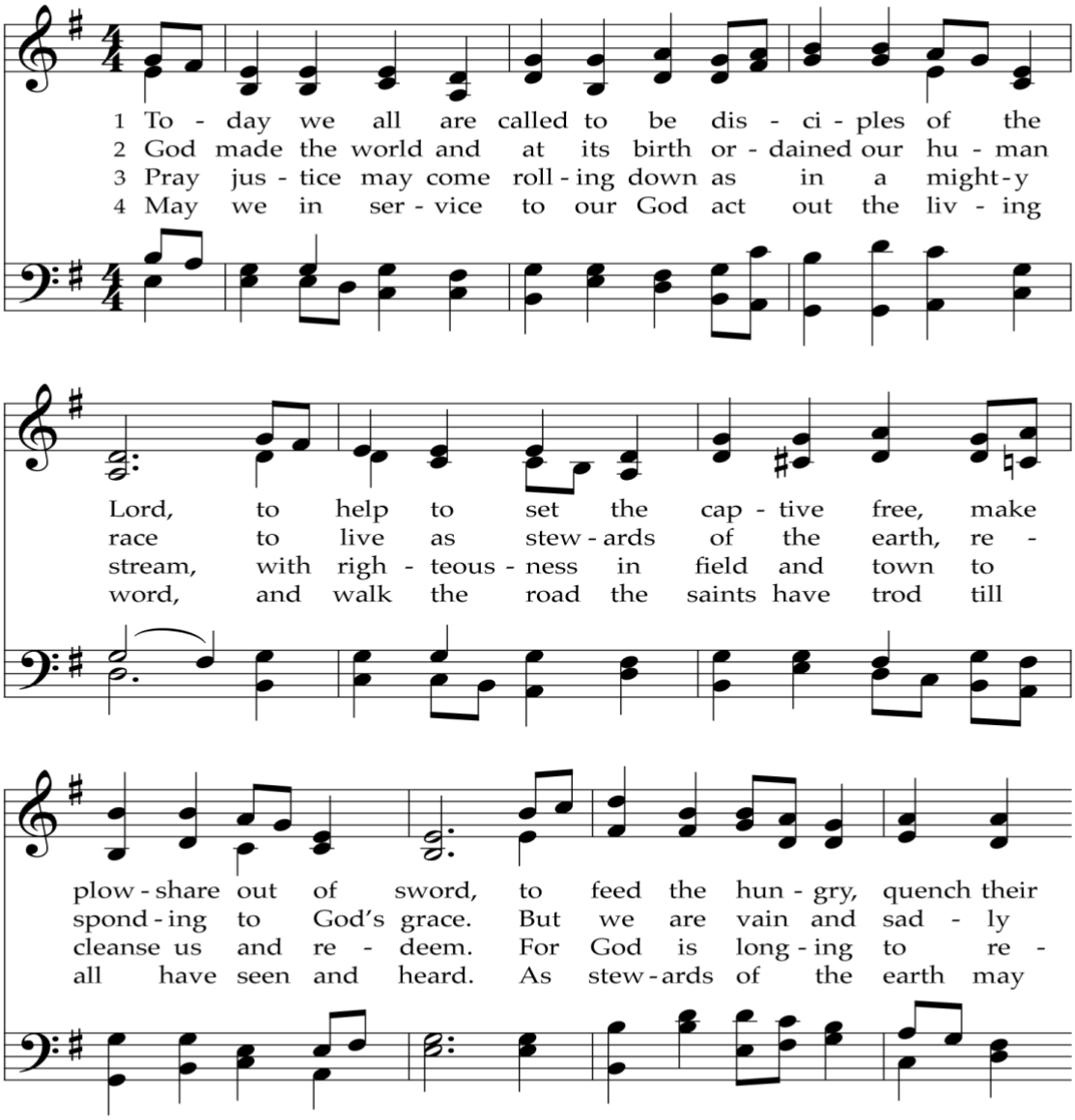


As paraphrases of 1 Corinthians 13:1, 3 the first two stanzas here are in the first person singular, yet they lead into a plural prayer for the gift of such love, for it thrives in community. These words are especially poignant with this adaptation of an English folk melody.

TEXT: Hal H. Hopson, 1972
MUSIC: English folk melody; adapt. Hal H. Hopson, 1972
Text and Music © 1972 Hope Publishing Company

GIFT OF LOVE
LM

JUSTICE AND RECONCILIATION
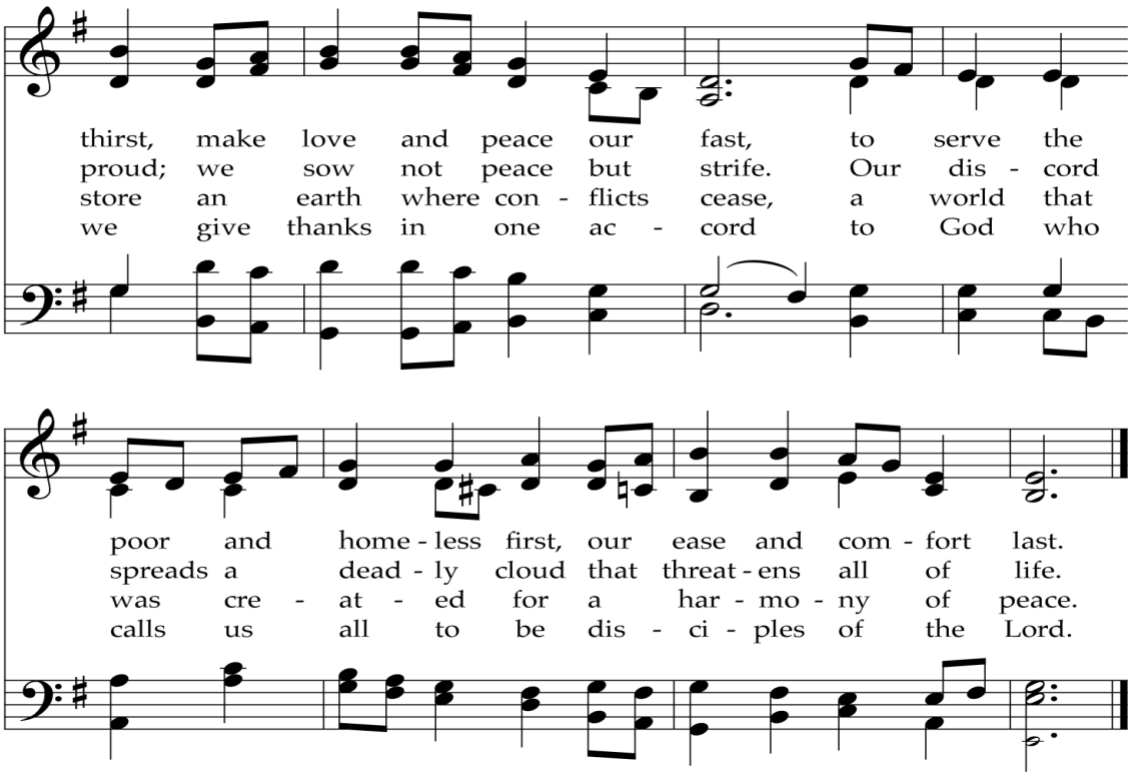
757 Today We All Are Called to Be Disciples



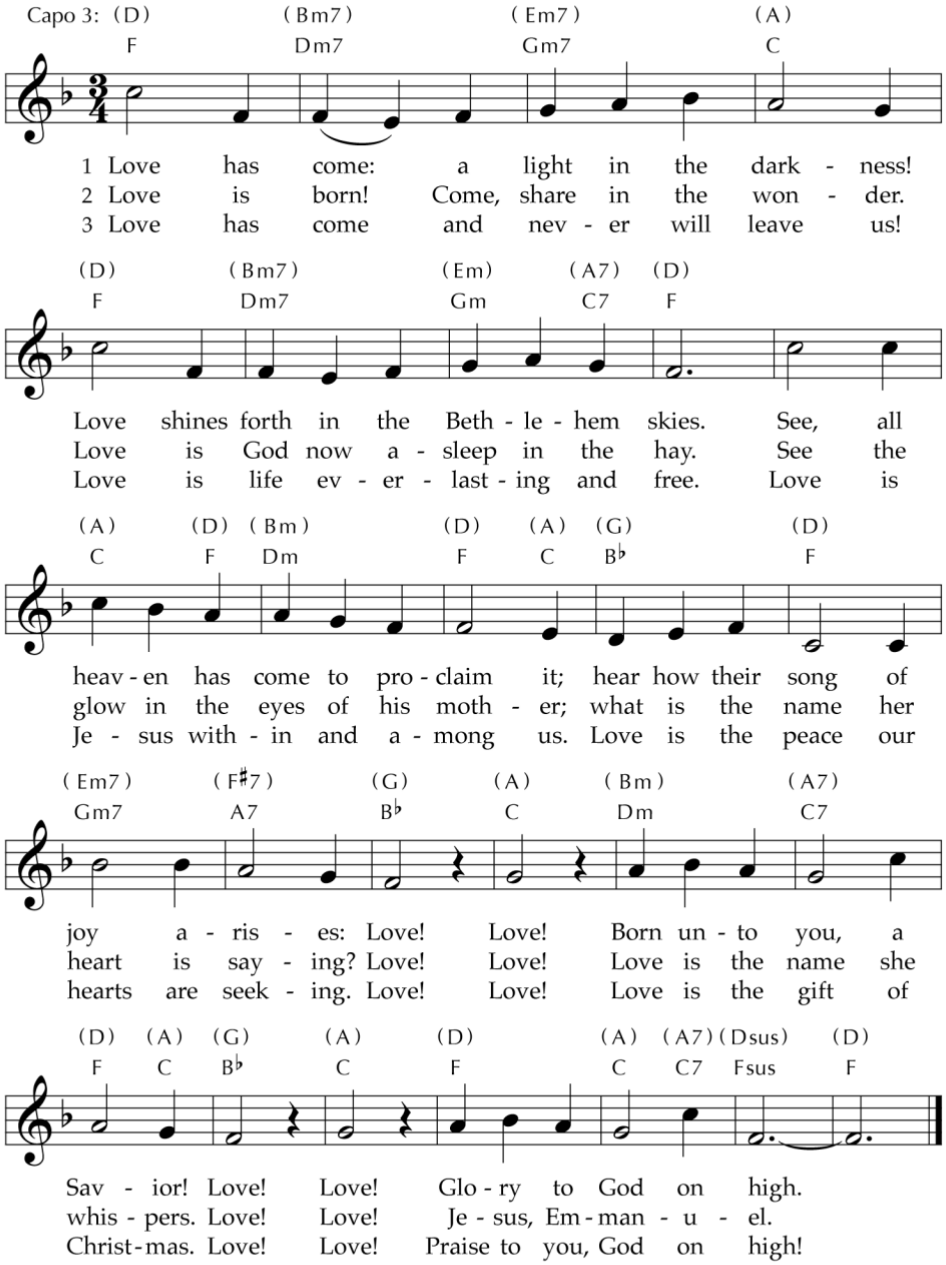
This text placing stewardship in the context of faithful witness was written by a retired Presbyterian minister to be part of the 1986 stewardship campaign titled "Called to Be Disciples." The tune name recalls the Sussex village where the arranger first heard the melody.

TEXT: H. Kenn Carmichael, 1985
MUSIC: *English County Songs,* 1893; harm. Ralph Vaughan Williams, 1906
Text © 1989 H. Kenn Carmichael

KINGSFOLD
CMD


thirst, make love and peace our fast, to serve the
proud; we sow not peace but strife. Our dis - cord
store an earth where con - flicts cease, a world that
we give thanks in one ac - cord to God who
poor and home - less first, our ease and com - fort last.
spreads a dead - ly cloud that threat - ens all of life.
was cre - at - ed for a har - mo - ny of peace.
calls us all to be dis - ci - ples of the Lord.

Love Has Come 110



Here is a chance to sing a familiar French carol tune with new words, the most important clearly being "Love." The senses "seen and heard" (as in Acts 4:20 and elsewhere) organize the first two stanzas, while the third holds the summary statement: "Love is the gift of Christmas."

TEXT: Ken Bible, 1996
MUSIC: French melody; arr. Eric T. Myers, 2012
Text © 1996 LNWhymns.com (admin. Music Services)
Music Arr. © 2012 Eric T. Myers

BRING A TORCH
9.9.10.9.9.8