

St. Andrews Presbyterian Church

MARCH 14, 2021

FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT

WELCOME

OPENING VOLUNTARY

Wondrous Love

American Spiritual
Setting by David N. Johnson

CALL TO WORSHIP

Before we were born,

Before we took our first breath,

Before the week started,

Before the year started,

Before we said, "I love you,"

Before we said, "I'm sorry,"

Before we figured out who we really are,

Before we figured out who we want to be,

Before it all—

God loved us.

Unconditionally and freely,

Fully and honestly—

God loved us.

Again and again, this is where our story begins.

Let us worship God!

HYMN

There's a Wideness in God's Mercy

IN BABILONE

There's a wideness in God's mercy, like the wideness of the sea.

There's a kindness in God's justice, which is more than liberty.

There is no place where earth's sorrows are more felt than up in heaven.

There is no place where earth's failings have such kindly judgment given.

For the love of God is broader than the measures of the mind.

And the heart of the Eternal is most wonderfully kind.

If our love were but more faithful, we would gladly trust God's Word,

And our lives reflect thanksgiving for the goodness of our Lord.

CONFESSING OUR SIN

God of love,

We forget the beginning of the story—

That we were made from love, to be love, to give love.

Instead of rooting our narrative in the goodness refrain of creation,

We skip ahead and find our worth at the fall,

With Cain and Abel, lost in the wilderness.

We forget that first there was you, and you are love.

We forget that out of that love you created us.

We forget that from the very first day, you loved first.

We forget, because a love like that doesn't make sense to us.

Forgive our low self-esteem.

Forgive our resistance to love ourselves.

Forgive our hesitation to trust that even we could be made good.

And forgive our tendency to pass that doubt on—from generation to generation.

Write a new beginning for us that roots our confidence in your unrelenting love.

With hope we pray, again and again.

Silence is kept for personal prayers of confession

CHORAL PETITION

O Lord, Hear My Prayer

HEAR MY PRAYER

O Lord, hear my prayer. O Lord, hear my prayer.

All my hope comes from you.

O Lord, hear my prayer. O Lord, hear my prayer.

Come and listen to me.

DECLARATION OF FORGIVENESS

Family of faith, no matter what we do, where we go, or what we tell ourselves—
God is love, and God is loving us.

Again and again, we are claimed, held, forgiven, and cared for.

In the name of the Lover, the Beloved, and Love itself—thanks be to God. Amen!

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

Nancy Berlin

EPISTLE READING

Ephesians 2:1-10

MUSICAL OFFERING

GOSPEL READING

John 3:14-21

CHILDREN'S LESSON

SERMON

Again & Again, God Loves Us First

Rev. Camille LeBron Powell

AFFIRMATION OF FAITH

We believe God is love—
Unconditional, constant love.
We believe this love exists for all,
Choosing each and every one of us,
Day after day,
Again and again and again.
We believe that God's love is like a river.
Rivers cannot help but flow toward the sea;
God's love cannot help but move toward us.
We are swimming in it.
We believe that God loved first.
We believe that God breathed life into dust.
We believe that God said, "This is good,"
And because we believe that God loved first,
We strive to build lives that reflect God's love.
May we begin again here. Amen.

JOYS AND CONCERNS OF GOD'S CHURCH, COMMUNITY AND WORLD

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE AND THE LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

OFFERING OUR GIFTS

Offertory Response

Praise God From Whom All Blessings Flow
Praise God, from whom all blessings flow;
Praise God, all creatures here below;
Praise God above, ye heavenly host;
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

TALLIS' CANNON

Prayer of Dedication

HYMN

O Love That Wilt Not Let Me Go

ST. MARGARET

O Love that wilt not let me go,
I rest my weary soul in thee;
I give thee back the life I owe,
That in thine ocean depths its flow may richer, fuller be.

Continued

O Light that followest all my way,
I yield my flickering torch to thee;
My heart restores its borrowed ray,
That in thy sunshine's blaze its day may brighter, fairer be.

O Joy that seekest me through pain,
I cannot close my heart to thee;
I trace the rainbow through the rain,
And feel the promise is not vain that morn shall tearless be.

O Cross that liftest up my head,
I dare not ask to fly from thee;
I lay in dust life's glory dead,
And from the ground there blossoms red life that shall endless be.

CHARGE AND BENEDICTION

THE PASSING OF THE PEACE

The peace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

And also with you.

BENEDICTION IN SONG

Peace of God Be With You
Peace of God be with you.
Peace of God be with you.
Salaam, Salaam.
Peace of God be with you.

AS-SALAAMU LAKUM

BENEDICTION IN MUSIC

My Song Is Love Unknown
RHOSYMERDE

John Edward (1809-1885)
Setting by Dale Wood



Notes on Today's Music

Today's **Opening Voluntary**, "Wondrous Love" (often referred to as "What Wondrous Love is This") is a Christian folk hymn from the American South. Its text was first published in 1811, during the Second Great Awakening, and its melody derived from a popular English ballad (Roud number 5089). Today it is a widely known hymn included in hymnals of many Christian denominations.

The hymn's lyrics were first published in Lynchburg, Virginia in the c. 1811 camp meeting songbook *A General Selection of the Newest and Most Admired Hymns and Spiritual Songs Now in Use*. The lyrics may also have been printed, in a slightly different form, in the 1811 book *Hymns and Spiritual Songs, Original and Selected* published in Lexington, Kentucky. (It was included in the third edition of this text published in 1818, but all copies of the first edition have been lost). In most early printings, the hymn's text was attributed to an anonymous author, though the 1848 hymnal *The Hesperian Harp* attributes the text to a Methodist pastor from Oxford, Georgia named Alexander Means.

This setting was composed by David N. Johnson (1922 - 1987), an American organist, composer, educator, choral clinician, and lecturer. Johnson published well over 300 compositions, most of them for church use, and was author of an *Instruction Book for Beginning Organists* (1964) and an *Organ Teacher's Guide* (1971).

The author of the text for our **First Hymn** "There's a Wideness in God's Mercy", Frederick William Faber (1814-1863) was a noted English poet, hymn writer, and theologian. Raised in the Church of England in a family with a strict Calvinistic background, he was educated at Balliol College, Oxford, and ordained in the Church of England in 1839. He published his hymns in various volumes and finally collected all of them in *Hymns* (London, 1861)

The tune IN BABILONE is a Dutch peasant melody first found in a collection published in Amsterdam (c.1710) and was arranged by Julius Röntgen (1855-1933) in this form for *The English Hymnal* (London, 1906).

The text of "O Love That Wilt Not Let Me Go," our **Second Hymn**, was written by George Matheson (1842-1906), a pastor in the Church of Scotland in Innellan, Argyllshire, Scotland. It was first published in *The Scottish Hymnal* (London, 1885).

The tune is from the pen of Albert Lister Peace (1844-1912). He was the musical editor of *The Scottish Hymnal* and composed the tune specifically for Matheson's poem. The tune name honor Margaret of Scotland (c.1045-1093), known for her personal piety and her charity to the poor. She was canonized in 1205 and declared patroness of Scotland in 1673.

The **Benediction in Music**, "My Song Is Love Unknown," was written by Samuel Crossman (1624-1683) based on Galatians 6:14: "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ" (KJV). It is a vivid and poignant reflection on the passion of Christ. The text first appeared in a collection of Crossman's poems, *The Young Man's Medications* (London, 1664) and included in *The Anglican Hymn Book* (London, 1868).

The words are found most often set to the tune RHOSYMEDRE composed by John David Edwards (1805- 1885), a Welshman who was educated at Jesus College, Oxford, England, and ordained an Anglican priest in 1833. He served parishes in Rhosymedre and Llanddoget and published a collection of hymn tunes. Rhosymedre translates from the Welsh as "lovely".

This setting is by Dale Wood (1934-2003), an American composer, organist, and choral director best known for his church music compositions.