

Worship Service

BY SHARON KIRKPATRICK FELTON

Prelude: "Oh Love That Will Not Let Me Go"

Call to Worship

All who desire to know the God of love and covenant,
come together to worship.
Come with open hearts, minds, and souls
committed to loving one another freely and completely.
Come together as individuals and couples into a new community,
ready to be changed
and to change the world through love.

Unison Invocation

God of covenant, God of unfailing love,
we seek your presence in worship.
Teach us to be people of commitment and compassion,
who give ourselves sacrificially to each other in covenant love.
Show us that true freedom comes in giving ourselves
and our power away.
Help us to find that freedom
and experience your love in one another. Amen.

Hymn

"Oh Love That Will Not Let Me Go" (verses 1-3)

O Love that will 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.

O light that follows 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.

George Matheson (1882)
Tune: ST. MARGARET (Peace)

Old Testament Reading: Hosea 2:18-20

I will make for you a covenant on that day with the wild animals, the birds of the air, and the creeping things of the ground; and I will abolish the bow, the sword, and war from the land; and I will make you lie down in safety. And I will take you for my wife for ever; I will take you for my wife in righteousness and in justice, in steadfast love, and in mercy. I will take you for my wife in faithfulness; and you shall know the LORD.

Prayer for Community

God, form us into a community that is faithful
in our covenants with you and each other.
Enable us to trust others
and make us trustworthy.

Share with us your heart, your mind, and your spirit
so that we will be faithful, supportive, and encouraging of our spouses.
Fill our hearts with love rather than fear,
and our spirits with tenacity rather than apathy.

Share with us your heart, your mind, and your spirit
so that we will be faithful, supportive, and encouraging
of other couples in their marriages.

Help us to work for their good,
and keep us from being stumbling blocks to their commitments.

Empower us to create families
that model your love in this world. Amen.

Hymn

“Two are Called to Live as One”

Two are called to live as one,
three candles now aflame.
A miracle in marriage see:
two persons make a trinity.

Honor husband, honor wife;
the marriage, honor too.
Each person is that person, still,
but with a covenant to fill.

In the other, finding self;
together more complete.
Creator God creating still
is weaving lives, and love, and will.

Covenant with spouse and God,
entwining ev'ry love.
Then will the woman, God, and man
embrace, rehearse, and prove God's plan.

Terry W. York, ASCAP (2005)

Tune: PLYMOUTH PARK (pp. 53-55 in this volume)

New Testament Reading: 1 Corinthians 13:4-8a, 13

A young, recently married couple reads responsively:

Love is bliss!
Love is exciting and easy.
Love is losing myself in you.
Love is wanting to be together twenty-four hours a day.
Love is wonderful!
Yes, love is divine!

A middle-aged couple reads responsively:

Love is hard work!
Love is not always liking each other.
Love is sometimes a struggle.
Love is figuring out who I am and who you are as well.
Love is loneliness and suffocation.
Love is exhausting.

A long-married couple reads responsively:

Love is patient; love is kind;
love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude.
It does not insist on its own way;
it is not irritable or resentful;
it does not rejoice in wrongdoing,
but rejoices in the truth.
It bears all things,
believes all things,
hopes all things,
endures all things.

All three couples in unison:

Love never ends.
And now faith, hope, and love abide, these three;
and the greatest of these is love.

Hymn

“O Love Divine and Golden”

O Love divine and golden,
mysterious depth and height,
to you the world beholden,
looks up for life and light.
O Love divine and gentle,
the blesser and the blest,
beneath your care parental
the world lies down in rest.

O Love divine and tender,
that through our homes can move,
veiled in the softened splendor
O holy household love.
A throne without your blessing
were labor without rest,
yet cottages possessing
your blessedness are blest.

God bless these hands united;
God bless these hearts made one!
Unsevered and unblighted
may they through life go on,

here in earth's home preparing
for the bright home above,
and there forever sharing
its joy where "God is Love."

John S. B. Monsell (1857), alt.

Suggested Tunes: AURELIA or ST. THEODULPH

Responsive Reading

Leader: Love is

**People: hope that promises new tomorrows
and heals yesterday's wounds.**

Love is

**compassion that dispels fear
and nurtures the soul.**

Love is

**commitment that stands the test of time
and overcomes mistrust and neglect.**

Love is

Two souls breathing independent breaths in unison.

True love

All: draws us to God and one another in covenant for all time.

Sermon

Hymn of Commitment

"Savior, Like a Shepherd Lead Us"

Savior, like a shepherd lead us, much we need thy tender care;
in thy pleasant pastures feed us, for our use thy folds prepare.
Blessèd Jesus, blessèd Jesus! Thou hast bought us, thine we are.
Blessèd Jesus, blessèd Jesus! Thou hast bought us, thine we are.

We are thine, thou dost befriend us, be the guardian of our way;
keep thy flock, from sin defend us, seek us when we go astray.
Blessèd Jesus, blessèd Jesus! Hear, O hear us when we pray.
Blessèd Jesus, blessèd Jesus! Hear, O hear us when we pray.

Thou hast promised to receive us, poor and sinful though we be;
thou hast mercy to relieve us, grace to cleanse, and power to free.
Blessèd Jesus, blessèd Jesus! We will early turn to thee.
Blessèd Jesus, blessèd Jesus! We will early turn to thee.

Early let us seek thy favor, early let us do thy will;
blessèd Lord and only Savior, with thy love our bosoms fill.
Blessèd Jesus, blessèd Jesus! Thou hast loved us, love us still.
Blessèd Jesus, blessèd Jesus! Thou hast loved us, love us still.

Attr. Dorothy A. Thrupp (1836)

Tune: BRADBURY

Benediction

Love is hard, yet love is full of grace and mercy.
Leave this place and love passionately, love completely,
and love in a manner that draws all people to the Kingdom of God.
Allow your heart and mind to be transformed by your worship.
Go from this place committed to love and serve God
and, through God's power, to love and serve humanity.
Make a difference, change this world,
and enable others to know Christ through you. Amen.



SHARON KIRKPATRICK FELTON
is a freelance writer in Hamilton, Texas.