

Great God, Your Love Has Called Us

Brian A. Wren

Michael Joncas

Slow and lyric (♩ = ca. 70)

VERSE 1: Unison Choir

VERSE 2: Soprano & Alto (Assembly women only, *ad lib.*)

mf/mp

Soprano

1. Great God, your love has
2. We come with self - in -

mp

Alto

2. We come with self - in -

mp

Organ

mf/mp

mp

mf/mp

6
22

1. called us here, As we, by love, for love were made. Your liv - ing like - ness
2. flict - ed pains Of bro - ken trust and cho - sen wrong, Half - free, half-bound by

2. flict - ed pains Of bro - ken trust and cho - sen wrong, Half - free, half-bound by

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**A Full Score (Ed. 71034-Z3) and parts for Brass Quintet (Ed. 71045-Z3) are available online from the publisher.
Please visit ocp.org.**

10
26

1. still we bear, Though marred, dis-hon-ored, dis-o-beyed. We come, with all our
 2. in-ner chains, By so-cial for-ces swept a-long, By pow'rs and sys-tems

2. in-ner chains, By so-cial for-ces swept a-long, By pow'rs and sys-tems

14
30

1. heart and mind, Your call to hear, your love to find.
 2. close-con-fined, Yet seek-ing hope for hu-man-kind.

2. close-con-fined, _ Yet seek-ing hope for hu-man-kind.

VERSE 3
mp (Assembly men only, *ad lib.*)

35 Tenor
8
3. Great God, _____ in Christ _____ you call us and re-ceive

Bass (Melody) *mp*
3. Great God, in Christ you call our name And then re-ceive us as your

mp

40
8
3. us as your own, _____ but by _____ your love a -

3. own, Not through some mer - it, right or gain, But by your gra-cious love a - lone. We

45

3. lone we find you, find you kneel-ing at our feet.

3. strain to glimpse your mer-cy seat And find you kneel-ing at our feet.

This system contains the first two staves of music. The top staff is a vocal line with lyrics: "3. lone we find you, find you kneel-ing at our feet." The bottom staff is a piano accompaniment line with lyrics: "3. strain to glimpse your mer-cy seat And find you kneel-ing at our feet." The piano part includes a grand staff with treble and bass clefs.

50

Soprano/Alto

Tenor/Bass

VERSO

mf

4. ... take the towel, and break the bread, And

4. The ... take the towel, and break the bread, _ And

mf

mf

This system contains the second two staves of music. The top staff is for Soprano/Alto with lyrics: "4. ... take the towel, and break the bread, And". The bottom staff is for Tenor/Bass with lyrics: "4. The ... take the towel, and break the bread, _ And". The piano accompaniment is shown in a grand staff with treble and bass clefs, featuring a *mf* dynamic marking.

55

4. hum-ble us, and call us friends. Suf - fer and serve till all are fed, And

4. hum-ble us, — and call us friends. Suf - fer and serve till all are

59

4. show how grand-ly love in - tends to cre - a - tion sings, To

4. fed, are fed, — to work till all cre - a - tion sings, To

63

4. fill all worlds, to crown all things.

4. fill, to crown — all things.

VERSE 5

5. Great you — set us free Your —

5. Great God, in Christ you — set us free Your life to live, your joy to

f

f

f

f

f

f

f

68

S/A

T/B (Melody)

5. Great God, in Christ you — set us free Your life to live, your joy to

f

f

f

f

f

f

72

5. joy to share. Give us lib - er - ty from dull de -

5. share. Give us your Spir-it's lib - er - ty turn from guilt and dull de -

5. spair, — and of - fer all that faith can do, while love is mak - ing —

5. spair, And of - fer all that faith can do, while love is mak-ing all things

5. spair, — and of - fer all that faith can do, while love is mak - ing —

5. spair, And of - fer all that faith can do, while love is mak-ing all things

5. spair, — and of - fer all that faith can do, while love is mak - ing —

5. spair, And of - fer all that faith can do, while love is mak-ing all things

76

div.

5. spair, — and of - fer all that faith can do, while love is mak - ing —

5. spair, And of - fer all that faith can do, while love is mak-ing all things

5. spair, — and of - fer all that faith can do, while love is mak - ing —

5. spair, And of - fer all that faith can do, while love is mak-ing all things

5. spair, — and of - fer all that faith can do, while love is mak - ing —

5. spair, And of - fer all that faith can do, while love is mak-ing all things

5. spair, — and of - fer all that faith can do, while love is mak - ing —

5. spair, And of - fer all that faith can do, while love is mak-ing all things

81

5. love is mak - ing all things

5. all things new, all things new, love is mak - ing, mak - ing all things

5. new, _____ W _____ ing all things

5. new. _____

85

5. new. _____

5. new. _____

W
E
L
C
O
M
E

Composer Notes

Circumstances of Composition: Created on 22–23 February 2008, my setting of “Great God, Your Love Has Called Us” was composed as a hymn for the dedication of St. Peter Holy Redeemer Church in North St. Paul, Minnesota, where Fr. Daniel Griffith, a former student of mine, is now pastor. With the support of Katheryn Lien, director of liturgy and music at the parish, parishioners and music ministers learned the hymn in a simple form over summer 2008. The fully orchestrated version with organ and brass was sung for the first time at the dedication liturgy in fall 2008. The leadership at St. Peter Holy Redeemer and I both hope that this hymn will not only speak the faith of that parish, but be found useful in the wider Church.

Textual Issues: Written in 1977 and revised in 1995, Brian Wren’s five stanzas are a model of what a carefully crafted hymn text should be. Stanzas one, three, and five make it clear that the hymn is a prayer, addressing the “Great God” who has called worshipers in love and in Christ. While the emphasis is clearly on God’s activity, stanza two forthrightly names the ambiguity of believers’ lives in this world, “half-bound, half-free.” It connects liturgical action (stanza four) with action for the transformation of the world (stanza five) under the direction of the Holy Spirit.

Some Catholics might be puzzled by stanza three. The text avers that God has called us by name and received us, which seems a biblically based description of the process leading to Christian initiation (for Catholics: baptism, confirmation, and first Eucharist). It may disconcert some Catholics to sing that our divine election is “not through some merit, right, or claim / but by [God’s] gracious love alone,” thinking that this might be a characteristically “Protestant” view, but in fact it represents Catholic doctrine quite accurately. Because many Catholics are less than scripturally literate, the final couplet of this stanza might be problematic. According to Exodus 25:18–21, the “mercy seat” (Hebrew: “kaporet”) is an object of pure gold, of the same breadth and width as the Ark of the Covenant, resting upon it, with two gold statues of cherubim facing each other placed at each end, their wings spread out over the object. Also called the “propitiatory,” from the Greek (“hilasterion”) translation of the Hebrew Scriptures, this object signified the personal presence of YHWH. The Letter to the Hebrews presents the Yom Kippur rituals involving the mercy seat as a pre-figuration of the passion and death of Christ. With extraordinary concision and poetic power, Wren’s couplet connects the redemption sought through the Jewish high priest’s rituals at the mercy seat – Yom Kippur (done before God, imagined as invisibly enthroned there), with Jesus’ ritual washing of the disciples’ (and by extension Christian worshipers’) feet at the Last Supper.

Musical Issues: Although scored for assembly (SATB choir, organ and brass quintet), “Great God, Your Love Has Called Us” can be sung in unison by the assembly with organ accompaniment alone. When sung with SATB choir, the assembly might sing in unison on the first and final stanzas, with women singing on the second stanza, men on the third, and remaining silent on the fourth.

Performance Issues: I think this hymn would serve best as an entrance song at the Eucharistic liturgy. However, it could also serve as a hymn during the preparation of the gifts or as a song after the reception of holy Communion. Given the descriptions of the praying assembly in the first and second stanzas, it might also be used in penitential services, in gatherings of catechumens and the elect (anticipating their full Christian initiation), and during the season of Lent. I think it could be helpful to offer a mystagogical analysis of the hymn text in print form or in rehearsal to point out the extraordinary skill with which Wren combines biblical and contemporary images to clothe his progress of thought and the poetic quality of this text (e.g. “as we, by love, for love were made,” “suffer and serve till all are fed,” “you set us free, your life to live, your joy to share”).

—*Michael Joncas*

SAMPLE

Assembly Edition

GREAT GOD, YOUR LOVE HAS CALLED US

Michael Joncas

1. Great God, your love has called us here, As
 2. We come with self - inflicted pains Of
 3. Great God, in Christ you call our name And
 4. Then take the towel, and spread, And
 5. Great God, in Christ you set us free Your

1. we, by love, for love were made. Your liv - ing like - ness
 2. bro - ken trust and cho - sen wrong. Half - free, half - bound by
 3. then re - ceive us as your de - pend - ent though some mer - it,
 4. hum - ble us, and call us friends. Suf - fer and serve till
 5. life to live, your joy to share. Give us your Spir - it's

1. still we bear, Though marred, dis - hon - ored, dis - o - beyed. We
 2. in - ner chains, By so - called for - saken a - long, By
 3. right, or claim, But by your a - lone. We
 4. all are fed, And show how grand - ly love in - tends To
 5. lib - er - ty To turn from guilt and dull de - spair, and

1. come, with all our heart and mind Your will to hear, your
 2. pow'rs and sys - tems close - con - fined, Yet ask - ing hope for
 3. strain to glimpse your mer - cy seat, and find you kneel - ing
 4. work till all cre - a - tions cease, To fill all worlds, to
 5. of - fer all that faith demands. While love is mak - ing

1. love to find.
 2. hu - man - kind.
 3. at our feet.
 4. crown all things.
 5. all things new.

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