



## #13: By Gracious Powers

Listen to track 13 of *Songs of Justice and Peace*.

You can find the words in ELW 626. (*Evangelical Lutheran Worship*)

### Belonging

Have the group listen to the song, "By Gracious Powers," as a whole or even sing along. Notice the dark heaviness of this prison song. Notice, by contrast, the words of hope and certainty of belonging to God in all of life. Share the scripture readings among the group.

### Devotion and Scripture:

The life of Dietrich Bonhoeffer was brief. He lived in Germany, from 1906 to 1945. He belonged to his family, his church, and the seminary students he taught and nurtured. In time, he belonged to a very different setting -- behind the walls of Tegel Prison, because he belonged to a group whose mission was to bring down Adolf Hitler for his heinous crimes as leader of Nazi Germany.

During that time in prison he wrote the poem, *By Gracious Powers So Wonderfully Sheltered*. Bonhoeffer's words, along with the Scripture verses, describe belonging to God and affirm the presence of God in our lives.

### Read/sing verse 1.

Being sheltered night and morning -- being greeted by God each new day confirms for us that we belong to God.

*Lamentations 3:22-23*

### Read/sing verse 2.

Protected from the torment of the evil foe and confident in the certainty of our salvation, we know that we belong to God.

*Romans 8:38-39*

### Read/sing verse 3.

Because we belong to God we can even endure the cup of suffering -- the tough times -- that enter our lives. While we may not be able to understand, we still know that we belong to God, and that even our suffering comes from a beloved hand.

*Romans 8:18*

Deaconess Bonita Fredel, Johnson Creek, WI

### Read/sing verse 4.

In the good days, we also remember to whom we belong and it's easy to be grateful. In that gratitude we commend or give our whole life to God.

*Psalms 23:5-6*

### Read/sing verse 5.

We can live with hope -- yes, with certainty that we belong to God -- that's forever -- that's what matters in life and in death.

### Prayer:

Loving God, to whom we belong, we thank you for being our Life giver and Protector.

- Teach us to listen well and rejoice in your words of ownership.
- Teach us to listen well for the pain and distress of those who search for belonging.
- Teach us to share your love with those who have never known it.
- Teach us to share the life blessings you give us with those in need.

Thank you for all the areas in our lives where we belong and all the persons who claim us in their love. Amen.

### Reflection:

1. What does it mean to belong? What feelings do you have when you know you belong?
2. Not all people have a sense or feeling of belonging, because they are trapped in prisons of poverty, discrimination or disability. How would you imagine that might feel?
3. What words could you say to someone who has no sense of belonging?

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