

BLEST BE THE TIE THAT BINDS

Tune: DENNIS, Hans G. Nageli; arranged by Lowell Mason, 1845
Lyrics, John Fawcett, 1782

John Fawcett (1739-1817), a young Baptist pastor in England, gave us one of the most beloved farewell hymns of all time, "*Blest Be the Tie*". The story of this hymn is passed along by hymnologist, Albert Bailey.

...While serving his apprenticeship, Fawcett became active in a Baptist church and was often asked to speak. Then, in 1765, at age 25 (and newly married) he was invited to serve as pastor of a small church at Wainsgate, a very impoverished community. With the addition of four children to the family, a modest salary that was supplemented by parishioners' donations of wool and potatoes was barely adequate, especially during the long winters. So, in 1772, when a prestigious parish with more financial resources extended a call, he accepted. The announcement was made to the congregation and the farewell sermon preached. After selling most of their bulky belongings, the day of departure arrived. With the wagons loaded with the rest of their belongings, his parishioners gathered around him, and with tears in their eyes begged of him to stay. His wife said, "*Oh John, John, I cannot bear this.*" "*Neither can I,*" exclaimed the good pastor. "*Unload the wagons!*" His decision was hailed with great joy by his people. To convey his sentiments and those of his wife to the poor people among whom they had chosen to live, he wrote the hymn, "*Blest Be the Tie*". Fawcett served that little church for the rest of his life — 54 years in all.

This hymn was included under the title of "*Brotherly Love*" in Fawcett's "*Hymns Adapted to the Circumstances of Public Worship and Private Devotion*" in 1782. In 1811 "*Devotional Commentary on the Holy Scriptures*" was published and he was also honored with a Doctor of Divinity degree from Brown University, Providence, R.I. Lowell Mason arranged the tune: DENNIS and first published it in "*The Psalter*" (1845), a hymnal he compiled with George Webb.

~ *Tull*