



**GO AND...**

*Tell the Story*

## **A Musical Reflection**

**By Gretchen Ahrens, Director for Youth and Justice Ministries**

I absolutely love the hymn “I Love to Tell the Story”. I remember learning the words and singing it in Sunday School and later singing it in church and seeing the absolute truth of the words of the hymn being reflected on those around me singing the hymn. There were faces of all ages, some with eyes uplifted, some quietly humming with their eyes closed swaying to the music, some singing jubilantly, some singing incredible four-part harmony and others singing blissfully unaware of being off key but so full of joy and love for the story. It was such powerful and incredible witness to be surrounded by so many who loved to tell the story. Even as a kid, I just knew it had to be a story worth knowing and worth telling.

This words to this hymn were written by Arabella Katherine Hankey as a two-stanza poem published in 1866. She was the daughter of a wealthy English banker who taught Sunday School as a teenager and later became a missionary nurse in South Africa. She wrote the words as the part of a 50-stanza poem. The first part was called “The Story Wanted” and the second part “The Story Told”.

Wow! As a woman in the 1800’s, she must have felt a very strong pull to tell the story if she was willing to be both a missionary nurse and a poet. Not only that, but she also wrote the story while she was very sick. Personally, I might have spent my time being angry at God and wondering why I was sick. Instead, she felt compelled to share the story. For me, knowing the history behind these words gives them even more power. I pray that in our own ways, we might all feel so strongly compelled to tell the story.

I have found several different versions of the old hymn. Although they are the same melody and the same words, each one tells the story uniquely. As you listen to them, and watch the videos, I hope it helps you to find YOUR voice to tell the story. There are NO wrong answers!

**Version 1: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JRJ7u5NDvGs>**

**I Love to Tell the Story by the A Capella Company**

**Watch the faces of the singers. How do you see their love of the story reflected in their faces? Is the story reflected in your face when you sing or tell the story? Without accompaniment, what do you hear in the words?**

**Version 2: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=onJLwQS8dR0>**

**I Love to Tell the Story sung by the congregation and choir of First Plymouth Church, Lincoln NE and accompanied by the Youth Orchestra**

**How do the changes in dynamics tell the story? How does the accompaniment from the orchestra change the telling of the story? How does the story become even more powerful with the accompaniment of the congregation and the corporate singing of the story? How can we our story become more powerful when we tell it together and how do we do that? How do we include the whole orchestra of creation in the telling of the story?**

**Version 3: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ocdEF1Bi-K0>**

**I Love to Tell the Story by the Eden Symphony Orchestra**

**This story is told without words. How do you hear it differently? Can you still hear THE story, even without Katherine's poem? How can you tell the story without words? Notice how different parts of the orchestra tell the story at different times. Do you tell the story like a flute or a trumpet? Do you tell it elaborately or quietly?**

**Version 4: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OrCpKa\\_xOcE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OrCpKa_xOcE)**

**I Love to Tell the Story by Alan Jackson**

**If you have ever heard Alan Jackson sing, as soon as you hear this version, you will recognize it as Alan Jackson. He has a unique voice and a unique style to his singing and as he sings this song, he signs it in is unique way, with his cowboy hat on his head and a twang in his voice. How do you uniquely tell the story? When you tell the story, how can others tell that it is real and powerful in your life? What is your special style that makes you a unique, individual child of God?**