

# SAWORSHIP

MAGAZINE



November 2023

# CHOICES

MAKING DECISIONS THAT REALLY  
MATTER TO YOUR CONGREGATION



ISSUE NO. 19

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# Context.

The idea of context or contextualizing our worship has been bouncing around in my head. We know that the Bible is the inspired word of God, but it is also a historical document written to a certain people at a certain time. Understanding this gives us context to what is being said. It gives us an opportunity to understand more deeply what is being communicated, because of the context in which it was used, and how that can have significance for us today.

As leaders, when we bring together a congregation of many different people, we are bringing many different contexts together. The way that people perceive God is naturally through the context of their experience. As people trying to understand an unlimited and boundless God, we can't help but try and put Him into a context that we can understand and interact with.

As we carry out our duties as worship leaders, I believe a vital role we have is to help pull the congregation's understanding of God beyond their own context and see a bigger, more grand, more powerful God than they could have imagined.

It seems like this is a growing trend in worship songs and I am here for it. Lyrics such as:

*On my best day I'm a child of God.  
On my worst day I'm a child of God.  
Oh, every day is a good day. You're the reason why.*

*All my life You have been faithful.  
All my life You have been so, so good.  
With every breath that I am able  
I will sing of the goodness of God.*

*Yes, I will lift You high in the lowest valley.  
Yes, I will bless Your name.  
Yes, I will sing for joy when my heart is heavy  
All my days, yes, I will.*

These songs, and many others with this type of theme, give us an opportunity to get the congregation thinking and worshipping beyond their current or past circumstances, and the context they have put God in because of them. They can help the congregation see beyond what their context is to a God who is so much more.

Try to add some songs to your list for worship next week that expand the context that the congregation can view God.

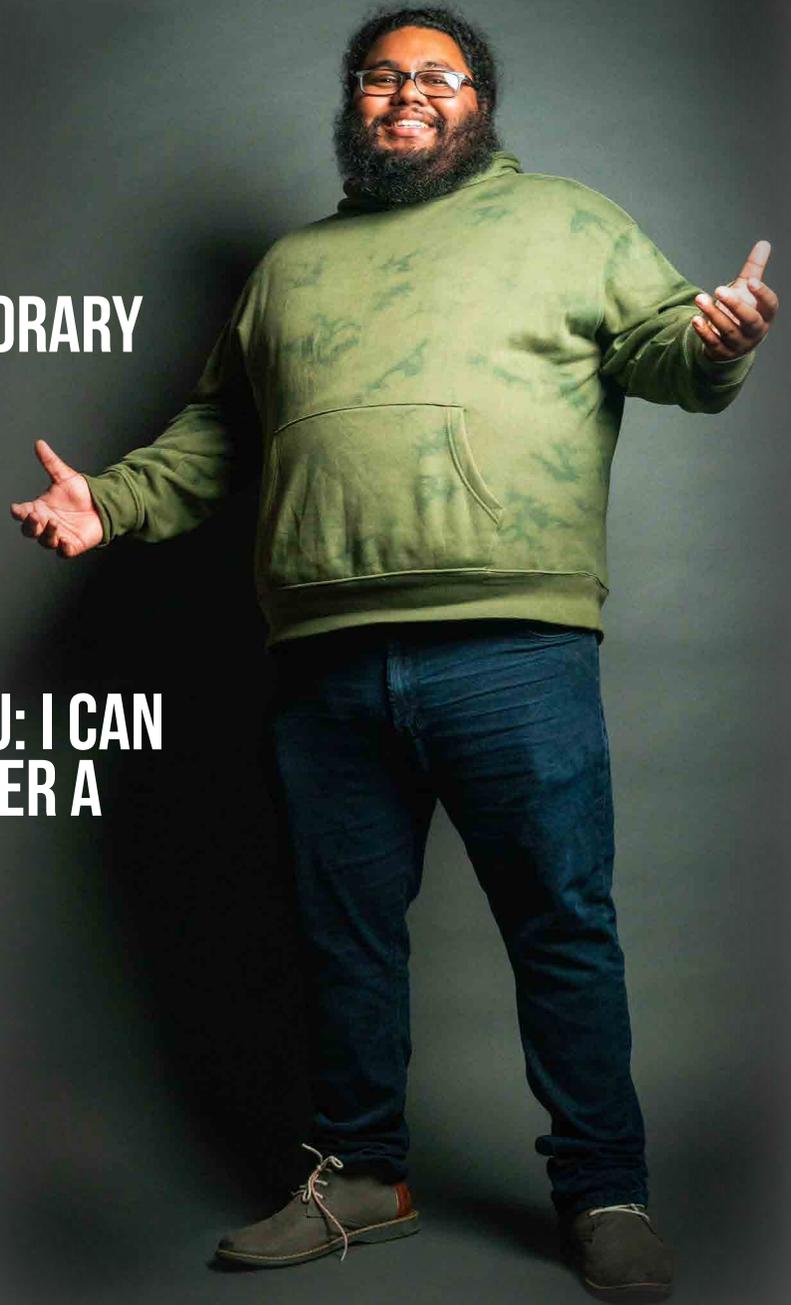
# INTRODUCING...

**NAME: REGGIE BROOKS JR.**

**ROLE: DIRECTOR OF CONTEMPORARY  
MUSIC AND STUDIO MANAGER  
USA CENTRAL TERRITORY**

**CORPS: ROCKFORD TEMPLE**

**ONE RANDOM FACT ABOUT YOU: I CAN  
SOLVE A RUBIK'S CUBE IN UNDER A  
MINUTE.**



## **HOW DID YOU GET STARTED LEADING WORSHIP?**

When I was 15 years old, I had just started going to church again.

My cousin, Scottie, was part of the praise band, and I wanted to hang out with him so I would attend practices and listen. Eventually, the praise band leader, Alberto Carrion, looked over at me and asked, "So you've been coming to practice long enough. What do you do?" My reply was, "I don't do anything." He told me to come onto the stage and he said with a comforting smile, "Why don't you try singing this next song with us?"

To my recollection, it went horribly, but he allowed me to sing with them again. Eventually I became part of the group. I learned so much while being in that group. I was blessed to be surrounded by such talented individuals. Everything was going great until disaster struck. A lot of people in the praise band moved onto the next stage of life, whether that was going to college, getting a job, having a child, or moving away. It felt like everyone was leaving the group and only four of us remained. We had a meeting to discuss if we should continue and we decided we needed to continue. This meant that I needed to figure out what it meant to be a worship leader. We prayed together and since then, God has been faithful in equipping us to lead worship.

## **WHY ARE YOU PASSIONATE ABOUT MUSIC/WORSHIP MINISTRY?**

I am passionate about this work because I have seen the way that God uses worship times to impact people. Praise and worship is an integral portion of the time we spend in church. People everywhere engage in praise and worship. It is also our most vulnerable ministry in my eyes. It is easy to get caught up with the performance, compliments, and fame of it all, but God can use this ministry for something so much greater than what we, in our human nature, make it out to be. He uses it so that people can see His glory. People come together and give Him the honour. I'm passionate about this work because I'm passionate about honouring the Lord. As well, I see the vulnerabilities in this work, and I am passionate about shielding others from those vulnerabilities.

## **WHAT ARE YOU EXCITED ABOUT IN YOUR NEW ROLE?**

I'm excited that I feel the Lord has appointed me to this position. Sometimes the world can make us feel like there isn't space for us or like we are running out of time. It is such a blessing to serve a God who not only knows me by name but has plans for me. I look at the criteria for a position like this and I never thought that I would have been able to do this, but God in His rich and abundant mercy continues to make a way to equip me for the work. I am grateful to be here, and I am excited to have a hand in carrying out the Lord's will within this particular scope of The Salvation Army.

# **PRAY FOR REGGIE AS HE BEGINS HIS NEW ROLE WITH THE USA CENTRAL TERRITORY**

# Neurodiversity in Music Ministries

By Abigail Morson

Music ministries in The Salvation Army have incredible potential as music schools and ensembles can be great tools for outreach. These ministries become meaningful communities where people build relationships, are discipled, and engage in worship. With so much potential in our music ministries, we should be bringing in all who are interested in learning music. This requires us to look critically at our programs and ask, “Who is being left out?”

I am a Salvationist and high school teacher, currently teaching music and special education. At my corps, I am an ensemble leader in our music school. During the summer, I participate at various music camps through serving on faculty. In all these settings, I teach a diverse group of individuals that have various musical levels and needs. Many individuals are neurodivergent. This means that their brain has a condition that places it outside of typical function. Types of neurodiversity include ADHD, Autism Spectrum Disorder, Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder, intellectual disabilities, and more. Neurodivergent individuals often face barriers that prevent them from participating in many activities.

How can we ensure that our music programs include those who are neurodivergent? First, we must reframe our priorities. What do we want to accomplish in a specific music ministry? When working in a music school or at a music camp, these are the priorities for learning:

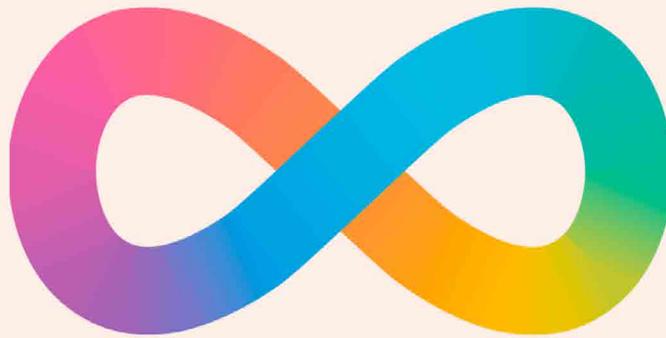
**1 KNOW JESUS** Children should learn that they are loved by God and can come to know Jesus as their Saviour.

**2 COMMUNITY** Children should learn that the church is a safe place where they feel like they belong.

**3 LIFE SKILLS** Children should learn skills for their everyday life such as leadership and cooperation.

**4 MUSIC** Children should gain musical skills.





With our priorities reframed, our next task is to ensure that our programs meet the needs of neurodivergent individuals. This can be done through modifying the program or offering accommodations that help an individual access that program. A one-size-fits-all approach will not work as every individual is unique. It will take some trial and error before finding strategies that work in your program and provide the best support for each unique individual.

When we modify a program, we change the program to meet the needs of participants. Below are examples of a few common modifications that could be done in your ministry.

- An individual learning material that is a **different level** alongside others in the same program
- An individual attending a program for a **different age group** that is a better fit
- An individual participating in a program **part time**

We can also offer accommodations to provide an individual with the support they need to access a music ministry. These accommodations fit into two categories: instructional and environmental accommodations.

Here are some examples of **Instructional Accommodations**:

### **1 BUDDY/PEER GROUPING**

Pairing an individual with a partner or small group to offer support.

### **2 NON-VERBAL SIGNALS**

These can be gestural reminders to sit, pay attention or participate.

### **3 FREQUENT BREAKS**

Many individuals will need movement breaks or quiet breaks outside of a loud rehearsal space.

### **4 REPETITION OF INFORMATION**

Reminders and repetition are great tools that can help learning and ease anxiety.

### **5 VISUAL AIDS**

This might include small pictures or phrases on a music stand, a whiteboard, or a visual schedule.

Here are some examples of **Environmental Accommodations**:

**1**

**ALTERNATE SPACE**

This is a safe space where an individual knows they can go to take a break.

**2**

**STRATEGIC SEATING**

This seating might be close to an exit, far from an exit, or close to a leader.

**3**

**REDUCTION OF AUDIO/VISUAL STIMULI**

This includes the use of headphones in loud rehearsal spaces.

**4**

**ASSISTIVE DEVICES/ ADAPTIVE EQUIPMENT**

This includes fidget toys and communication cards.

What does all this look like in a music ensemble? In an ensemble I lead with many neurodivergent members, we are all learning the same song as this fosters community. During each rehearsal, I provide a visual schedule. Individuals are sometimes using different types of notation (sheet music, lead sheet, tabs, letters) and some are learning by rote. This is to accommodate differences in cognitive ability. Individuals are aware of an alternate space they can access if they need a break and frequent breaks are given to the group as a whole. To make a group like this successful, it is important that all leaders are communicating well, remain calm, and are patient in all circumstances.

When we work with neurodivergent individuals, there are a few more truths that we should remember:

1. Behaviour is communication. An individual's behaviour is trying to tell us something and we should be listening.
2. Every person is unique and always changing. The strategies we use to support them will also need to change.
3. We should be partnering with families to understand the needs of an individual in our program.
4. We should collaborate with other leaders in our programs and reach out to experts (special education professionals, music department) for support when needed.
5. Don't underestimate someone who is neurodivergent because of their disability. Be prepared to be amazed!

Above all else, remember that every person we come across was created in the image of God and is loved by God. We have so much to learn from the neurodiversity in God's creation. These are individuals whose brains allow them to experience God in unique and powerful ways, making them an important part of the body of Christ.

# GETTING VOLUNTEERS

Many of our ministries depend on volunteers. They are the building blocks of what we do, and at times, it can be a challenge to get enough people to partner with us in ministry. One of the biggest challenges can be communication. How do we let people know what we need? Perhaps as a leader you feel shy about coming forward and asking for help, but we need to remind ourselves of Matthew 7:7 that says, "Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you." People process information differently, so here are five strategies that can help you communicate more effectively about potential opportunities to volunteer.

## 1 SOCIAL MEDIA

Interacting regularly with your church through social media is a great way to stay connected throughout the week. Use your social media platforms to let your congregation know about available ministry positions that need to be filled.

## 2 WEBSITE VIDEOS

Videos can also be posted on social media platforms depending on length. Create a tab on your website that is labelled volunteers. This is a place where longer and more in-depth videos can be posted about specific volunteer opportunities. Outline the roles and responsibilities/expectations for being part of the team.

## 3 INTEREST NIGHT

Have an open rehearsal where people can come and join in to see how rehearsals run for a musical group. Give people a chance to see what goes into putting a Sunday worship service together from a technical/audio/visual perspective. Give individuals a taste of what it could be like to be involved in these areas of ministry.

## 4 JOB FAIR

This could be for the entire congregation and not just limited to worship ministry. Set up a job fair in the foyer or gym and allow people to see what positions are available for volunteers. Have leaders there to answer questions and extend invitations to events like an interest night.

## 5 CHURCH ANNOUNCEMENTS OR BULLETIN

Add a "Roles and Holes" section to the bulletin, announcement reel, or email communication where opportunities can be highlighted. This will help people see the various areas of need. Refresh this section regularly. Even if the announcement remains the same, find a way to communicate it differently whether through a change in font or graphics so it becomes eye catching and appears new to the reader.

# *Choices choices...*

I'm the kind of person who used to be indecisive, but now I'm not so sure. I'll spend hours scanning Netflix for something to watch and then end up turning the TV off and going to bed without watching anything. At a restaurant, I'll narrow my menu choice down to a selection of 12 dishes to choose from and then will go with my usual. I'm not sure what it is, but when faced with a myriad of choices, I never quite know what to do for the best.

The same can be true when it comes to picking songs for use in worship: there are thousands of songs available at our disposal, but how do we know which are the right ones to pick? The twin danger is that, when faced with such a vast choice, we end up selecting the same old songs or we end up choosing songs which fail to connect with our congregations. The tips in this article, some theological, some musical, might help us to make decisions when it comes to planning and preparing for gathered worship.

## *1 What's the big idea?*

The starting point for selecting songs in worship should come from a recognition that the musical elements of a meeting form one part of the bigger whole which takes place when we worship. In a Salvationist context, the sermon and response are the climax of the meeting, but the sermon doesn't begin when the preacher gets up, but rather when people walk through the door. The overall direction of a meeting can be strengthened by worship leaders and preacher taking time to explore the big idea or theme of the meeting together, so that the song choices help to build momentum towards the sermon. Many hymnbooks, including The Songbook of The Salvation Army contain Scripture indexes which link passages of the Bible to songs: looking up the particular text for the meeting can be a great spark of inspiration.

## *2 How am I building variety into the meeting?*

In my experience, worship leaders can sometimes feel stuck between the "there were too many new songs this morning" and the "that was too traditional this morning" camps, as they try to strike a balance. Congregations can have strong opinions on the songs that are used in gathered worship. Rather than get caught into the trap of Contemporary verses Traditional, a healthier way to approach this challenge is to consider the overall "diet" of worship in a meeting. We looked at this in detail in a previous edition of SAWM, but in short, try to pick songs which cut across some of the following genre of worship songs:

- **Declarative praise** – songs which state and name who God is (for example: *A Thousand Hallelujahs, Praise Is Rising, Holy! Holy! Holy!*)
- **Personal worship** – songs which help us to express our devotion to God (for example: *This Is My Desire, Goodness of God, I Love You, Lord*)
- **Lament** – songs which express frustration or regret (for example: *When the Music Fades (Heart of Worship), A Thousand Times I've Failed*)
- **Testimony** – songs which express corporately what God has done in our lives (for example: *Boundless Love, When I Was Lost You Came and Rescued Me, This Is Amazing Grace*)

### 3 Who is actually in my congregation?



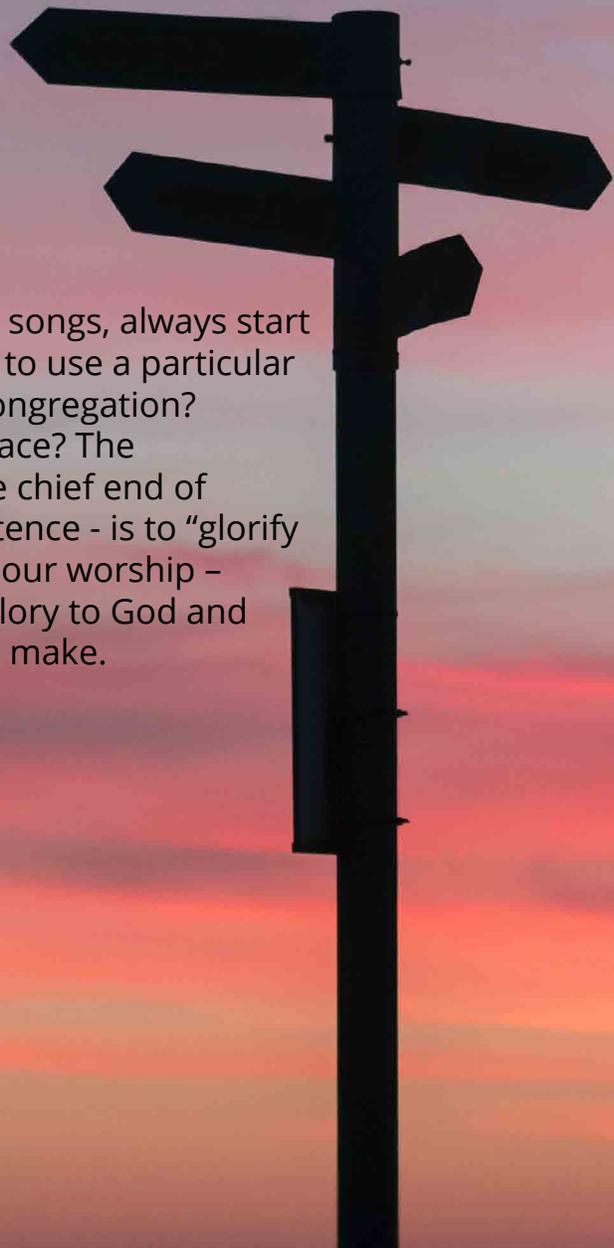
A common mistake that worship leaders can make is leading worship for the congregation they wished they had, rather than the one which is in front of them. You might like to have a Bethel congregation – complete with a plethora of electronic pad sounds and spontaneous singing – but if that's not within the frame of reference of the congregation that you actually have, what you prepare and lead is unlikely to make a connection. Worship leaders should take time to get to know their congregations. In our last corps appointment, we used to plan the meetings with different members of the congregation in mind. We'd think of hymns that Hilary, from an Anglican Church background would be familiar with. We'd think of including contemporary songs that Matt and Collette, a young married couple, would find engaging. We'd be sure to include an SA classic for Marilyn and Carol – two of the saints of the corps. This means that whilst not everything will connect with everyone, everyone would be able to connect with something.

## 4 *Where am I leading people to?*

Reading how the temple in the Old Testament is physically structured gives us a fascinating glimpse into the way that worship was intended to be structured and can be a useful pattern for worship leaders to consider when selecting songs. The outer courts of the temple saw the people sing psalms and hymns which were overwhelming declarations of the nature of God for the whole world. The inner courts were reserved only for God's people: they're where sacrifices were made. Then, the centre of the temple, known as the holy of holies was where God himself dwelt. If we translate this to our contemporary worship sets, it means that we might begin with the declarative and the corporate but move to the expressive and the individual. An example might be starting with the classic hymn, *Praise to the Lord, the Almighty the King of Creation* – declaring God's sovereignty over the world, moving to *Lord, Reign in Me* – acknowledging God's sovereignty over our lives, and then singing *When I Look Into Your Holiness* – offering our response of worship to God. All of this is to do with having an awareness of where you want people to be lead during the meeting – rather than just singing a few songs.

## 5 *Why are we worshipping in the first place?*

Above all things, when it comes to selecting songs, always start with the "why" questions. Why do you want to use a particular song? Why would it be a good fit for your congregation? And...why are we worshipping in the first place? The Westminster Catechism reminds us that the chief end of humanity – the primary reason for our existence - is to "glorify God and enjoy him forever." That's what all our worship – with and without music - should do: bring glory to God and ultimately, that's the first choice we need to make.



*A common mistake that worship leaders can make is leading worship for the congregation they wished they had, rather than the one which is in front of them.....*

*....whilst not everything will connect with everyone, everyone would be able to connect with something.*

# INTRODUCING...

**NAME: VICTOR MORALES**

**ROLE: DIRECTOR OF WORSHIP  
TECHNOLOGY AND  
SPECIAL EVENTS  
USA EAST**

**CORPS: WE MOVED A COUPLE  
OF WEEKS AGO SO WE'RE STILL  
VISITING DIFFERENT CORPS.**

**ONE RANDOM FACT ABOUT YOU:  
I WANTED TO BE AN ARCHITECT**



## **HOW DID YOU GET STARTED LEADING WORSHIP?**

I started in music from a very young age and grew up in a musical family. My father plays the trombone and a little bit of guitar. Apart from that, I have two older siblings who also play instruments. I grew up listening to them practice. I was mostly devoted to guitar and only sang sporadically. In high school, I started a band along with some of my friends and we played in our school's chapel services. That is when I started to sing in a worship context more often. From then on, it has been a long journey of development and various learning experiences. Coming into the Army several years ago has also given me many opportunities for growth and development, and I am very appreciative of that.

## **WHY ARE YOU PASSIONATE ABOUT MUSIC/WORSHIP MINISTRY?**

What excites me about worship music is that it provides a space in which we can be creative and inclusive. Beyond that, it is a space where we can come into a very intimate and personal contact with God.

## **WHAT ARE YOU EXCITED ABOUT IN YOUR NEW ROLE?**

I have always liked the idea of being able to help create communities of artists where people of different levels of proficiency can interact, make good music together, and support each other in their spiritual journey. My current role represents another opportunity where I can contribute to that goal. We have so many creative and talented people in The Salvation Army. I think it's great for them to know that they can count on a community of people that understand and support them.

# **PRAY FOR VICTOR AS HE BEGINS HIS NEW ROLE WITH THE USA EAST**

# SALVATION WORSHIP

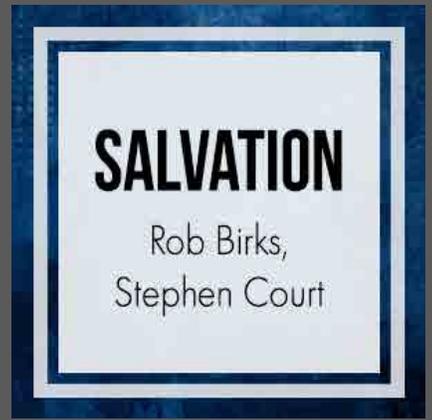
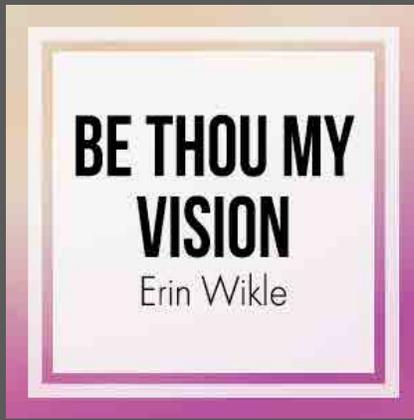
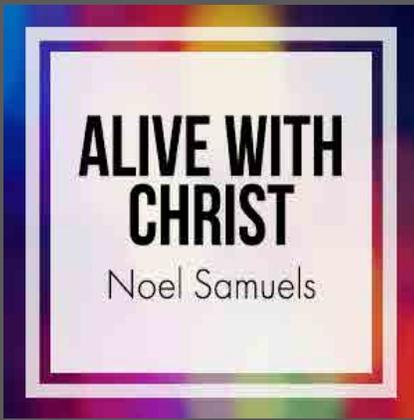
## VOLUME SIX

Released in August 2023 Volume 6 of Salvation Worship boasts 3 new writers, arrangements of familiar songs of the church and from our Salvation Army Songbook and some original songs.



## WHO IS ON THE LORD'S SIDE?

I arranged a worship version of *Who Is on the Lord's Side?* using the lyrics from the song book by Frances Ridley Havergal. The song was prepared for a corps cadets retreat where I was assisting with the worship music. The lyrics boldly call listeners to declare their allegiance to God. They echo the biblical story of Moses who confronts the rebellious Israelites for worshipping a golden calf. In Exodus 32:26, Moses cries out, "Who is on the Lord's side?" as a call to rally the faithful, just as this song rallies modern listeners to consider their commitment to serving God. With the catchy melody and impactful lyrics, this song is a fitting call to action for people of all ages.



# SAVIOUR, HEAR ME

I don't remember exactly why or how she asked for it, but at some stage, a dear friend of mine asked me to write a new tune for these beautiful words. It was just before Easter in 2020, so on Easter Sunday that year, I "gave" it to her as a video on Facebook. I didn't

think I'd be able to write this tune because I already knew a few incredible arrangements of the original melody. I was worried that I wouldn't be able to get away from those arrangements. I sat down at my piano with the words in front of me, and it just came, as though it was always meant to be. It felt as though the tune was already written and I just had to be the one to write it down. Reading that back sounds a little pretentious maybe, but that is how natural it was. This is generally how it has happened for me throughout my writing process with other songs. I can count on one hand the number of new tunes I've written, so it doesn't happen often, but when it does, it is like a little miracle that I get to hold.



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