

Good Shepherd  
LUTHERAN CHURCH

SONGS OF THE SOUL  
LENTEN DEVOTIONAL



# SONGS OF THE SOUL

Theologian Walter Brueggemann describes the Psalms as the most crucial resource for a conversation with God. He divides the Psalms into three simple categories: Psalms of Orientation, Disorientation and Reorientation. Psalms of Orientation describe and articulate the joy, delight, goodness and reliability of God, creation and God's law (i.e. Trust psalms). Psalms of Disorientation focus on seasons where we experience hurt, alienation, suffering and death.

These psalms describe our times in the darkest valleys. Psalms of Reorientation describe the turns and twists of life when we are overwhelmed by good fortune, joy and love. These songs speak of the beauty of coming back into a right relationship with God. Brueggemann describes how we move in a continuous cycle between these three categories in our lives of faith. This is the journey we will be on this Lenten season and we invite you to come and listen, to learn and to worship these "Songs of the Soul."

For more about Lent at Good Shepherd visit:

**[gslcwi.com/lent](http://gslcwi.com/lent)**

## MARCH 7<sup>TH</sup> | “LONGTIME” – BOSTON

SHARED BY RICK BLUM

Like many 50-year-old men, I love the band Boston. For many of us, listening to their first album is a rite of passage during our youth. But my feelings for the band, and one song, go to a different level.

When I went to college, I had a roommate from Massachusetts, and he really looked at Boston differently. He looked at the band at a spiritual level, and how the words spoke to him personally. His inspiration helped me when I took my first job after college in Topeka, KS as a television reporter. I moved to a town where I knew no one, and I was 500 miles from anything that was familiar to me. The lyrics from the song “Longtime” by Boston helped keep me strong. “It’s been such a Longtime, I think I should be going. Time doesn’t wait for me, it keeps on rolling...”

It wasn’t just classic rock that kept me strong. When I moved to Topeka, I found a Lutheran church, where I became very active as a youth volunteer and volleyball coach. It became my second home. It was there where I felt God leading the way, when the family and friends I knew my entire life weren’t there to do it. It was where the words of the psalmist really rang true to me. “Your word is a lamp to my feet; and a light for my path.” Psalm 119:105

Eventually, I would leave Topeka and move closer to family and friends by coming to Wisconsin. But the song “Longtime” became my metaphor for the dreams I was trying to chase in my television career. “There’s a long road, I gotta stay in time with. I gotta keep on chasing that dream, although I may not find it....I’m always right behind it.”

As it turns out, I never quite caught the dream I was chasing. I wanted to work at a television station in Chicago where I grew up. I made it as far as Madison. But after a while, you realize that maybe the dream you were chasing, wasn’t the dream you wanted.

That hit home 2 years ago, when I finally got to see Boston play live for the first time at Breese Stevens Field. This time, I had my then 15-year-old son with me, and we had a great time... together. All the emotions I had about that song and that band hit me that night. I thought about my life. I had a loving wife, two great kids, a nice house, a 27-year career in television news. And I thought, “That sounds like a nice dream to have, too. Maybe God was leading the way after all.”

**MARCH 8<sup>TH</sup> | "IT IS WELL WITH MY SOUL" – HORATIO SPAFFORD**  
SHARED BY KRIS HALVERSON

Music has always been an important part of my life, so the invitation to share a “soul song” was intriguing for me. It was harder than I imagined to capture one particular song or moment, but it wasn’t hard to realize that my grandma would be a part of the story. She was an exceptional musician and accomplished pianist who was still playing “programs” at her nursing home when she was 90.

All of our family gatherings involved time around the piano, most notably at Christmas when we would break into 4 part harmony to sing the Hallelujah Chorus from Handel’s Messiah. Grandma led us while singing soprano and playing the accompaniment, embellishing the score as the Spirit moved her. Most of the rest of us could carry a tune and some had true vocal talent, so our Hallelujahs were at least passable. But the joy, love, and music flowing from Grandma year after year is what marked my heart.

The only thing that defined Grandma more than her musicianship was her faith. She lived and breathed the love and peace of Jesus. That became crystal clear to me at my Grandpa’s funeral. Faith, music, and family were the foundation of their 63 year marriage, so Grandpa’s memorial service was filled with scripture and hymns. ‘It Is Well With My Soul’ was the last song. My voice was failing through my own tears, but then I distinctly heard Grandma. I looked over and she was still singing, just as strong and firm as if we were all back around their piano with Grandpa sitting in his chair.

*When peace like a river, attendeth my way,*

*When sorrows like sea billows roll*

*Whatever my lot, thou hast taught me to say*

*It is well, it is well, with my soul*

It was well with her soul and hearing that helped anchor my own.

## MARCH 9<sup>TH</sup> | “OLD CHURCH CHOIR” – ZACH WILLIAMS

SHARED BY THE CALDWELL FAMILY

Ashlynn sometimes jokes that she feels like she lives in a movie musical. That’s just how she and her brother process things. Whether it’s talking about what Disney soundtrack to crank up while we clean the house, what playlist to rely on to make a road trip seem shorter, the latest “earworm” one of them has brought home from school or choir, or the impromptu originals Boaz sometimes creates to narrate his superhero adventures, music is a constant in the life of our family. It’s really loud sometimes (trust us) but mostly a lot of fun.

It’s not hard to understand why David turned to Psalm-writing no matter what his mood or circumstance. Even before we had kids, certain songs came to define the highs and lows of our life together, filling in the places where our own words fell short of expressing the true joy, love, sorrow or confusion we might have felt in any given moment, creating our own personal soundtrack that we can listen back on and remember. And not being terribly musical ourselves, we are grateful for the courage and talents of others who have helped us express our emotions in this way over the years. (We also really appreciate all of the gifted members of our congregation who have, in one way or another, helped us foster this understanding of music in our kids.)

All that said, it was hard to choose one song for this Lenten assignment. But the more we talked and thought about it, we realized that for our family music is all about connecting – with God, our emotions, each other, our congregation, our world. So with that in mind, “Old Church Choir” by Zach Williams was the winner. We first heard and enjoyed the song on Life 102.5, but the connecting started when Echoes of Grace began to play it on Sunday mornings and then invited Joyful Noise and Raise Praise to join them one Sunday last spring. It was one of only a few times Ashlynn and Boaz got to sing together with their choirs, which made it extra special. Once the kids both had it down, it became a natural part of the movie musical that seems to be our life these days:

*I got an Old Church Choir singing in my soul, I got a sweet salvation and it's beautiful,  
I've got a heart overflowing 'cause I've been restored, There ain't nothing gonna steal  
my joy, No, there ain't nothing gonna steel my joy*

On the best of days, this chorus is a fun way to rock out in the car on the way to school and praise our God for all the wonderfulness of life. On the worst of days, it’s an incredible reminder that nothing in this world can change the promises our God has made us. We are connected to each other – in our little family of four as well as in our wider church family – by a sweet salvation and a God who loves us. There ain’t nothing gonna steal THAT joy!

# MARCH 11<sup>TH</sup> | “GOD & KING” – GATEWAY WORSHIP

SHARED BY THE CALDWELL FAMILY

I remember the first time I heard this song. It was the last Women of Faith I attended. It was the very last year they were running Women of Faith conferences and I was already emotional because of that. I was remembering the spiritual transformation I'd experienced since my first Women of Faith over a decade and a half earlier, the deep friendships I'd forged and the laughter and tears that accompanied every single event.

Gateway Worship was leading the music that final year and when I heard their arrangement of God and King, I was beside myself. The vocals and musicality lent themselves perfectly to the depths of which the song expresses a great and deep praise of our God. It's articulates perfectly the unity that is experienced when we worship. There's nothing more powerful than voices, and hearts, united in praise. When we brought the song to Good Shepherd and began to sing it in worship, my levels of connection to that song were amplified. Now it was MY community singing it together. Every time that song comes up at worship and every opportunity that it fits the scripture that week (which, if we were honest, would be every week since praising God is timeless) and every note which I sing when we lead it, fills my entire body with electricity. It's as though my already intimate connection to our Savior is even more real. In that moment, the Spirit is so palpable and my feeling of unity with my church family is so undeniably real.

Listen to the song. Hear the words. Close your eyes.

*Praise Him.*

*Praise Him.*

*Praise Him.*

**MARCH 12<sup>TH</sup> | “SO GLAD I’M HERE” – ELIZABETH MITCHELL**  
SHARED BY ROBYN ZIMMERMAN

I love music, all different kinds of music. So when I thought about which song I would like to write about I thought it would be a lot harder than it actually ended up being. It didn't take me longer than 2 or 3 minutes to make my decision. I hope this simple song will bring you as much happiness as it has brought me.

About 13 years ago I was introduced to a little children’s song called “So Glad I’m Here” by Elizabeth Mitchell. It’s the first track on her album titled “You Are My Sunshine.” I liked it, listened to it with a couple of kiddos I nannied for but never enjoyed it quite as much as I did nine years later. So what happened, what changed? It was the same song.

What happen was my cousin Nate had his first child, a little dude named Lyle. I was so happy because not only did I have family in town, but there was a baby in town! On the day Lyle was born we went up to the hospital to meet him. On my cousin and his wife’s first night out, I got to be his first babysitter. When his daycare fell through on his second day I was able to help out and watch him. For the first year of Lyles life I was able to see him just about everyday. Every Monday I was off from my job at the office of Good Shepherd, what better way to spend my day off but with my favorite little Lyle. Every morning when I came over Lyle would have the most beautiful smile on his face. Every lunch we would play our favorite song. We would clap when it started. Just listen to the link and you will be clapping along too. I would sing, we would dance all while enjoying our special time together.

On June first Lyle and his parents moved to a beautiful house in the country almost 3 hours away. I was sad but very happy for them. They would be closer to more family and I understood how important that was.

Lyle is turning 4 at the bringing of March, he now has an adorable baby sister and will have another sibling any day now. I still listen to our song when we FaceTime or when I am able to go visit even though the visits are never enough time spent together. Lots of things have changed since Lyles first year of life, many tears have been shed, mine and his. Many changes have occurred in my life, some good some not as good. Through all of my ups and downs my heart is still soaring and I’m still so glad I’m here, because love brought me here, here today.

## **MARCH 13<sup>TH</sup> | “CHILDREN OF THE HEAVENLY FATHER”**

**SHARED BY HEIDI SULLIVAN**

Lots of songs have moved me, comforted me, filled me with joy and hope. My Father was a terrific singer. He often sang in church.... all the way up to his last days (just died last month at 88). He sang the Lord's Prayer at all his grand daughter's weddings. When we were kids, we all sang four part harmony songs at nursing homes and also in church. My favorite as a kid was “Children of the Heavenly Father”. My Dad also would sing it in Swedish. However, we all had the English version memorized. Also, I Love to Tell the Story, How great Thou Art, His eye is on the Sparrow and 10000 Angels. It's difficult to sing those old hymns in church right now because I hear him singing behind me and it makes me cry.

I believe music is a direct conduit to heaven. When you are a choral singer, and you've perfected a piece together, you can hear the angels singing with you. All those individual singers, become one in the Spirit. The experience is overwhelming. There are no more soloists when you get to that point. That "one" voice sails through the rafters and into the heavens on Angel wings..... for the glory of God. I remember going to a Luther College, Nordic choir concert a few years ago when they were on tour. They sang downtown at Bethel with perfected pieces. The entire building vibrated with sound. You definitely could hear the angels as they sang “Oh Lord God” which is that choir's annual anthem. So keep singing.... or at least listen for the heavenly hosts.

**MARCH 14<sup>TH</sup> | "YOU ARE A CHILD OF MINE" – MARK SCHULTZ**  
**SHARED BY ANONYMOUS**

I wish childhood abuse could be left in the past, forgotten like old toys disappearing without mention. I wish it didn't affect how I see the world and myself, cause scars society calls mental illness, like depression, post traumatic stress, and anxiety. I wish it didn't permeate my identity, how I view the world and feel about myself.

*I've been hearing voices  
Telling me that I could  
Never be what I want to be  
They're binding me with lies  
Haunting me at night*

*And saying there's nothing to believe  
They're binding me with lies  
Haunting me at night  
And saying there's nothing to believe*

Every single minute I feel the words of past abusers and those who judge me now, based on who they think I am, not caring how I got this way. I don't want to be angry and sad or for my pain to affect others.

*Somewhere in the quietness  
When I'm overcome with loneliness  
I hear You call me name  
And like a father You are near  
And as I listen I can hear You say  
You are a child of Mine*

*Born of My own design  
And you bear the heart of life  
No matter where you go  
Oh, you will always know  
You have been made free in Christ  
You are a child of Mine*

When those who were supposed to love you fail miserably, you learn very young how evil the world can be and never feel completely safe.

*And so I listen as You tell me who I am  
And who it is I'm gonna be  
And I hang on every word*

*Knowing I have heard  
I am Yours and I am free*

There are always voices telling me I am unworthy of love. The judgement so heavy, I sometimes think I can't get out of bed.

*But when I am alone at night  
That is when I hear the lie  
You'll never be enough  
And though I'm giving into fear*

*If I listen I can hear You say  
You are a child of Mine  
Born of My own design*

This song, especially, speaks through darkness with the brilliant, difficult and remarkable notion that even I was born of God's own design. It's amazing to think He loves my defective self and though I struggle every day, I'm thankful and comforted he is the father I never had and will always be.

## MARCH 15<sup>TH</sup> | “THIS IS MY FATHER’S WORLD”

SHARED BY RICH JOHNSON

While in grade school, I first learned this hymn in a vacation bible school held at a church in my neighborhood. Almost immediately, I found it joyful as well as a welcome reminder that God created the heavens and the earth.

*This is my Father's world: I rest me in the thought, Of rocks and trees, of skies and seas-- His hand the wonders wrought.*

God created everything! Even at that young age, the truth of this verse cheered. This helped open the way for God’s grace to provide me with feelings of warmth and security.

It remained a favorite song as I grew up. I somewhat remember that “This is my Father’s World” was one of two songs that I requested my Uncle Larry to sing at our wedding reception.

*This is my Father's world: He shines in all that's fair; In the rustling grass I hear Him pass, He speaks to me everywhere.*

This cheerful tune and words continued to accompany me on my life’s journey. For the last four and a half decades, I have been singing this song to myself whenever I cross-country ski in the Madison parks. At this latter time in my life, the last verse seems to convey a message I need to hear frequently.

*This is my Father's world: O let me ne'er forget; That though the wrong seems oft so strong, God is the Ruler yet.*

When skiing, on a sunny day with fresh snow, I feel the joy of being in his creation and this song pops into my mind. Through the years, this song has helped me to remember and reflect on all that God does for me.

As Christians, we are asked to worship joyfully. Singing this song and other favorite hymns helps promote a joyful attitude. Today, I more fully appreciate the Lutheran tradition of singing in our worship services.

## **MARCH 16<sup>TH</sup> | “GODSPEED” – THE DIXIE CHICKS**

**SHARED BY SHANNON DAVIS**

Music to me is an escape. A way for me to shut out the busy of life and be surrounded by what makes me feel at peace or a way for me to be energized and motivated. Whatever the genre, speed, lyrics or simply music with no words at all, music can change the way I am feeling and the way I am processing my interactions and experiences.

My “soul song” has evolved. It’s a song that has meant different things to me depending on the stage I am at in my life. I believe “Godspeed” has helped me process my changing role of mother and how my babies have grown from being with me every moment of every day, to gaining little bits of mastery and independence with such pride, to now moving with increasing speed toward being young adults. Our babies grow so quickly and before long the endless nights with sick, colicky babies who only want the warmth and comfort of their mother turn to weekend days where I wait anxiously for my teenagers to wake so we can have conversations about their adventures and dreams.

I’m coming to realize our time spent with them is so short and so precious. This song has helped me to remember that there is no stopping their growth, for there is no way to freeze time on those innocent moments that I wish to remember forever. But rather I must wish them Godspeed, or in other words “may God prosper you.” In every step of being a mother I have hoped for my children to have good wishes on their journey and as much as I want to protect them and keep them close, it is their journey and I must have faith that they are on the path they were chosen to travel. My unconditional love will always be there for them, this I am constantly reminding them. No matter their age or where they are, “my love will fly to them each night on angels’ wings” but God is their ultimate protector and He is the one I hope has His arms wrapped tightly around them when mine cannot.

## **MARCH 18<sup>TH</sup> | “DIAMONDS” – HAWK NELSON**

SHARED BY LANE E JOE (AGE 10)

The first time I heard this song was in chapel at school. It spoke to me because it is about God refining us into the diamonds he wants us to be. It reminds me that in a world of ugliness and sin God wants us to be diamonds for him and let his beauty and light shine through.

*He's making diamonds, diamonds  
Making us rise up from the dust  
He is refining in His timing  
He's making diamonds out of dust  
I won't be afraid to shine  
He's making diamonds out of us*

## **MARCH 18<sup>TH</sup> | “GOD IS A WOMAN” – ARIANA GRANDE**

SHARED BY KAYLA WAGNER (AGE 13)

I first heard this song when I was listening to the radio. I have listened to this song when I am feeling a lack of self-love and self-confidence. My relationship with myself has been on and off and this song has helped me through all those tough times. When I was struggling to find words for myself, this song helped me. Although this may not be a typical “church song”, it speaks into my journey of faith in God and in myself. At first, I thought this song was just a typical pop song, but then I realized what the meaning of the song was. I would recommend this song to anyone wanting to have faith in believing themselves and self-confidence.

## MARCH 19<sup>TH</sup> | “BEAUTIFUL THINGS” – GUNGOR

SHARED BY BETH MARSHALL

**Revelation 21:4-5:** *And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away. Then He who sat on the throne said, “Behold, I make all things new.”*

From the songwriter: “This song is an expression of hope that God will make beautiful things out of the dust in our lives, and God will somehow use us, use our obedience and love, our feeble human effort, and build Himself a kingdom. I see that God is using suffering to bring us closer to Him.” – Michael Gungor

I first heard this song as I was drowning in the aftermath of divorce. Who was I anymore? Where was God? Was this awful pain going to last forever? I prayed through this pain, this loss, and the so many levels of grief it brought with it. I listened, I cried, and I sang. And this song became my affirmation. A rediscovery of who I was and who I was created to be.

As time passed, the feelings of doubt and inadequacy began to leave me, replaced with hope. There was a way to find my “colors” again, to bring light to the beauty awaiting inside in spite of the pain and suffering. To be made new! Because, God makes beautiful things! He does not leave us alone. He does not abandon us. God is present even in our difficulties. I believed this; and I thought, if I can lift my eyes up to God, I can have the hope that He has promised in His Word. He is the source of strength and hope. For if things can not be made new, there would only be death and darkness. And it is not living if we stay spinning in death and darkness. “Out of chaos life is being found, in You.”

“You make me new, You are making me new!” This is repeated over and over. And the newness feels good. And it gives HOPE! Believe that this “making new” can be for you too! My grief was replaced by contentment, satisfaction, joy, hard work and ultimately new love. There are still pangs, and so I remember, “You make beautiful things, You make beautiful things out of the dust. You make beautiful things, You make beautiful things out of us.”

## **MARCH 20<sup>TH</sup> | “I CAN ONLY IMAGINE” – MERCYME**

**SHARED BY ROBIN KURL**

I have two songs that are very significant to me in my journey of faith. The first song is “Blessed Assurance”. This song always reminds me every time that I hear it that Jesus is at the forefront of my life & that He is indeed my story & my song. The second song is called “I Can Only Imagine.” They are both so inspiring to me. Blessed assurance lets me know that Jesus is always directing my steps each & every day and that he is my help & song. I just love the song I Can Only Imagine. The song is so inspiring to me I had that song at my grandmother’s funeral & I know that she would love that song as much as I do. It also lets me know the amazing joy that I will one day experience. God bless you.

## MARCH 21<sup>ST</sup> | “IN MY LIFE” – THE BEATLES

SHARED BY RYAN PANZER

I am probably not the only one who would suggest that The Beatles have shaped my understanding of who God is, and who God is for me. So many of their songs are truly spiritually thought-provoking – from the shouts of joy and thanksgiving in “The End” to the cries of lament found in “Yesterday.” One could write an entire liturgy based on the “Let it Be” album. The Beatles seem to have a song that gives voice to every stop in the endless spectrum of emotions and experiences found in the life of faith. But one song, “In My Life,” has proven to be especially meaningful for my journey.

When I think of what it means to follow Jesus, I think of the tension that comes from balancing our rich faith tradition – its scriptures, its stories, its messages – with the fast-moving realities of our daily life and the ever-changing ways of our world. The Christian experience allows us to reflect on that tradition, on these beautiful stories, on these everlasting messages – and to discern what they are saying to us in this present moment. Returning to God during the season of Lent is not about retreating from the world around us, but is instead about strengthening the bond between our present-moment experience and God’s eternal promise, so that we can live more fully into who God created us to be. When I hear “In My Life,” I hear a song that reflects on what it means to be part of a beautiful tradition that is always calling us to new ways of being Christ’s hands and feet. The song begins:

*“There are places I’ll remember, all my life, though some have changed.”*

I hear this as an expression of how there are places, people, and moments that have given shape and continue to form my understanding of faith. I hear this line, and I think of the church in which I grew up. I think of Pine Lake Camp, and yes, I think of Good Shepherd. None of these places are the same as when I first encountered them – but the experiences I found, the moments I had, have shown me that we are all a part of God’s story – that I too am a part of God’s work in the world. But God’s story is as much a story of reform and change as a story of continuity and stability. The song continues with the line:

*“Though I know I’ll never lose affection, for people and things that went before, I know I’ll often stop and think about them. In my life, I love you more.”*

There are so many ways to interpret this last line, but when I hear it, I think of the hope that comes from a future that is God’s. When we return to the foundation that is Christ, we move with hope and clarity towards a future that is God’s. We can embrace the changing world around us, knowing that we are an essential piece of God’s never-ending story.

## **MARCH 22<sup>ND</sup> | “BENEATH THE CROSS OF JESUS”**

**SHARED BY MARK RENNER**

The way of Lent is CROSS-Cultural. When I was serving as Chaplain for the Lutheran Service Society of New York, in Buffalo, I had 5 nursing homes assigned. I was to provide weekly worship at each. The residents ranged from domiciliary care to skilled nursing. Most of these were sisters in Christ, old enough to be my grandmas. They taught me this song, I was unfamiliar with the tune, since it was not part of The Lutheran Hymnal. It became a favorite.

As a Lutheran pastor, the centrality of the Cross of Christ was a Seminary Confessions Class “given.” In the company of these aging saints, it became a lived experience. During my several years in service to them, many of them died. The letting go...first of the last vestiges of capacity and the movement to more intense levels of care...finally to the last words of good bye always struck these little “congregations” to the heart. So, the CROSS... and the culture of life in Christ that comes with it, by grace through faith.

## MARCH 23<sup>R</sup>D | “I STILL HAVEN’T FOUND WHAT I’M LOOKING FOR” – U2

SHARED BY CARRIE ENSTAD

I am barely 13 years old. It is October 1988, my 8th grade year. I am suffering and struggling in ways both common to the average 8th grader, and in ways so very unique to my own situation. I have just returned home from a month long hospital stay for a crippling depression that knocked me right over and stole my normal, every-day life right out from under me. My friends were keeping pace with mall visits, the latest styles from The Limited, and how to get their bangs to stay unnaturally stiff and curled, while I labored to leave my house and make sense of the mess of fear that had overtaken my body and mind. I was scared and exhausted. Knowing I could use a pick-me-up, my next door neighbor and friend Kelley, a senior in high school, took me to see a movie: the U2 documentary, Rattle and Hum.

I sat mesmerized for two hours – blissfully carried away by the music, inspired by the story, and blown away by the Gospel choir that joined the band for this amazing anthem. I walked away with a lifelong love affair with this band, a lifelong connection to this song, and a deep and abiding understanding that my faith would carry me, that music would be the wings, and that because of what Jesus had done for me, it would be ok for me to keep walking and looking. I was found, even if I was so, so lost. Ok, it’s possible that I didn’t have all of that wrapped so neatly in my injured 13 year old brain, but in hindsight, the seeds were sown.

U2 defined my high school experience and friendships. Their music came with me to college. In other dark and scary corners of life’s journey – traumatic anxiety does not tend to exist as one isolated event – this anthem has filled me and raised me. It reminds me of who I am and Whose I am. It reminds me what what Jesus has done. And because of its Gospel style, it reminds me of the long history of oppression and unfair treatment and hardship that the human spirit endured and even transcended with the help of MUSIC and FAITH. On those days when I don’t find just what I’m looking for, I can rest securely in the arms of Jesus, who broke the bonds, loosed the chains, and carried the cross of my shame. And I believe it. You know I believe it.

## MARCH 25<sup>TH</sup> | “BEAUTIFUL SAVIOR”

SHARED BY LYNNE KROGER

I have so many wonderful favorite hymns and songs, but “Beautiful Saviour” is very special because the hymn is a favorite of my husband Doug and myself. This hymn was sung during his Funeral Service in 1983.

*“Fair are the meadows, Fair are the woodlands, Robed in flow’rs of blooming spring,  
Jesus is fairer, Jesus is purer, He makes our sorrowing Spirit sing.”*

Then the hymn, “Praise To The Father”. “Praise to the Father for his loving kindness. Tenderly caring for his erring children, Praise him, all angels; praise him in the heavens; Praise to the Father!”

The Lord is always loving and caring for his children if we only allow His love to be received in us daily. But beyond receiving His love, the Lord wants us to share with others in times of sorrow and joy. Listen to one another as we await the flowers of God’s Spring.

## MARCH 26<sup>TH</sup> | “IF YOU BUT TRUST IN GOD TO GUIDE YOU”

SHARED BY RICK BLUM

It happened on a Tuesday. I was doing a live shot for WISC-TV in UW-Platteville, where they were honoring Bo Ryan for winning a national championship for the Pioneers. In between live shots, I was told to call my wife at home. I went into the satellite truck and got a hold of her, when she gave me the news: “I have breast cancer.”

This news is never welcome. But it really hit Beth and I hard. We had been married less than 2 years. Beth was 32. Would we be able to have a family? Would this news be a death sentence for her? We both walked in a daze the next few days, pondering what the next few months would be like as she underwent treatment, and wondering whether we had a long-term future together.

The next Sunday, we both went to church at Good Shepherd. We sang a very old hymn that day, one I didn't know well, despite spending my entire life in traditional Lutheran churches. The hymn was “If You But Trust in God to Guide You?”, That day, it really spoke to me. Here's verse 2:

*“What gain is there in futile weeping,  
In helpless anger and distress?  
If you are in his care and keeping,*

*In sorrow will he love you less?  
For he who took for you a cross  
Will bring you safe through ev'ry loss.”*

I mean...that REALLY hit home. But here is where it gets weird. I go home and pull out an old hymnal my grandfather had given me 23 years before, to see if that hymn was in that hymnal. My grandfather gave it to me when I was 8, and he had signed it in the back. He died 6 years later. As far as I knew, he hadn't written anything else in it. So, I turn to Hymn 518 in the Lutheran Hymnal and find “If Thou But Trust in God to Guide Thee.” Other than the old English terms, the hymn is there. But here's the weird part: he had underlined the last 3 verses of that hymn. I hadn't seen that before. And it was THE ONLY OTHER WRITING IN THE BOOK.

Looking back, it was obvious I didn't find it for 23 years for a reason. But ever since that weekend, I hold a special fondness for that hymn, and the last verse still gives me hope, that trusting in God will always pay dividends.

*“Sing, pray, and keep his ways unswerving, Offer your service faithfully. And Trust his Word, though undeserving, You'll find his promise trued to be. God Never will forsake in need The soul that trusts in Him indeed.”*

Beth's diagnosis was 20 years ago today. Despite all our challenges, we've been lucky that the diagnosis 20 years ago didn't keep us from having everything God imagined for us. I hope I never lose that trust in Him. Amen.

## MARCH 27<sup>TH</sup> | “CITY OF NEW ORLEANS” – STEVE GOODMAN

SHARED BY ALLISON SEMRAD

Like many songs I know by heart, I had no idea who wrote “City of New Orleans.” I didn’t know who made it famous, or when it was released, or even what it was about. But I did know all of the words from a very young age; because this was the sound of Saturday morning. This was one of a few songs that my dad played over and over again. On weekends and relaxed evenings, he would pick along to this song, familiar folk chords on his guitar, singing something about a train and America. I heard it a million times and eventually internalized it.

In the fifth grade, when I was the new kid in music class; the teacher asked for volunteers to sing. In a fleeting moment of bravery, I sang the first verse of “City of New Orleans.” Riding on the City of New Orleans, Illinois Central, Monday Morning Rail. Fifteen cars and fifteen restless riders. Three conductors, twenty-five sacks of mail. I had no idea how strange it would be for a very shy 10-year-old to start singing a folk song about a railroad released in 1971. But I knew that it felt good to sing, and I knew I felt validated when the boys in my class told me, “Weird song, but I liked your voice!”

And when I played a lot of music in college, on my own guitar, this song would come to mind. To play it for people, I didn’t need to memorize something new. So, I picked along and sang the chorus to strangers in living rooms. Good morning America, How Are You, Don’t You Know Me, I’m Your Native Son. I’m the train they call the City of New Orleans, I’ll Be Gone 500 Miles When the Day is Done. And unlike the fifth grade, this time I was “informed” for knowing a folk song from the 1970s.

Always, this song sticks with me unconsciously. It’s not really a song you hear often on the radio, or one that is referenced in music trivia. But I never really forget it; it’s there in my mind, in my dad’s voice. So, this Lenten season, I am thinking about songs that can never be forgotten. Maybe this isn’t a song that has changed me; but it is a song against which I can mark my own change. I am grateful for this song as a reminder of grace, like music that is unfailing. As a reminder of peace, like an easy Saturday morning. And as a reminder of joy, like singing something familiar.

## MARCH 28<sup>TH</sup> | “TO EVERYTHING” – PETE SEEGER

SHARED BY DIANE HUGHES

I was pretty young when Turn, Turn, Turn (To Everything There Is a Season) was released in October 1965. I don't remember when I first became aware of the song, but I have listened to it many times in recent years because it is on our Forrest Gump CD. It's one of the songs I like to play when I'm exercising with my Hula Hoop. That seems appropriate, right? This song by Pete Seeger was popularized by the Byrds, an American folk rock band.

Although I have never heard this song during a worship service, I have read Solomon's words in the third chapter of the Book of Ecclesiastes many times. In these verses, Solomon points out that God provides cycles of life for his people. The notes in my study Bible state, "All the experiences listed in verses 1–8 are appropriate at certain times. The secret to peace with God is to discover, accept, and appreciate God's perfect timing. The danger is to doubt or resent God's timing. This can lead to despair, rebellion or moving ahead without his advice."

Over the years, I have become more aware of the seasons of life. I have come to understand and appreciate the cycles of life, the joys and sorrows that are all mixed together. Just as we experience the change of seasons in creation, we go through many seasons during our earthly life. Some of the seasons are welcomed, while others are not. The desired outcome is to find peace in all the seasons of life.

The words that stand out for me in this song are: a time to laugh, a time to weep, and also, a time to dance, a time to mourn. In recent years, I have experienced several painful losses. These losses occurred close together. Just as I felt I was healing from one loss, another one happened. Grieving took a lot of energy. Waiting on God's timing for relief from grief took trust and patience. Mixed in with the weight of grief were many lighthearted, cheerful moments. The love and support from my family and friends helped me get through that difficult season.

This song reminds me that there is an appropriate time for everything. The different seasons of life don't last forever. The difficult seasons pass away eventually. The good times come and go. I try to live in the moment, relishing all that's good. During the good and bad, the challenge is to see what the purpose is, what is the lesson that can be learned. It can take courage and trust to step into a new season of life. We can know that God will always provide His Holy Spirit to guide us through everything. I have asked myself, "How can I use the wounds I've suffered and the life lessons I've learned to help and support other people?"

One of the difficult losses I experienced was my mom's death after years of serious health problems. Mom was a big Dolly Parton fan. I know she would have enjoyed Dolly's version of Turn, Turn, Turn that I found on Youtube. Check it out.

## **MARCH 29<sup>TH</sup> | “NEED YOU NOW” – PLUMB**

SHARED BY TAMMY FISH

Have you ever been driving down the road and a new song comes in the radio and by the end you are crying and saying yes she gets it? That is what happened the first time I listened to Plumb’s Need You Now. I’ve lived with an autoimmune disease for 33 years. Living with a chronic illness can be a lonely life, not because you are alone but it’s hard to find someone else who understands what you are feeling or the struggles that you go through. Plumb’s song put into words what I feel often, she understood!

One of the verses she used when writing the song is one that I look at daily; Psalm 46:10 He says, “Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth.” When I feel like the life I’m leading is not the one I wanted or it feels out of control, I go back to this verse, still my mind and listen for God. God’s plan and my plan are different occasionally, but God’s plan is always the one that is right for me and God is always there to help me along the way.

## MARCH 30<sup>TH</sup> | “FOR EVERYONE BORN, A PLACE AT THE TABLE”

SHARED BY JARED STELLMACHER

Music brings us together; it transcends; it comforts, it unites; it heals; its melodies stir us, its words leave impressions; it becomes part of who we are.

*“Music is life itself. What would this world be without...music?”*

*–Louis Armstrong*

### Hymns Connect Us

Music joins us together. The hymns of the church have always been an important part of my life. From early on, I remember going to my great Aunt’s house, who was like another Grandma to me, every day after school. Like most kids who might like to watch TV, play video games, or run around outside after school, I always sat down on the bench of her living room organ and would play hymns while Aunt Ellie would sing along many times from memory. When I was about ten years old, I remember telling her: “I am going to play every hymn in the hymnal,” and I did, and Ellie sang along faithfully. These songs were imprinted on her heart from an early age, and they were beginning to shape my faith, as well. A bond; a connection; a tradition being etched on my heart.

Similarly, I vividly remember my Grandma Lucy driving me to Peace Lutheran Church in Rosendale to practice. Likewise, I would play hymns, and she would sit (and eventually laydown) in the front pew singing along. These songs meant so much to her. Her faith was strong, and it showed through these hymns. We loved doing this together – a prime example of how hymns of faith are passed down throughout the generations. Music reminds us of the past; the memories of church, relationships, and life’s journey. Music transports us back to special and important times in our lives. Those songs which leave impressions on our hearts.

### Music Transcends & Transports Us

When I was a graduate student at Yale University, I remember listening to an organ concert given by a classmate, Chelsea Chen, in Woolsey Hall. Woolsey Hall seats 2,650 people, was built in 1901, is home to the world’s 10th largest organ, and is ornately decorated in Beaux Arts style. It’s stunning! Lavish murals and gold carvings decorate the hall, and the ceiling is a mural of a blue sky with white clouds. During a performance of Prélude, Adagio et Choral varié sur le theme du ‘Veni Creator’ by Maurice Duruflé, I remember gazing up at the ceiling and into the clouds. The celestial music overwhelmed me as I began to weep. It transported me to another place! I was captivated by its beauty – I didn’t know what was happening. For a moment, tears ran down my face as I was in

awe, overwhelmed with emotion. All I could think looking up toward heaven was, “is this what it’s like there?” What did I just experience? This magical yet mystical experience reinforces the reality that music truly has the power to transcend; to transport us. It stirs our emotions and overtakes us. It comforts us.

*“Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; For You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.”*

–Psalms 23:4

## **Hymns Unite Us**

Growing up in a small, rural, relatively conservative community, it was challenging to be 100% me growing up. I didn’t “come out” until I was in college. I remember being made fun of, being called names, and being judged. It wasn’t easy, and I held a lot of the hurt within. Beyond having an incredibly loving family, I continually turned to music for comfort and an escape. Not only was there comfort in listening to music, playing it was a way of expression, release, and escape. I often turned to hymns which reminded me of God’s unconditional love.

*“Music has healing power. It has the ability to take people out of themselves for a few hours.”*

*“Let the morning bring me word of your unfailing love, for I have put my trust in you.”*

–Elton John & Psalm 143:8

One hymn that has taken a hold of my heart recently is For Everyone Born, A Place at the Table. It was written in 1998 by New Zealand hymnwriter, Shirley Erena Murray. Not only is the melody beautiful; it sweeps and comforts the soul, but the text is so relevant; for me – for our church – and for our world. Love should be unconditional, but too often, it isn’t felt like it is. Too many fall wounded to hate, abuse, judgement, exile, and hurt. Jesus extends unequivocal love to everyone! All are welcome! All are forgiven. We are all children of God.

Seeing and experiencing injustice both personally and in the world is heartbreaking. For everyone born; no matter who you are, regardless of age, gender, color or culture, religious or spiritual background, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, relationship status or family structure, physical, emotional, or cognitive abilities, additions, physical or mental health, socio-economic status, political views or affiliations, or any other point of distinction, which too often divides us in the world,

deserves a place at the table of grace. I go to this hymn to regain hope, to find comfort in God's love, and to be reminded that we are all children of God. Everyone is different, no one is the same. Who are we to judge? For everyone born, a place at the table.

Another song I continually turn to for strength and healing is called, Child of God. Likewise, when experiencing injustice and feeling excluded, these words provide comfort and hope: You are all child of God, no matter what people say or think about you. And there is nothing, or no one who can separate you from the truth: you're someone, you are family, you are meant to be, a child of God.

Music is powerful. It can unite us, it can comfort us, it can feed us, it can reconcile, it creates community, it transcends, it embraces, and it connects us all. My faith stays strong through hymns. My heart remains full and I remain strong as I reflect on hymns like For Everyone Born, A Place at the Table. As you journey through your favorite songs of faith this Lenten season, may you be reminded of God's unconditional love for you and the power of music in your life. Listen...take that love, embrace it, feel it, and share it. Extend it to all you meet, because for everyone born, there is a place at the table.

## APRIL 1<sup>ST</sup> | “CONFIDENCE” – SANCTUS REAL

SHARED BY JOSIE MUELLER (FR. AT UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA)

I would consider myself a pretty quiet person who doesn't like to stand out in a crowd. While this has its perks, it also means that I struggle with confidence, mainly the lack there of. I have always felt like what I do won't be good enough, or that other people will judge me. This has led me to not take up leadership positions or try new things because I am fearful of what that could mean. Relating to my faith life, I sometimes feel as though what I'm doing isn't good enough for God or that I am not the right person to do it.

And I need to stop myself from comparing myself to others when it comes to what I think is a “good Christian” because that isn't what God intended at all. This song by Sanctus Real talks about how people feel insecure and like they are not strong enough for God's plans. It then goes on to say how God uses our brokenness to fulfill His plan. He gave us countless examples throughout the Bible of people who lacked confidence until they set that fear at God's feet and fully put their trust in Him. Once we put that aside and sing and shout His praises the enemy has no choice but to step down and be defeated. This song is such a good reminder to let God come in and work in our lives and to see what miracles could happen.

## APRIL 2<sup>ND</sup> | “THE CROSS” – PRINCE

SHARED BY PASTOR CHRIS ENSTAD

I have been a life-long Lutheran Christian. I grew up surrounded by God’s love and grace but as I grew up, I sought out experiences of God that brought me out of my bubble and exposed to me both triumphs and tragedies, love and loss, anger and joy all experienced by people of faith both near to me and far away. I experimented with different theologies of God: the glory-seeking-happy-all-the-time Christianity being the one that most attracted me as a young man. But even within those parts of my journey I never quite felt “at home” in my faith. I have always believed that there is something bigger than myself in the universe, but that didn’t stop me from trying, again and again, to put myself in the center of it.

It wasn’t until I spent time on the U.S./Mexico border that I truly began to understand what true faith looked like. I also learned what made Lutheran Christians different than everyone else. In the face of immense poverty and violence, I met and worked alongside people of deep-seated faith. I lived with people who took life on life’s terms while putting their trust fully into God’s hands. This kind of faith opened me up to what Martin Luther called the “Theology of the Cross”.

A theologian of the cross is one who calls things what they truly are. In our Western culture, we continually seek happiness by attempting to solve the riddles of satisfaction and success. When God tells us that to find life we must first lay our down and take up the cross it takes us by surprise. Christians meet one another with this true word, lifting up each other our burden’s as we move through this beautiful, and terrifying, life.

This song by Prince exemplifies that theology in more than one way. First, there was a rock star singing about real life and bringing his faith to these stories in a powerful, humble way. Second, it shows that the message of the cross is not just for other people, it is for each of us. Prodigal children all.

*Black day, stormy night  
No love, no hope in sight  
Don't cry, he is coming  
Don't die without knowing  
the cross  
Ghettos to the left of us  
Flowers to the right  
There'll be bread for all of us  
If we can just bear the cross  
Sweet song of salvation  
A pregnant mother sings  
She lives in starvation  
The cross*

*Her children need all that  
she brings  
We all have our problems  
Some big, some are small  
Soon all of our problems  
Will be taken by the cross  
Black day, stormy night  
No love, no hope in sight  
Don't cry for he is coming  
Don't die without knowing  
the cross  
Ghettos to the left of us*

*Flowers to the right  
There'll be bread for all, y'all  
If we can just, just bear the  
cross, yeah  
We all have our problems  
Some are big, some are  
small  
Soon all of our problems,  
y'all  
Will be taken by the cross  
The cross*

## APRIL 3<sup>RD</sup> | “THE RIVER” – GARTH BROOKS

SHARED BY DAN FELDHACKER

*I will sail my vessel ‘til the river runs dry - Like a bird upon the wind, These waters are my sky, I’ll never reach my destination, If I never try, So I will sail my vessel ‘til the river runs dry*

-Garth Brooks. “The River.” *Ropin’ the Wind*, Capitol Nashville, 1991.

I grew up on a small dairy farm in Northwest Wisconsin, so it may not be surprising that my first music preference was country. Country music in the 90’s was going through a bit of a transition. As slow ballads began to give way to slightly faster ballads, a lot of the music was emotional, sincere, and sometimes a bit sappy. As I look back on those songs from my childhood and teenage years, I begin to see several common themes that seem to carry through most of my favorite songs. Songs like “See You Again Someday” by Kenny Chesney and “If You Only Knew” by Randy Travis were extremely relatable as I worked through the loss of my aunt. “We Shall Be Free” by Garth Brooks and “In My Daughter’s Eyes” by Martina McBride taught me that we have a responsibility to care for and respect life. “The Good Stuff” by Kenny Chesney taught me to appreciate both the joys and difficulties in relationships. One song that especially sang to my soul was “The River” by Garth Brooks because it carried a message of how perseverance and hope work together, and it became a song that carried me through both good and hard times.

When I was a kid, I received several Garth Brooks CD’s from my sister for Christmas, and I absolutely loved the music. The River was one of many, many songs I would listen to on repeat, but it always stuck with me. I’d often find myself singing it while doing chores on the farm. At times, it was a fun song about hopes and dreams and living life to the fullest. At other times, it was about keeping my head up and pushing through. While many songs spoke to me in certain moods or situations, this song seemed to wind its way through daily life.

There are many times in my past where accepting God’s grace felt easy, and of course this would bring a lot of joy. I would want to sing and praise and rejoice. There were other times when faith felt hard. Sometimes I would not want to think about it at all because everything felt so distant. This song was not for those times. The River was for those moments in between, when everything felt regular and it was easy to become complacent. The River took me from morning to night, through chores, school, and after-school practice and encouraged me to look for improvement. As the song says, “don’t you sit upon the shoreline and say you’re satisfied. Choose to chance the rapids and dare to dance the tide.” I’ll admit that it has been a while since I’ve listened to this song, but I think it’s one that I should start singing again.

## APRIL 4<sup>TH</sup> | “FORGET & NOT SLOW DOWN” – RELIENT K

SHARED BY SARA RITTER

I’m not perfect.

I’ve done things I’m not proud of and said things that have hurt people. As much as I wish I could take those things back, the truth is I am grateful for those experiences because of the lessons learned from them. They shaped me. Maybe I don’t like who I was then, but I love who I am now.

My soul song is “Forget And Not Slow Down” by Relient K because it reminds me that through Christ I am continually made new. My past is in the past. The burdens I find myself carrying – resentment, guilt, shame, a sense of worldliness that gradually creeps in – don’t have to weigh me down. Those things don’t define me, even though they try from time to time.

I can’t remember the first time I heard this song but I remember how it made me feel, because I still get the same feeling when I hear this song – it feels like coming up for air or like a layer of dust being blown off of my soul and getting this moment of, “Oh, there I am.”

There isn’t a specific lyric or phrase that stands out to me, either. From “how many times can I push it aside” to “pour over me and wash my hands of it”, every word of this song speaks directly to me and it reminds me of 2 Corinthians 5:17.

“This means that anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun!”

I’ve made mistakes but this song reminds me that what matters most right now is whatever I do next.

## APRIL 5<sup>TH</sup> | “SURVIVOR” – ZACH WILLIAMS

SHARED BY MONICA FEILER

When I first started to consider writing about how a song affected me I thought ok I can do to this, but what song as there are so many songs that have deep meaning to me. Songs that make me tear up as I am singing along in church, my car, my kitchen.

I chose Zach Williams, Survivor. It talks about carrying the burdens of my past. The decisions I had made were not always the best. Most days, I would fall to my knees and cry in prayer. It took me many years to open my eyes and see what God was trying to tell me.

That I am worth being rescued and being welcomed with open arms to the one place that I felt comfortable.....alive in the arms of Jesus. I felt alive when I opened my heart and became a survivor of my bad choices. God has shown me how he wants me to live my life. I am a survivor and thank God every day for never losing hope in me. For shaking my world so I would listen and reach out to him with all I have each day.

I encourage you to open your heart and become a survivor if you are feeling lost. He is listening to you, just reach out and he will help you ..... Survive!

May God bless you!

## APRIL 6<sup>TH</sup> | “SOMETIMES PEOPLE ARE GOOD” – FRED RODGERS

SHARED BY SHERRI SWARTZ

I was fortunate to grow up watching Mr. Rogers every day. My mother bought his records so we could listen to his songs any time. Fred Rogers was trained as a musician and ordained in the Presbyterian church with the call of ministering to children via television. His unique gifts and insight enabled him to distill some of life’s most difficult and profound truths into songs that preschoolers could understand. This one is my favorite.

We seem to have a need to sort the people we encounter personally, publicly, even historically into categories, with the most basic of those categories being Good or Bad. Santa has a Naughty list and a Nice list. The Packers are Good, the Vikings are Bad (just checking if Pastor Chris is proofreading these). Martin Luther King was Good, Slaveholders were Bad, America’s Founding Fathers are Good, the British were Bad, Police are Good, Criminals are Bad....But wait, what happens if a founding father was also a slaveholder? Do we still name our high school in his honor? What happens when our own bishop ends up in prison? Do we have to throw out all the good in someone when they are discovered to have committed a sin that is unforgivable in the public eye? Can we still appreciate Cosby Show re-runs? I remember feeling physically sick when I discovered there is pretty good evidence that Martin Luther King was not always a faithful husband. Wasn’t he supposed to be the epitome of Good? We can get dizzy watching how fast public figures move from one category to the other. And of course we have a need to see ourselves and present ourselves to the world as a Good person, so we make excuses (starting right away with Eve) and we hide our faults and mistakes, sometimes denying them even to ourselves.

We might think it is a new, post-modern tendency to expose the flaws in our heroes, but the Bible has included stories of flawed heroes for thousands of years. Noah was spared from the Ark because of his righteousness but then spent a night as an incestuous drunk. Abraham had the faith to leave his homeland to follow God but fathered a child through his servant when his faith wavered. David was the great King, slayer of Goliath, Psalmist, and man after God’s own heart, but even after Bathsheba he didn’t learn his lesson, and he continued in dysfunctional relationships with his family and women into old age. Peter was the Rock of the Church one moment and Satan’s mouthpiece the next. It’s been said that it’s a good thing God can use sinners, or he wouldn’t have much material to work with. Maybe when we pass the peace at church, we should introduce ourselves, “Hello, my name is Sherri, and I’m a sinner.”

Martin Luther coined the phrase that we are all simultaneously Sinners and Saints. Paul said, "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." (Romans 3:23) Jesus said, "Let he who is without sin among you cast the first stone." (John 8:7) John said, "If we say we have no sin we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." (I John 1:8) And Fred Rogers said it like this:

Sometimes people are good.

And they do just what they should.

But the very same people who are good sometimes

Are the very same people who are bad sometimes.

It's funny, but it's true.

It's the same, isn't it, for me and you.

## APRIL 8<sup>TH</sup> | “VICARIOUS” – TOOL

SHARED BY KRIS ZIMMERMAN

I am a pretty moody person. My mood swings can often dictate what songs I am (or am NOT) going to enjoy at any given time. That made the task of picking one song to write about somewhat difficult for me. But, for me, there is a band that speaks to me just about every time I listen to them. Going out of the box a bit, I chose to write about the song “Vicarious” by the metal band, Tool. Listening to Tool, I feel almost instantly locked in and emotionally charged. They aren’t for everyone (recently a friend told me, “That’s what you’re listening to? I’m out!”) but the more I thought about it, the way they speak to me is much like the Psalms do.

What makes the Psalms so rich is the breadth of emotion and scope of topics that they cover. From praise and admiration, to anger and confusion, the entirety of the human experience is all in there. The familiar and the surprising.

Tool is often loud, angry, and critical. But, their songs are constructed with a care and precision and musicality that often surprises listeners. They change time signatures, layer complex rhythms and sounds, vary between soft and lyrical to loud and driving. Their songs can be jarring, filled with the unexpected, yet can be familiar and inviting. Their songs swirl from beautiful and calming to disorienting and exciting. Which for me, speaks to my life experience. Pretty much running the gamut of emotions, never knowing where things are going but if I strap in it’s bound to be a wild ride!

I picked this song in particular because the vocalist sings about watching tragedies from a distance. The band’s lead singer reportedly wrote this album in part as a response to his experience as his mother died. The pain, but the need for detachment is pretty powerful. But that’s a dangerous road, right? Detachment can be safe and soothing, but pretty soon we can get detached from life, and the experience that God wants for us. Ecclesiastes 1:18 says “For with much wisdom comes much sorrow; the more knowledge, the more grief.” But, Jesus doesn’t want us to go through life vicariously, passing through as only observers. We live life to the fullest when we dive in and experience the richness it has to offer, with all of the beauty and pain that comes along with it.

This song is filled with life and emotion like not many can achieve for me. Tool’s music forces me to confront whatever emotion it brings out. Sometimes it’s chills and headbanging in the car. Sometimes it’s tears. But listen, as breathtaking as it can be facing down and naming those emotions, equally break taking is God’s assurance to walk with us through everything. There is a truth in this music, and like God’s grace, I can’t get enough.

## APRIL 9<sup>TH</sup> | “HARD WAY HOME” – BRANDI CARLILE

SHARED BY BECCA MORTENSEN

*I'll follow my tracks – see all the times I should have turned back*

*I wept alone – I know what it means to be on my own*

*The things I've known – looks like I'm taking the hard way home*

*The seeds I've sown – taking the hard way home*

There is a story in the Old Testament of a worn down, lonely, disheartened prophet wandering up the side of a mountain for 40 days. After encountering God on top of the mountain and voicing his fear, God directs him in what to do but starts with “go back down the way you came.”

There are plenty of times and places that I associate with struggle or pain, loneliness or fear, brokenness or weariness. And I think about how frustrating or unpleasant it probably was for Elijah to have to rewalk that journey down the mountain, remembering the struggle on the way up and all the emotions he experienced as he journeyed up. I don't even think I'd like to rewalk the halls of my middle school and that was nothing compared to what Elijah was experiencing!

“Go back down the way that took you 40 days to get up here. Not on the nicely manicured path that goes straight to what's next but through the bushes and thick from which you just came here. Not the way that's going to get you to your next task fastest but the one that's purposeful in a different way.” The thing is, I think there is power in taking the hard way home and seeing things in a new light.

I think of the most upsetting points in my life and I think about the temptation to completely avoid the people and places that were involved. In fact, I was the victim of a strange crime back in March and in working through it I was encouraged by many caring people to change my habits and perspective – don't go to that place where the incident happened again, don't go anywhere alone, have the perpetrator “get what they deserve.” But I consistently felt that instead of blacking out places on my map that had been tainted by the experience, God would redeem them and let me see those places in a new light. I think God even allowed me to go back down that mountain with the person who caused this trauma and forgive them.

I don't know what Brandi Carlile intended with this song, but it has been one of a few that reminds me of the truth that God redeems all people and places – regardless of the roughness; regardless of the “regretables” or wrong turns (whether deliberate or mistaken) and regardless of the pain that has happened somewhere, there can be beauty and growth that emerges in and from it and sometimes we have to revisit it, slow down to reflect on the journey, or think back through those steps to see how God had a hand in it.

There will always be struggles in our journey here on earth, whether it be from our own actions, the actions of others, or just the world's condition. But I think sometimes we get a Spirit-nudge to revisit those places or to do the hard work of going back and reflecting through the hard experiences to see them with a new set of eyes. Reframing and reflecting is not efficient, it's not easy, it's not without some memories of pain, but sometimes I think we're called to take the hard way home and that's what this song has encouraged for me.

## APRIL 11<sup>TH</sup> | “KEEP HOLDING ON” – AVRIL LAVIGNE

SHARED BY DIANE KOHRS

My growing-up home was almost always filled with music. If an album wasn't playing, there was singing. The radio was tuned to the pop station. My older brothers would record the Top 40 every week, not that it was any different from what we heard all week long. The tape would get recorded over each week with the same songs slowly re-ordering and changing over time.

They would poke fun at my younger sister who would always get the words wrong. But it didn't stop her from singing along. Even in her sleep. I don't know what her preference in music was, now that I think of it. I guess when you're the youngest, you don't get much opportunity to do the choosing.

There was one song that I remember LOVING when I was about 4. I'd lay in bed listening to the radio in my brothers' room waiting for it to come on. For a season it usually did. I'd be so happy when it came on. It felt comforting. I wish I could remember what that song was, or why it felt that way. Everything was right in the world.

When I was 10, I was allowed to take up an instrument. I chose the trumpet, because it is obviously the best one. 😊 Also, we already had one at home. (I briefly considered NOT playing the trumpet, thinking that's what everyone would choose and we'd need other instruments for the band. To my actual 10 year old shock, there were only a couple of kids in my class who chose trumpet. I was so relieved.) I spent hours playing the 3 notes we started on... then jumped ahead in the book because all the 3 note songs were boring. I was on my way to making my own music.

That same year my family broke up. My sister and I spent a few years bouncing from place to place with my mom, while my brothers were given the relative stability of staying in the same home and school. Music from that era sounds terrible to me, still to this day. It's embedded with the sadness and confusion and helplessness of that time.

But this is when I started to MAKE music. It was a diversion and a healing for me.

When I turned 14, my family recognized making music wasn't a fad for me and were able to secure a beat-up upright piano. It came from a nursing home who had gotten a nicer one donated to them. I inherited all my grandma's piano music from when she played dance music at parties and in theaters.

I LIVED on that piano for 3 years. My piano teacher couldn't give me enough music to play. I was playing in every music group our school let trumpets play in. I was in choir. I found friends who loved music as much as I did. We formed a tribe. I was listening to music again. We were singing to the car radio. The world started to right itself again.

Fast forward to 2009. I'm at home watching Glee. Season 1, episode 7. Quinn is having to finally face a huge life change. She's sure her parents will be upset and she'll be kicked out of cheerleading and lose her friends. So, the choir picks her up. While she mostly cries through the choreography, they sing "Keep Holding On", mostly to her. They choreography has them trading partners throughout the song with each member getting a chance to let her know: "You're not alone, together we stand" "We'll make it through" "I'm here for you".

I immediately began to tear up myself. This is exactly what it felt like to me when I found my people. True have-your-back friendship. That was when the world came back into proper alignment for me. The song didn't exist back then, but certainly touched my soul when it arrived.

## APRIL 12<sup>TH</sup> | “HERE I AM LORD” – DAN SCHUTTE

SHARED BY DIANE CALI

One of my all-time favorite hymns is Here I Am, Lord. I first heard this song in my church in Pennsylvania. It was so powerful, the lyrics swept over me and I heard my heart cry along with “Here I am, Lord, Is it I, Lord?” I so wanted it to be me. Those words have driven me for many years. It stirred my spirit and the spirit brings it back to my remembrance whenever an opportunity arises where God needs someone. I believe my desire to serve God by serving His people began that first time I heard this song. I don’t hear this song much now. Some people think this song is for funerals. But I don’t think so. I believe this song motivates us to answer God’s call when He needs to send us forth to bless His people and to also hold His people in prayer. Sometimes I will just begin singing this song when I am cleaning, or cooking or even exercising and it never, never fails to strike my heart and move me to want to jump up and say.....Here I am Lord, Is it I Lord?

Dear Lord, we are so thankful for your live presence in our lives and in our hearts. Stir our hearts to hear your call. Open our eyes to see where we can help your people. Cause our spirit to dance within us and cause us to cry “Here I am Lord, is it I, Lord?” In Jesus’ name, Amen.

Here I am, Lord. Is it I, Lord?

I have heard you calling in the night

I will go, Lord, if you lead me

I will hold your people in my heart

## APRIL 13<sup>TH</sup> | “FOREVER YOUNG” – BOB DYLAN

SHARED BY PASTOR SHERYL ERICKSON

*Psalm 71: 17-18*

*<sup>17</sup> O God, from my youth you have taught me, and I still proclaim your wondrous deeds.*

*<sup>18</sup> So even to old age and grey hairs, O God, do not forsake me, until I proclaim your might to all the generations to come.*

I've always liked folk music. It's the style of music that sings of protest. It sings of tales that can make us laugh at ourselves. It sings of hope and peace. It sings of simple things. It sings of being blessed with the basic, most meaningful things in life.

I was preschool and grade school in the 60's, a time when lots of folk music flooded the airwaves. But I didn't discover Peter, Paul and Mary until my college years in the 80's. Peter, Paul and Mary were the first ones I heard sing this song of Bob Dylan's. I listened to "Forever Young" a lot in my college years as it made me feel the blessings about which its lyrics sing.

Then this song came back around for me to share with my daughter. When she was in her teens, together we liked to watch the TV show "Parenthood" and "Forever Young" by Bob Dylan was the show's theme song.

While this song sings a blessing that we might each stay forever young, I also interpret the lyrics from my Christian perspective. I hear these words sing of the same qualities that I'm blessed with in my new life in Jesus Christ: That I'd grow up to be righteous and true. That I'd always do for other and let others do for me. That I'd have a strong foundation when the winds change and shift. That I'd be courageous, upright and strong. And that in my heart, I'd stay forever young.

This song calls me to be hopeful, forward thinking, open to possibilities. And that's my call, and yours, as people of Christian faith too!

## APRIL 15<sup>TH</sup> | “YOU LIFT ME UP” – BRENDEN GRAHAM

SHARED BY JEN MAIER

Perhaps the melody is floating through your head after reading the lyrics...it is a favorite of mine for many reasons. About 14 years ago, I was grappling with the death (by suicide) of my girlfriend’s husband partially because he was Catholic and what was believed about this type of situation. He was on my mind accompanied with questions and confusion when I pulled into Miller’s parking lot one afternoon. It’s a moment I’ll never forget because this song started playing on 102.5 and it just caused me to stop. I truly felt like it was God speaking to me and telling me my friend’s husband was going to go to heaven. Tears filled my eyes and joy filled my heart. I later shared with my friend that I was assured that everything was going to be okay.

What a powerful message that we are stronger with him, that he will give us power and make us more than we could ever be on our own, but we have to be tuned into Him. Ironically, the words say we wait for God to come and sit with us, but I often find that God has to wait for me to come and sit with Him. I get so busy with other distractions, I often don’t slow down enough to listen well. That’s why another one of my favorite songs is, “Be Still and Know that I am God.” Not only as a song but a “go-to” verse (Psalm 46:10) that I can recite in the middle of a stressful situation. It’s a great reminder of who is actually in charge and from whom I should be seeking guidance and approval.

I love music! I think it’s one of the most powerful ways to connect, reflect, share, worship, and learn. Today, I thank God for the gift of music. May you also be blessed by meaningful, beautiful lyrics and love. Amen.

When I am down and, oh my soul, so weary;  
When troubles come and my heart burdened be;  
Then, I am still and wait here in the silence;  
Until you come and sit awhile with me.

You raise me up, so I can stand on mountains;  
You raise me up, to walk on stormy seas;  
I am strong, when I am on your shoulders;  
You raise me up, to more than I can be.

There is no life, no life without its hunger;  
Each restless heart beats so imperfectly;  
But when you come and I am filled with wonder;  
Sometimes, I think I glimpse eternity.

You raise me up, so I can stand on mountains;  
You raise me up, to walk on stormy seas;  
I am strong, when I am on your shoulders;  
You raise me up, to more than I can be.

You raise me up to more than I can be.

## APRIL 16<sup>TH</sup> | “FLAWLESS” – MERCYME

SHARED BY KAREN SMITH

During this season of Lent, we’re reading the Psalms and contemplating our own “soul songs.” I figured it would be easy to find a song that speaks to me, that lifts me up when I’m down and sticks in my head when I’m celebrating the good times. Like the crawl that runs across the bottom of the screen during a newscast, song titles ran through my head: hymns I’ve sung with my family, songs I’ve taught kids in choirs and church school, every song ever sung by Echoes of Grace, several Gershwin tunes, most Christmas carols...

Suddenly, this wasn’t easy as it first seemed. So I did what a lot of people do when they don’t know what to write about: I did a Google search. A few minutes later, this produced the title of a song that really does speak to my soul; ‘Flawless’ by MercyMe. I first paid attention to this song because it has both kids and adults singing, but as I began to learn the words, the song really spoke to me:

*No matter the hurt...Or how deep the wound is...No matter the pain...Still the truth is  
The cross has made...The cross has made you flawless*

On the surface, I understand the meaning of this: God heals us, redeems us and makes us new again. It’s the truth I’ve been taught since childhood, and yes, I kind of get it. But flawless? That’s a whole other level. As I was planning this devotion out in my head, this was the part where I was going to launch into an exhaustive list of my many flaws. Really, don’t we all do that too often? Society and especially social media are quick to point out the areas where we fall short, and we’ve all become experts in self-deprecating talk. I’m pretty sure I’m not the only one who has had the 3:00 AM conversation with myself of what I could’ve done better or differently in so many areas the previous day. But the song tells us that God rides in to save the day:

*Then like a hero who takes the stage when...We’re on the edge of our seats saying it’s  
too late...Well let me introduce you to amazing grace*

Grace. I am so intrigued by that word, because it is so far beyond my understanding. 2 Corinthians 12:9 tells us, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” My immediate response to this would normally be to roll my eyes and say something like, wow, then God’s power must be REALLY perfect in me! But for this Lenten season, it might serve us well to put aside the self-deprecation and to stop listening to those voices in our heads that tell us we’re not good enough. The cross has made us flawless!

## **APRIL 17<sup>TH</sup> | “LET IT SNOW” – DEAN MARTIN**

**SHARED BY JEFF KUCHENBECKER**

It's 10pm and I'm just about to leave the office for home. I'm eagerly anticipating the next thing on my to-do list, shoveling snow. Yes! Absolutely!! I can't wait to shovel some more.

Several years ago I began having long, late night conversations with God while shoveling snow after the latest snowfall. Last year we didn't have much snow. But this year has been a bonanza, and I couldn't be more content and excited. Shoveling snow late at night is a great cardio exercise for me, and I can also feel the grandeur and awesomeness of God. Every inhale is a chilling sensation. Every exhale is a visual wonderment as volumes of mist rise in the air. The humbleness of being in God's creation, and of being His creation, is uniquely evident. And the casual talk, and frequent tears of joy, flow easily.

Praise God from whom all blessings, and snow, flow.

My prayer? Let it snow, let it snow, let it snow.

## APRIL 18<sup>TH</sup> | “THIS LITTLE LIGHT OF MINE”

SHARED BY JUDY HOARD

“This Little Light of Mine, I’m gonna let it shine, let shine, let shine, let it shine!” , these are familiar words to one of my favorite songs. It’s a song that has grown up with me. I learned it as a child in Sunday school and liked it then. Having had the privilege and blessing to be a church school worship leader at Good Shepherd for many years, “This Little Light of Mine” continues to be a song I love to teach and sing with children. It is a song that transcends all ages and places. Each verse provides opportunities for singing and accompanying motions that the children can really get into (myself and teachers included). I can just picture the motions to the words “I won’t Satan blow it out, I’m gonna let it shine”. Lots of energy is expended blowing Satan or other evil out.

While in Door County attending a musical performance after Christmas, one of my favorite acting/musical groups sang “This Little Light of Mine” toward the end of their show. How inspiring it was to hear this song sung by the “choir” in attendance. Hearing these favorite words brought tears to my eyes. Hearing it sung in a non-church setting, made me appreciate even more how meaningful the message of the song is.

In recent years when leading the song with the children, I’ve taken the word “light” and substituted the word “life”. I want my life to be a light that shines for Jesus by my words and actions. The seeds that are planted in our children is that they too, will let the light of their lives shine as they grow in their faith as followers of Jesus.

As we travel through the season of Lent, may each of us let our light (life) be a beacon of hope for others to see that Jesus is our Savior and Lord.

## APRIL 19<sup>TH</sup> | “BE STILL MY SOUL” – KATHRINA VON SCHLEGEL

SHARED BY GREG MEYER

It is exceedingly rare to see a middle-aged man weeping uncontrollably in the middle of a Monday morning business meeting. And yet there I was, unable to hold back my tears.

We had just announced the signing of our first Finnish customer, a surprise that elicited smiles, applause, and cheers from my colleagues. But mine were not tears of joy. You see, someone decided to commemorate the occasion by playing an instrumental rendition of Finlandia. I recognized the tune, but not as a patriotic anthem of Finland. It is the same melody used in the eighteenth-century German hymn “Be Still, My Soul.”

It had always been one of my favorite hymns – lovely, haunting, profound. But ever since it was sung at my friend Ross’ funeral, I am emotionally overwhelmed whenever I hear it.

Ross was part of my inner circle of friends at Seminary, and we spent a lot of time on campus discussing the content of our studies, as well as plenty of time off-campus just blowing off steam.

It was a conservative school. They did not view homosexuality as an acceptable Christian lifestyle. And Ross was gay, though he never shared that with anyone. Seminary, we only later came to understand, was his last attempt to train himself to be straight.

I was with Ross just hours before he took his life. He was happier than usual, perhaps even celebratory. I’m thankful that I can remember him that way, even though in hindsight I know he was simply looking forward to a bittersweet respite from years of shame, judgment, and exclusion.

Many lines in this hymn have spoken powerfully to me at many different times during my life. But I never understood the very first line until hearing it at the funeral.

Be still, my soul, the Lord is on your side.

I never thought of God choosing sides. Surely it is our responsibility to align ourselves with God, and not the other way around? But like any good Father with a child who is scared and tormented and alone, God comes alongside. Of course, he chooses sides. He is the defender of the vulnerable, the champion of the downtrodden, the friend of the outcast.

I don't feel any personal responsibility for Ross' death. Ross was able to hide his pain and didn't allow anyone to come alongside him. But I did feel a corporate kind of responsibility. I participated willingly in a system of belief and practice, of policy and governance, that further distanced and degraded a brother in Christ who had already endured years of isolation and scorn from the very people God called to love him.

Jesus intervenes on behalf of prostitutes, dines with thieves, travels with fisherman, touches lepers, and converses with Samaritans. In those moments, they are able to believe for the first time that, despite everything they have been told, maybe God is on their side. Ross wasn't able to believe it. Now he doesn't have to. He knows.

Be still, my soul: when dearest friends depart,  
and all is darkened in the veil of tears,  
then shalt thou better know His love, His heart,  
who comes to soothe thy sorrow and thy fears.

## APRIL 20<sup>TH</sup> | “O MAGNUM MYSTERIUM” – MORTEN LAURIDSEN

SHARED BY SARAH IVERSON

I grew up listening to a steady diet of campfire songs and LBW hymns. The campfire songs were for everyday (I lived at bible camp), they lived in my head, they used everyday language and taught me a lot about God’s story and God’s love. The hymns were special Sunday songs, they lived in a special green book, and their poetic language gave me rich images of God and taught me about the church.

The campfire songs involved my dad on a guitar and a group of people sitting on logs under a starry sky around a fire. The hymns involved my beloved piano teacher playing the organ and a group of people sitting in pews around font and an altar. The community aspect of my first musical experiences can’t be overstated. As powerful as the words and chords of the songs were, it was singing with others that helped me understand what it was to be a part of the body of Christ. During the singing of all of these songs, the community felt so unified, I felt so known, and God seemed so obvious.

Over the years, each of these feelings has been complicated and simplified 20 times over. My childhood musical diet would no longer fully nourish my adult faith, but I am so grateful for the container it provided. I am equally grateful for the places that hold and nourish me now, like The Deep. A space where we gather, in a circle, around the font and the altar and sing songs that express the experiences of my adult faith. Songs that express the brokenness, the doubt, the gratitude, the confusion, and the comfort of the journey of faith. Songs sung in a community of others who, it seems, must also have an incredibly human and holy life. In this space, I once again experience feeling known, connected to others, and in the presence of God. So what song would I pick as one of the most meaningful of my journey? Well a Latin hymn of course.

My 4 years at Luther College thoroughly and beautifully intertwined my understandings of music, faith, and community. My time at Luther taught me how to articulate the beauty of what happens when these things come together, as well as teaching me when to simply be quiet before the holy mystery of it all

Christmas of my sophomore year, the choir I was in sang, Morten Lauridsen’s, O Magnum Mysterium. The text is ancient, the musical setting sublime, and in singing it – and listening to it each subsequent year – I am always pulled deeply into the holy mystery. The mystery, not only of Christmas and a God who comes down to us in the most unexpected of ways, but the mystery of humanity and how, for all our bluster and blunder, we are capable of creating things of great beauty. Fifty unique voices and stories singing one story – sometimes as if one voice. Like most experiences of faith, it is as complex and as simple as that. Soli Deo Gloria.

## **THANK YOU FOR JOURNEYING WITH US THROUGH LENT**

We hope, in reading the stories of others, you have glimpsed the many ways God speaks through the songs of our Soul. We invite you to reflect on your own songs of the soul and share those stories with others.

We offer here a psalm from King David for you to sit with as you prepare for your Lent to give way to Easter. Come Lord Jesus!

# Psalm 51

<sup>1</sup>Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions.

<sup>2</sup>Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin.

<sup>3</sup>For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me.

<sup>4</sup>Against you, you alone, have I sinned, and done what is evil in your sight, so that you are justified in your sentence and blameless when you pass judgment.

<sup>5</sup>Indeed, I was born guilty, a sinner when my mother conceived me.

<sup>6</sup>You desire truth in the inward being; therefore teach me wisdom in my secret heart.

<sup>7</sup>Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.

<sup>8</sup>Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones that you have crushed rejoice.

<sup>9</sup>Hide your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities.

<sup>10</sup>Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right[b] spirit within me.

<sup>11</sup>Do not cast me away from your presence, and do not take your holy spirit from me.

<sup>12</sup>Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and sustain in me a willing spirit.

<sup>13</sup>Then I will teach transgressors your ways, and sinners will return to you.

<sup>14</sup>Deliver me from bloodshed, O God, O God of my salvation, and my tongue will sing aloud of your deliverance.

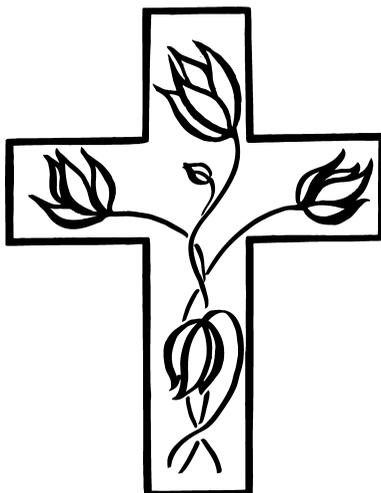
<sup>15</sup>O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth will declare your praise.

<sup>16</sup>For you have no delight in sacrifice; if I were to give a burnt offering, you would not be pleased.

<sup>17</sup>The sacrifice acceptable to God[d] is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.

<sup>18</sup>Do good to Zion in your good pleasure; rebuild the walls of Jerusalem,

<sup>19</sup>then you will delight in right sacrifices, in burnt offerings and whole burnt offerings; then bulls will be offered on your altar.



## **Easter Worship**

April 21<sup>st</sup>, 2019

### **Verona**

Worship Times

7:30 a.m.

9:00 a.m.

10:30 a.m.

### **Madison**

Worship Times

7:00 a.m.

8:30 a.m.

10:00 a.m.

# **Good Shepherd**

LUTHERAN CHURCH