

A CURRICULUM FOR TEACHING COLLABORATIVE WORSHIP SONGWRITING  
INSPIRED BY VILLAGE HYMNS

By

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Liberty University

A MASTER'S THESIS PRESENTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT  
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF  
MASTER OF ARTS IN MUSIC AND WORSHIP

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## ABSTRACT

The scriptural injunction to “sing to the Lord a new song” motivates the church to create new worship songs that are Biblically based, musically excellent, and reflective of God’s unique gifting and purpose for the church in its time. Village Hymns, a collective of worship leaders and songwriters serving in South Florida churches, has developed a platform for building skill in collaborative worship songwriting through their CREATE events. Through the experience of hosting over 50 CREATE events and recording three EP CDs, Village Hymns has developed best practices for collaborative worship songwriting. The aim of the case study research was to identify these best practices and incorporate them into a twelve-week curriculum for teaching collaborative worship songwriting. The curriculum is informed by perspectives from Biblical and theological scholarship and church history. Additionally, social learning constructs including communities of practice and structural folding inform the curriculum.

*Keywords:* Worship songwriting, collaborative songwriting, Village Hymns

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*To God be the glory; great things He has done!*

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## CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

The Scriptures exhort us, “Sing to the Lord a new song”<sup>1</sup> and for more than four millennia, the followers of God have created new songs to sing in praise to God. The Bible contains at least 185 songs that we know were sung<sup>2</sup> and it is likely that many more poetic passages in Scripture were sung as well. In more recent history, the emergence of Contemporary Christian Music (CCM) and black gospel music has led to a veritable explosion of new songs for the church to sing. Today, thanks to YouTube and online streaming platforms like Spotify and iTunes, new worship songs are instantly released to the entire world. Yet not everyone in the church is equally enthused about singing these new worship songs; like Jesus’ parable about wine and wineskins<sup>3</sup>, some prefer the old after tasting the new. They conveniently overlook the fact that “all music was once new.”<sup>4</sup> Aside from preference, however, these questions remain: Are all new songs equally good to sing? If not, what gives a song the capacity to endure and be sung by churches in various places and times?

Ed Steele addresses a more fundamental question, “What makes a song ‘congregational?’” by posing five evaluative questions about the song: (1) Is the text biblical? (2) Does the text speak to experiences common to believers? (3) Is the melody of the tune really singable? (4) Is the song of lasting character, or is it more of a temporal filler? (5) Can the

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<sup>1</sup> Psalms 96:1; 98:1; 149:1; Isaiah 42:10

<sup>2</sup> Jeffrey Kranz, “All the Songs in the Bible [Infographic]”, Jul 2 2014. <https://overviewbible.com/bible-songs/> (accessed August 16, 2020).

<sup>3</sup> See Luke 5:37-39

<sup>4</sup> “Reminding you that all music was once new” is a registered trademark of Minnesota Public Radio. <https://trademarks.justia.com/785/38/reminding-you-that-all-music-was-once-78538819.html> (accessed August 16, 2020).

congregation follow?<sup>5</sup> In an article for Charisma Leader Magazine entitled, “5 Keys to Making a Worship Song Singable,” Bobby Gilles argues that singable worship songs must have (1) a melodic range of one octave, or at most, an octave and a third; (2) mostly single step intervals in the melody; (3) symmetrical lines and short phrases; (4) a key that is well matched to the singers; and to a lesser extent, (5) a style and genre that mesh with the preferences of the congregation.

The Internet has made possible the instant spread of countless new worship songs around the world; churches have a massive virtual catalog from which to choose songs to use in worship services. Churches that have established their own songwriting culture serve as a source of new songs, while churches without such a culture are fortunate to reap the benefits of the labors of others.<sup>6</sup> Is there some benefit to be gained by encouraging and nurturing a songwriting culture in every church?

Some worship songs are the creative work of one person, while others emerge from a collaborative effort of two or more people. *Collaborative worship songwriting* is the focus of this study. While it may be easier for a solo songwriter to agree with herself on the lyrics, melody, and chord progressions of the song, collaborative worship songwriting offers a level of synergy and quality assurance that combine to make stronger songs. Worship leaders who have gained experienced as collaborative worship songwriters have discovered best practices that can be woven into a curriculum suitable for undergraduates (and exceptional high school students) pursuing training in worship arts.

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<sup>5</sup> Ed Steele, *Worship HeartCries: Personal Preparation for Corporate Worship* (North Charleston, South Carolina: CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2016), 1238-1293, Kindle.

<sup>6</sup> See John 4:38.



Village Hymns is a collective of worship leaders and song writers who represent and serve in dozens of South Florida churches. As their web site<sup>7</sup> states, “The vision of Village Hymns is to see Christ-centered and vibrant worship fuel a revival in South Florida.” From their first gathering of 20 worship leaders in 2015, Village Hymns (VH) has grown to over 150 worship leaders and artists from more than 50 churches. VH has hosted more than 50 “CREATE” collaborative songwriting events, and the group has recorded three EP CDs of five songs each. VH operates in partnership with Church United, a support network of pastors serving churches in Broward and Palm Beach Counties and the Treasure Coast.

The visionary leadership of VH have embraced several defining values. First, by bringing together leaders from scores of churches throughout South Florida, VH demonstrates a commitment to the unity of the body of Christ in one of the most culturally diverse regions of the country. VH provides a space where worship leaders can find a supportive community of peers who set aside comparison and competition. VH is also committed to a vision of revival, first among the worship leaders, and then in their churches throughout the region. Revival is the theme of their third CD release, and personal revival is the goal for an emerging VH initiative focused on soul care. Believing that their vision and values are transferable and beneficial to worship leaders in other regions, VH hopes to extend its reach beyond South Florida to create a national network of worship leaders and songwriters.

### **Statement of the Problem**

If we believe the scriptural injunction to “sing to the Lord a new song” is not just a mere suggestion but a command, how are we to create new worship songs that are pleasing to God? Is

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<sup>7</sup> [www.villagehymns.com](http://www.villagehymns.com)

it reasonable to say that such songs would be Biblically based, musically excellent, and reflective of God's unique gifting and purpose for the church in our time? When new songs are created and shared, how can we evaluate them according to their theological muscle, artistic merit, and contextual fit, and correctly anticipate their usefulness within our worshiping community? Are these efforts and decisions best left to the worship leader, the paid, "professional" music minister? Or is there room for "a multitude of counselors" who can help provide safety?<sup>8</sup>

### **Statement of the Purpose**

The purpose of the research was to discover best practices for collaborative worship songwriting that Village Hymns (VH) has formulated and field-tested in their 50+ CREATE songwriting events. The research results were used to design a comprehensive, 12-week collaborative worship songwriting curriculum that can be taught in a variety of settings: colleges and universities, church worship teams, and regional worship leader collectives. Research methods included personal interviews with VH founders; surveys of CREATE workshop participants; and surveys of other worship leaders in South Florida who lead or participate in collaborative songwriting events in their church or church network.

### **Significance of the Study**

This research utilizes a case study approach<sup>9</sup> to document the effectiveness of Village Hymns CREATE events in teaching best practices for collaborative worship songwriting for the local church. This study builds on the construct of communities of practice (CoP) coined by Lave

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<sup>8</sup> Proverbs 11:24; 15:22; 24:6

<sup>9</sup> John Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative and Mixed Methods Approaches*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publishing Company, 2014), 14.

and Wenger<sup>10</sup> and by extension, communities of musical practice (CoMP).<sup>11</sup> Previous studies have analyzed collaborative songwriting for popular music<sup>12</sup> and Broadway shows.<sup>13</sup> The benefits of collaborative songwriting therapies that match songwriting experts with at-risk individuals have been well documented.<sup>14</sup> However, the usefulness of collaborative teams (and the requisite skills and best practices) for creating new worship songs for use in congregational worship has not been explored.

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<sup>10</sup> Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger, *Situated Learning: Legitimate Peripheral Participation*. Learning in Doing: Social, Cognitive, and Computational Perspectives (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1991), accessed July 29, 2020, <https://web-b-ebSCOhost-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/ehost/detail/detail?vid=4&sid=736809e7-7d25-4e04-a27d-4c7710318ecd%40pdc-v-sessmgr04&bdata=JnNpdGU9ZWhvc3QtbGl2ZSZzY29wZT1zaXRl#AN=1991-98963-000&db=psyh>; Etienne Wenger, *Communities of Practice: Learning, Meaning, and Identity* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

<sup>11</sup> Ailbhe Kenny, *Communities of Musical Practice* (New York: Routledge, 2016), 11,16, accessed July 29, 2020, <https://www-taylorfrancis-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/books/9781315572963>.

<sup>12</sup> J. Bennett, “Constraint, Collaboration and Creativity in Popular Songwriting Teams,” in D. Collins, ed., *The Act of Musical Composition: Studies in the Creative Process*, SEMPRE Studies in the Psychology of Music (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing Limited), 2012, 139-169, accessed July 29, 2020, [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/314079396\\_Constraint\\_Creativity\\_Copyright\\_and\\_Collaboration\\_in\\_Popular\\_Songwriting\\_Teams](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/314079396_Constraint_Creativity_Copyright_and_Collaboration_in_Popular_Songwriting_Teams).

<sup>13</sup> Brian Uzzi and Jarrett Spiro, “Collaboration and Creativity: The Small World Problem.” *American Journal of Sociology* 111, no. 2 (September, 2005): 447–504, accessed July 29, 2020, doi:10.1086/432782.

<sup>14</sup> Mary Judd, “There’s Something Happening Here: The Positive Impact of Collaborative Songwriting on Veterans Suffering from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder,” *Music and Medicine* 12 no 1 (January, 2020): 49–54, accessed July 29, 2020, <https://search-ebSCOhost-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&db=psyh&AN=2020-12882-006&site=ehost-live&scope=site>; Ronald Hirschberg et al., “Collaborative Songwriting Intervention for Veterans with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder,” *Journal of Alternative & Complementary Medicine* 26 no 3 (March 11, 2020): 198–203, accessed July 29, 2020, doi:10.1089/acm.2019.0368; Mary L. Cohen and Catherine M. Wilson. 2017. “Inside the Fences: Pedagogical Practices and Purposes of Songwriting in an Adult Male U.S. State Prison.” *International Journal of Music Education* 35 no 4 (November, 2017): 541–53, accessed July 29, 2020, <https://search-ebSCOhost-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&db=eric&AN=EJ1160539&site=ehost-live&scope=site>; Rebecca Fairchild and Katrina Skewes McFerran, “‘Music Is Everything’: Using Collaborative Group Songwriting as an Arts-Based Method with Children Experiencing Homelessness and Family Violence,” *Nordic Journal of Music Therapy* 28 no 2 (March 2019), 88–107, accessed July 29, 2020, <http://dx.doi.org.ezproxy.liberty.edu/10.1080/08098131.2018.1509106>; Myers-Coffman, Katherine, Felicity A Baker, Brian P Daly, Robert Palisano, and Joke Bradt, “The Resilience Songwriting Program for Adolescent Bereavement: A Mixed Methods Exploratory Study,” *Journal of Music Therapy* 56 no 4 (Winter 2019): 348–80, accessed August 18, 2020, <http://dx.doi.org.ezproxy.liberty.edu/10.1093/jmt/thz011>.

## Research Questions and Sub-Questions

The research was directed at answering the question, "What are the best practices for collaborative worship songwriting that Village Hymns (VH) has discovered and field-tested in their 50+ CREATE songwriting events?" Additional questions were:

1. How does the specific context and goal of “collaborative songwriting for the local church” influence the creation of new worship songs?
2. What beneficial outcomes are experienced by participants in collaborative songwriting events?
3. What are the best ways to introduce new worship songs to a congregation?

## Definition of Terms

*Revival* (also called *gospel revival* in the VH literature): On their web site, Village Hymns characterizes revival among individuals in terms of renewal, devotion, spiritual health, and authenticity; and in the church in terms of unity, repentance, and a move of the Spirit that manifests in worship renewal and witness:

At the end of the day the vision of Village Hymns is to see vibrant worship fuel a revival in South Florida. Our mission has always been to inspire and equip worship leaders to not only be creative but also to be healthy as they lead their churches in authentic worship... Our third album focuses on the things that Church United and Village Hymns share in common: prayers for unity, repentance, a move of the Spirit, and Gospel revival. We long to see God’s kingdom come in South Florida and our prayer is that God would awaken His church once again to love Him passionately and love those whom He loves.

In the CREATE Workshop Handbook,<sup>15</sup> VH includes a workshop plan that focuses on revival.

Here are the notes that introduce the lesson:

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<sup>15</sup> See Appendix E.

Today I want us to talk about revival. What is it? How does it start? **With us.**  
**The cycle of God's people has always been:** Love and worship of Him; falling prey to idols, distraction, and sin; seeing and feeling the brokenness; repentance, asking for forgiveness; God's salvation, redemption, mercy; [the people's] response is worship; **and then [the cycle] starts again.**

VH does not specifically characterize revival in terms of widespread manifestation of gifts of the Spirit; because VH includes worship leaders from more than 50 South Florida churches representing diverse denominations, VH focuses on unity and steers clear of issues where there may be disagreements.

*Vibrant worship:* while this term is not specifically defined in the VH literature, we can surmise that it is the outcome when worship leaders are well equipped and supported through VH:

**The vision of Village Hymns is to see Christ-centered and vibrant worship fuel a revival in South Florida.** Our mission is to serve worship leaders by providing tools and support as they press on to be healthy and fully-formed leaders in their churches. We believe that those in our city who are without Christ are yet to become His worshippers, and that the goal of a worship leader is to present Christ through music as the only One to be treasured and adored.

In order for worship leaders to be most effective in serving their churches they should be **spiritually growing** to know the heart of God and what He desires for worship, be deeply **involved in community**, and be **challenged in their craft and creativity.**

Vibrant worship is also the outcome in a church whose congregants are no longer satisfied to be spectators or consumers but become active participants in worship.

## CHAPTER II: BACKGROUND AND LITERATURE REVIEW

### History of Village Hymns

In 2015, worship leader Josh Bramos sensed that God was prompting him to bring other worship leaders together from different churches in his region. Bramos ignored the idea for eight months. “I didn’t want to do it, in fear of being rejected by other worship leader ministries. I wanted friends in the worship world; I kind of felt isolated. And what’s interesting is, so did everybody else!”<sup>16</sup> Bramos invited a few other worship leaders to his church, Victory Life Church in Plantation, to perform their original worship songs. The event was promoted through Facebook; about 150 people attended the first *Song Share* event and it was a major success. A second Song Share was organized, in a new location and with a slightly different format. Bramos explains:

We decided to change churches to get more churches, more people aware of this thing [VH]. It started with a worship night, that’s all it was. Then it turned into a, “now we’re going to sing each other’s songs” worship night. So, I would sing Adam’s song, Julie Anne would sing my song, or I would sing... and everyone started realizing, it’s so cool to see unity, and friendships. And really, the start of Village Hymns became a community of worship leaders that have friendships, and we bridged those gaps between the churches [and] denominations.<sup>17</sup>

Quickly VH grew to a core of about 20 worship leaders and songwriters from various churches in the South Florida counties of Palm Beach, Broward, and Miami-Dade. Some of these churches had very large worship teams and worship training programs, while others were significantly smaller and had limited resources. Adam Pizzaro, who now serves as Worship Director at Riverside Church and VH Central Broward Leader, explained how connections built at VH events leveled the playing field:

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<sup>16</sup> Josh Bramos, interview with Village Hymns Leadership by author, North Lauderdale, July 22, 2020, 04:20.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 05:50.

It wasn't like you're going to a Calvary [Chapel] thing, or you're going to a Coral Ridge [Presbyterian Church] thing. It was a Village Hymns thing, and immediately it was a mutual space. I was leading at a church plant at that time; rubbing shoulders with people at larger churches: it kind of felt like, "Oh, I have a seat at the table!"<sup>18</sup>

Bramos related how the friendships cultivated through VH helped break down feelings of competitiveness between churches:

The competitiveness, and the envy, or jealousy, immediately is destroyed when you know the person behind that microphone at the other church. When you don't know them, you think: *They just want to be a famous worship leader; they don't care about the community.* [When you do know them] you say: *This guy is just as desperate for community as I am. Why did I think that?*<sup>19</sup>

These new friendships also opened opportunities for collaborative songwriting. One example is the song *God the Spirit*,<sup>20</sup> which Bramos co-wrote with Julie Anne Vargas and Grace Coleman. Bramos explains:

[God the Spirit] was intentionally collaborative, with friendships that I built and I pursued to write... The reason that was even possible was because of the Village Hymns community. I never would have even asked [Vargas]; I wouldn't have known who she was. Because I saw songs she had written, I thought she would probably be a good writer for this song.<sup>21</sup>

Pizzaro shared how collaborative writing impacted the song *As It Is in Heaven*.<sup>22</sup>

I showed it at the time to the church I was at. I showed it to the pastor and another guy, and they said, "Oh, that's a nice tune." There just wasn't any excitement. Then I brought it to Village Hymns and it was like, "WHOA!!" ... it got tweaked, because when I came to Josh, I literally had [the lyrics] "As it is in heaven" [sung to the verse melody], and that changed as we went along. Because I thought that was the chorus, that original melody.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Adam Pizzaro, Interview, 07:20.

<sup>19</sup> Bramos, Interview, 09:06.

<sup>20</sup> See Appendix F for a chord chart of this song.

<sup>21</sup> Bramos, Interview, 12:06.

<sup>22</sup> See Appendix F for a chord chart of this song.

<sup>23</sup> Pizzaro, Interview, 12:37; 13:18.

Bramos added,

That wouldn't have even happened, which was interesting, unless it was for a community. So, he would have never come to me, because we sort of met through somebody. His vulnerability of showing me something he was writing, was because of the Village Hymns network.<sup>24</sup>

Feedback from the early song share events revealed a desire among worship leaders to learn how to write original worship songs. Julie Anne Vargas, who now serves as Creative Director for VH, explains how they began to see the need for a new opportunity within VH.

That crew that we were doing the Song Shares with was probably 15 or 20 really good, strong, wonderful writers and singers. [But there was] something that I felt was missing, because of my work with interns... and different people that were saying, *I want to get better!* I had a heart to say, *How do we help people to grow to become songwriters?* What is Village Hymns going to be if we can't have a growth track for people? Or how do people get involved in the [VH] community, rather than just being invited to do a Song Share? There's got to be another way to get involved.<sup>25</sup>

VH leaders imagined and hosted a songwriting event (CREATE) for the worship leader community. The format of that first event was presentational; invited experts talked about songwriting, and Bramos, Pizarro and Vargas demonstrated a collaborative songwriting session on the fly. Vargas remembers how the three of them did not anticipate how people would respond:

I heard feedback from people who said, "We had an idea for that!" We should have called on the audience to help write; they were almost on the edge of their seats! But because of the format, we were the people writing and they were [just watching]. So that was the #1 feedback that we got from that night: "I wish I could have participated in that!" So then we realized, people want to actually co-write.<sup>26</sup>

Subsequent CREATE events had a much more participatory format. Attendees worked in groups (typically groups of 3) to write Scripture-based songs using a theme, Scripture passage, or other

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<sup>24</sup> Bramos, Interview, 13:41.

<sup>25</sup> Julie Anne Vargas, Interview, 24:43.

<sup>26</sup> Vargas, Interview, 26:02.



guidance for that day. Various strategies were used:

- At one of the earliest CREATE events, groups were given the same Scripture passage and told to write a complete song in one hour. Then everyone gathered in the large group and shared their songs.
- At another event, groups were assigned different passages of Scripture and told to write lyrics only, no melodies. After thirty minutes, lyrics were traded between groups, and the new task was to write melodies for another group's lyrics. Again, everyone gathered in the large group to share their songs, and each group heard their lyrics sung to a melody they had never heard before.
- At another event, groups were given Scripture passages and told to write different sections of a song (verse 1, verse 2, chorus, or bridge). Each group was given the same tempo, key, and time signature to use. In the large group, the writers of each section lined up near the piano in sequence, and they played the song through without a break. "That moment was the goosebumps moment!"<sup>27</sup>

Bramos explained that the intent of these different creative exercises was not as much to produce a finished song that day, but to cultivate skills and passion for songwriting:

All those things stirred up the joy of songwriting in everyone's heart. This wasn't the end—they weren't going to make a record of that song, right? But it was so fun! *Wow, this can help me write more.* That's why **we hope** these writers come these CREATEs: get inspired and go back and write for their church.<sup>28</sup>

Not long after the first CREATE event, VH leaders gathered at La Bamba, a Mexican restaurant on Federal Highway in Fort Lauderdale. They looked at each other and said, *We*

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<sup>27</sup> Bramos, Interview, 40:03.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 40:10.

*should do a record.* In Bramos' words, "We all have vision, we all want to do things. It just took us saying, *Let's do it.*"<sup>29</sup> The self-titled debut CD had five songs: *All Glory Be to God, As It Is in Heaven, God the Spirit, Come and Make Us Free,* and *Lord You Reign.* The songs were recorded in the sanctuary of Bramos' church. The project's shoestring budget of \$5,000 (raised from private donors) was paid entirely to the recording engineer, Nashville native Steven Goss, for his labor and travel expenses. Pizzaro remembered how the engineer was visibly moved by the authenticity and passion of that first recording:

I think that's what people loved about the early stages, and I think why Village Hymns, at least down here in South Florida, in our context, just grew because it was organic... It was super real. And even Steven, I remember when we were tracking [the first record], and we were tracking gang vocals, we were so in love with the project because it was the realest thing we've ever done. And I look over, and, you know, he's a producer in Nashville, and he's just tearing up.<sup>30</sup>

Interest in the CREATE events grew quickly, to the point that nearly 150 worship leaders were involved. VH leadership made the decision to divide and host three regional events. While the move made CREATE events more accessible for people scattered throughout the vast tri-county region, the downside was that some collaborative relationships were disrupted. Skilled songwriters accustomed to working with peers now found themselves matched with beginners who needed lots of instruction and guidance. Once the leadership adjusted their expectations, it was easier to take on the new role, as Vargas explains: "It was a different emphasis point. We became a training ground for songwriting rather than a Song Share platform. So that's how it grew so large, and honestly, it's helped us with fundraising, it's helped us with so many other

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<sup>29</sup> Bramos, Interview, 18:15.

<sup>30</sup> Pizzaro, Interview, 20:00.

things. But it definitely changed the way that VH looks, and the way it operates.”<sup>31</sup>

Another shift has begun to emerge as VH leaders recognize the need for soul care among worship leaders. Bramos explains:

We’ve learned that soul care was the greatest need... And that’s where our whole model changed... [We prayed,] God, if you're calling us, you’ve given us a ministry and calling us to be a bigger part of our city, what is it? And it was [this:] “The hearts of the worship leaders are weary and tired, and they’re uneducated, they don't understand the doctrines of what I want them to learn.”

VH leaders began conversations with Church United (CU), a sizeable support network for pastors in South Florida, and in time VH became a subsidiary of CU.

Bramos, Pizzaro, and Vargas offered several recommendations of what ought to be included in a collaborative worship songwriting curriculum:

1. Build community first; begin the class with a Song Share event that will build rapport;
2. Teach songwriting etiquette, using the guidelines in the CREATE Workshop Handbook;<sup>32</sup>
3. Get the right mix of talent in songwriting groups; make sure a lead instrument (guitar or piano) is represented, and match novice songwriters with more experienced writers;
4. Use a variety of songwriting exercises to stir creativity and build engagement.

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<sup>31</sup> Vargas, Interview, 30:10.

<sup>32</sup> See Appendix E.

## Literature Review

A review of scholarly literature for this case study should include three perspectives: Scripture and theology; church history; and social science research. What follows is an overview of relevant works from each of these perspectives.

### Perspectives from Scripture and Theology

In his book *Engaging with God: A Biblical Theology of Worship*,<sup>33</sup> David Peterson builds a biblical theology of worship by exploring themes throughout the Old and New Testaments. He demonstrates how different dimensions of worship can be understood from different portions and genres of Scripture. The OT shows us God's initiative in making covenant with his people, and it prepares us to see Christ's fulfillment of the OT law through his atoning sacrifice. NT worship is seen in creedal confession and the entire consecration of one's life to God.

Allen Ross<sup>34</sup> characterizes biblical worship as a celebration of our covenant relationship with God through Christ, and an eschatological anticipation of the return of Christ glorified. God gave specific instructions to Moses for the building of the Tabernacle so his people would be reminded of the Paradise of Eden and taught the story of redemption. Five acts of worship awaken four senses in worshipers and elicit a three-fold response from them. These serve as a grid for worship planning and decision-making.

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<sup>33</sup> David G. Peterson, *Engaging with God: A Biblical Theology of Worship* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1992).

<sup>34</sup> Allen P. Ross, *Recalling the Hope of Glory: Biblical Worship from the Garden to the New Creation* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 2006).

Ronald Byars<sup>35</sup> advocates for the recovery of biblical language for worship in our postmodern world. He analyzes passages from the Book of Common Worship used by the Presbyterian Church (United States) (PCUSA) and shows their usefulness for spiritual formation.

Byars writes:

in the postmodern world, the historic churches will do well to recover biblical and liturgical language and images... Instead of trying to translate biblical images and affirmations into secular and discursive language, or into a newly coined language of individualistic piety, the historic churches will do better to relearn the use of scriptural language, and use it boldly, not as though it could serve as public language but as language that is indispensable to the worshiping assembly.<sup>36</sup>

Similarly, Debra and Ron Rienstra in *Worship Words*<sup>37</sup> advocate for the skilled use of language in worship. The authors argue that there are four dimensions of language that are relevant to worship: expressive, aesthetic, instructive, and memorial. It is healthy to ask often, “What does this element of the service teach our people? What does it teach newcomers?” Repetition can be a powerful teacher in worship; innovation works best within a predictable framework. Formal language belongs in worship; simplified language can devalue worship. “The best simple language in worship is the language that results from much reflection and care.”<sup>38</sup>

In his widely quoted book *The Worship Awakening*<sup>39</sup> Robb Redman offers insight into a number of trends in modern worship including seeker services, Praise and Worship (P&W)

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<sup>35</sup> Byars, Ronald P. 2008. *What Language Shall I Borrow? The Bible and Christian Worship*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>37</sup> Debra Rienstra and Ron Rienstra, *Worship Words: Discipling Language for Faithful Ministry* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009).

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 104.

<sup>39</sup> Robb Redman, *The Great Worship Awakening: Singing a New Song in the Postmodern Church* (San Francisco, CA: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2002).

music and the Contemporary Worship Music industry, and the Liturgical Renewal Movement.

While maintaining that "the nature and character of the God we worship shapes what we think is the best way to worship him,"<sup>40</sup> Redman argues that God's intent for humanity is to fill the earth with a diversity of expressions of his image, a position he calls the theology of variety:

The diversity of human creativity reflects the image of a creative Creator. Because humans are individually and culturally different, our creative expressions [in worship] are bound to differ as well... A theology of variety embraces these differences as part of the good--though fallen--creation of God... All expression is distorted in some way by sin, but all expression can be refocused or retasked as a vehicle for praise to God.<sup>41</sup>

John Witvliet's article "Mind the Gaps"<sup>42</sup> makes a compelling case for the creation of *formative* worship songs – songs that not only express beliefs and experiences but also shape and deepen them. "Worship is not only expressive. It is also formative. This is especially so if we are willing to sing not only the songs we want to sing, but also the songs we need to sing, and if, by God's grace, we learn to want to sing the songs we need to sing."<sup>43</sup> Witvliet describes two gaps, the Real-Time Sincerity or Authenticity Gap and the Hypocrisy Gap, and explains how formative worship can help us overcome both. It is an outstanding article that gives worship leaders and songwriters the courage and motivation to stretch their people and bring liturgy into life.

Witvliet contributes an insightful, concluding chapter to the anthology *The Message in the Music*.<sup>44</sup> A section of the chapter entitled "A Call to Songwriters" offers three suggestions to

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 175.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 183.

<sup>42</sup> John D. Witvliet, "Mind the Gaps: Responding to Criticisms of a Formative Vision for Worship and Congregational Song," *The Hymn* 67, no. 4 (Autumn, 2016): 33-39, <http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?url=https%3A%2F%2Fsearch.proquest.com%2Fdocview%2F2229860458%3Faccountid%3D12085>.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Robert H. Woods, Jr. and Brian Walrath, ed., *The Message in the Music: Studying Contemporary Praise*

writers of contemporary worship music (CWM): (1) write songs with themes that are underrepresented in the current repertoire (pain, confession, and the Trinity); (2) write for congregations rather than teams or soloists; and (3) do not neglect the craft of songwriting, because the Holy Spirit works through both spontaneity and artful craft.<sup>45</sup>

Each generation of Christ followers has created songs that express worship to God and tell the story of the gospel. John Piper observes<sup>46</sup> that in the current generation, there seems to be a disproportionate explosion of new songs written and sung in our churches. “We live in a time of unprecedented wealth of Christian music, and there is no shortage whatsoever of older songs, newer songs, and fresh renditions of older songs that are rock-solid in their biblical content — creative, fresh, and powerful both in their lyrics and in their tunes.”<sup>47</sup> The most frequently used songs across North America are found in the CCLI Top 100 Songs, and the number one song in the quarter ending May 31, 2018 was “What a Beautiful Name”.<sup>48</sup> The song’s second verse contains the phrase, “You didn’t want heaven without us / So Jesus, You brought heaven down.”<sup>49</sup> Piper is troubled by the surface implications of this lyric: “God is not miserable and lonely without us. He’s not motivated to sing over us because we have just made up for some

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*and Worship* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2010), accessed August 17, 2020, [https://www.google.com/books/edition/The\\_Message\\_in\\_the\\_Music/jrosHgc-H5MC](https://www.google.com/books/edition/The_Message_in_the_Music/jrosHgc-H5MC).

<sup>45</sup> John Witvliet, “Discipleship and the Future of Contemporary Worship Music: Possible Directions for Scholarship, Songwriting, and Public Worship,” in Woods and Walrath, ed., *The Message in the Music*.

<sup>46</sup> John Piper, “Should We Sing of God’s ‘Reckless Love’?”, *Desiring God*, Episode 1202, updated May 25, 2018, accessed August 18, 2020, <https://www.desiringgod.org/interviews/should-we-sing-of-gods-reckless-love>.  
<sup>47</sup> John Piper, “‘Reckless Love’?”

<sup>48</sup> CCLI, “CCLI Top 100 Songs,” updated May 31, 2018, accessed August 5, 2018, <https://us.ccli.com/ccli-news/ccli-top-100/>.

<sup>49</sup> Ben Fielding and Brooke Ligertwood, *What A Beautiful Name* (Hillsong Music Publishing, 2016), <https://www.lyrics.com/lyric/33292105>.

poor deficiencies that God has... God's delight in us is the overflow of his fullness, not the compensation of his emptiness."<sup>50</sup> Piper warns that worship leaders must take seriously their role as teachers in the church: "Right after the pastor come the worship leaders, who are choosing what teaching is going to happen while people are singing their hearts out and absorbing all this truth (or non-truth) that these people have put in front of them."<sup>51</sup>

### Perspectives from Church History

Elmer Towns and Vernon Whaley in *Worship Through the Ages*<sup>52</sup> demonstrate from a historical perspective that spiritual awakenings have always stirred up new expressions of worship, especially in music. From the early church era to the modern praise and worship movement, Christians have responded to times of renewal by creating new and fresh ways to offer praise to God. The authors include stories of key songwriters who made significant contributions to Christian hymnody.

Robin Leaver's book *The Whole Church Sings*<sup>53</sup> documents extensive research of early Lutheran hymnody and makes the case that the practice of congregational singing of vernacular hymns was already gaining momentum as the Reformation began. Leaver documents how Luther encouraged friends and colleagues to write metrical versions of the Psalms, essentially

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<sup>50</sup> John Piper, "When Worship Lyrics Miss the Mark," *Desiring God*, Episode 1077, updated August 7, 2017. Accessed August 5, 2018, <https://www.desiringgod.org/interviews/when-worship-lyrics-miss-the-mark>.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Elmer Towns and Vernon Whaley, *Worship Through The Ages: How the Great Awakenings Shape Evangelical Worship* (Nashville, TN: Broadman-Holman Books, 2012).

<sup>53</sup> Robin A. Leaver, *The Whole Church Sings: Congregational Singing in Luther's Wittenberg* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2017), accessed August 18, 2020, [https://www.google.com/books/edition/The\\_Whole\\_Church\\_Sings/3k8xDwAAQBAJ?hl=en](https://www.google.com/books/edition/The_Whole_Church_Sings/3k8xDwAAQBAJ?hl=en).



pioneering a new genre of hymnody.<sup>54</sup> In his review of Leaver’s work, Matt Merker urges church leaders to “harness the didactic and polemical power of hymns,” keep songs simple, and use only the best songs: “a good hymn conveys truth in a way that makes it compelling and invigorating for the people of God.”<sup>55</sup>

Robert Webber’s landmark work *Worship: Old and New*<sup>56</sup> is a must-read for serious students of Christian worship. Tracing the history of worship from Biblical times to the present, Webber advocates for a unified style of worship, one that merges traditional and modern styles into a convergent blend “that respects the tradition yet seeks to incorporate worship styles formed by the contemporary church.”<sup>57</sup> Convergence of worship old and new “is a way to preserve the best of the past and to walk with confidence into the future.”<sup>58</sup> Webber devotes an entire chapter (Chapter 18) to the role of music in worship, where he addresses the central importance of congregational singing. Webber cites an important lesson from history when the church of the Middle Ages prohibited congregational singing. Although medieval music was professional, beautiful and inspiring, “the fact that it was taken away from the people and put into the category of performance was undesirable for worship.”<sup>59</sup> The same problem can and often does occur today in our modern megachurches when the priority shifts from congregational engagement to production excellence.

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 74.

<sup>55</sup> Matt Merker, “6 Lessons from Luther on Congregational Singing,” *The Gospel Coalition*, updated October 27, 2017, accessed August 18, 2020, <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/reviews/the-whole-church-sings/>.

<sup>56</sup> Robert E. Webber, *Worship Old and New* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1994).

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 13.

<sup>58</sup> Webber, *Worship: Old and New*, 15.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 199.

Andrew Wilson-Dickson’s book *The Story of Christian Music*<sup>60</sup> is a richly illustrated work documenting the emergence of worship songs throughout Christian history and around the world. The author muses about the “triangle of dissension” emerging from the Reformation regarding the practice of congregational singing: “The Catholic, in church, listens without singing; the Calvinist sings without listening; and the Lutheran both listens and sings—simultaneously!”<sup>61</sup>

While people tend to emphasize the differences between hymns and modern praise and worship songs (P&W), Gesa Hartje<sup>62</sup> draws attention to their similarities, using several perspectives: technological, sociological, theological, and liturgical. Our hymn tradition has developed over the course of hundreds of years, in contrast to just 40 years of P&W, so there has not been enough time for “hymnological Darwinism”<sup>63</sup> to weed out lesser quality songs and build a strong canon of enduring songs.

Andy Park’s book *To Know You More*<sup>64</sup> includes a chapter entitled “The Gift & Craft of Songwriting” where he offers valuable insights for aspiring writers. “Songs of devotion spring from a life of devotion... Every generation needs a fresh restating of the ancient truths of

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<sup>60</sup> Andrew Wilson-Dickson, *The Story of Christian Music: From Gregorian Chant to Black Gospel, an Illustrated Guide to All the Major Traditions of Music in Worship* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), accessed August 18, 2020, <http://books.google.com/books?id=qVKpwxIgCiYC>.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 81.

<sup>62</sup> Gesa F. Hartje, “Keeping in Tune with the Times—Praise & Worship Music as Today’s Evangelical Hymnody in North America,” *Dialog: A Journal of Theology* 48, No. 4 (Winter 2009): 364-373.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 370.

<sup>64</sup> Andy Park, *To Know You More: Cultivating the Heart of the Worship Leader* (Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2004), accessed August 4, 2020, ProQuest Ebook Central.

Scripture, phrased in a musical genre that will catch their attention.”<sup>65</sup> Park references the work of songwriters like Charles Wesley, Martin Luther, and Johann Sebastian Bach as illustrations of these principles. In a section entitled “Cultivating the Ground for Songwriting” Park recommends a disciplined, scheduled habit of songwriting, and a practice of worshiping with your song: “I can’t write a worship song without worshiping. If it doesn’t pull worship out of me, it won’t be any good for the church.”<sup>66</sup> Although he is principally a solo songwriter, Park acknowledges the benefit of collaborative songwriting: “Many of the songs I have recorded would be better if I had taken more time to rewrite and get input from other writers. You can get a lot of input on your songs by meeting with one or two other writers and asking for very honest feedback. Cowriting is also a great way to go.”<sup>67</sup> Park also includes an insightful analysis of the Vineyard Movement started by John and Carol Wimber in the 1960’s.<sup>68</sup>

### Perspectives from the Social Sciences

Relevant research studies from the social science arena can be organized around several themes: communities of musical practice, collaboration models, composition of the songwriting team, and therapeutic outcomes of collaborative songwriting.

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 225.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 235.

<sup>67</sup> Andy Park, *To Know You More*, 233.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., Appendix 1.

## Communities of Musical Practice (CoMP)

*Situated Learning: Legitimate Peripheral Participation* by Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger is a widely cited work that focuses on learning as a fundamentally social endeavor. “The authors argue that most accounts of learning have ignored its quintessentially social character... They propose that learning is a process of participation in *communities of practice* [emphasis added], participation that is at first legitimately peripheral but that increases gradually in engagement and complexity.”<sup>69</sup>

Ailbhe Kenny’s book *Communities of Musical Practice* extends the idea of communities of practice to musical communities; the author defines a *community of musical practice* (CoMP) as “a group of people who form a community of practice through shared music-making and/or musical interests.”<sup>70</sup> Kenny expands Wegner’s later work<sup>71</sup> defining criteria for communities of practice, and applies these criteria to musical communities:<sup>72</sup>

<u>Wegner’s Criteria for CoP</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Kenny’s CoMP</u>
Mutual engagement (domain)	“regular interactions and sets of relationships form a common endeavor”	“rehearsals, workshops, and performances”
Joint enterprise (process)	“interactions, shared goals, and negotiation”	“stated and negotiated aims of the music communities”

<sup>69</sup> Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger, abstract for *Situated Learning: Legitimate Peripheral Participation*. Learning in Doing: Social, Cognitive, and Computational Perspectives. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1991, accessed July 29, 2020, <https://web-b-ebSCOhost-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/ehost/detail/detail?vid=4&sid=736809e7-7d25-4e04-a27d-4c7710318ecd%40pdc-v-sessmgr04&bdata=JnNpdGU9ZWhvc3QtbGl2ZSZzY29wZT1zaXRl#AN=1991-98963-000&db=psyh>.

<sup>70</sup> Ailbhe Kenny, *Communities of Musical Practice* (New York: Routledge, 2016), 11,16, accessed July 29, 2020, <https://www-taylorfrancis-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/books/9781315572963>.

<sup>71</sup> Etienne Wenger, *Communities of Practice: Learning, Meaning, and Identity* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

<sup>72</sup> Kenny, *Communities*, 18

Shared repertoire (practice)	“shared ways of doing, joint pursuit and communal resources”	“the practices or built-up communal resources that distinctly belong to each musical community”
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These criteria can be easily applied to the activities of Village Hymns as a community of musical practice:

<u>Wegner’s Criteria for CoP</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Village Hymns as CoMP</u>
Mutual engagement (domain)	“regular interactions and sets of relationships form a common endeavor”	Song Share and CREATE events
Joint enterprise (process)	“interactions, shared goals, and negotiation”	Worship songwriting
Shared repertoire (practice)	“shared ways of doing, joint pursuit and communal resources”	Rules of etiquette, best practices for collaborative songwriting

## Collaboration Models

A study of collaborative creativity in the production of video games<sup>73</sup> offers several useful insights that have broad application to creative teams. The authors build on the concept of “*structural folding*—the network property of a cohesive group whose membership overlaps with

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<sup>73</sup> Mathijs de Vaan, David Stark, and Balazs Vedres, “Game Changer: The Topology of Creativity,” *American Journal of Sociology* 120, no. 4 (2015): 1144–94, accessed July 29, 2020, <https://web-b-ebshost-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/ehost/detail/detail?vid=1&sid=7bed0e31-5f25-4753-bc9e-01ac4b10ccaf%40pdc-v-sessmgr02&bdata=JnNpdGU9ZWhvc3QtbGl2ZSZzY29wZT1zaXRl#AN=102422800&db=sxi>.

that of another cohesive group.”<sup>74</sup> This structural folding produces a novel, shared, rudimentary language that the creative team uses to accomplish their shared goals. Interestingly, more diverse teams leverage this better (and tend to come up with better quality products) than more homogeneous teams.<sup>75</sup> In addition, teams who have a prior history of working together build a metaknowledge that includes “knowledge of the nuances and subtleties of *how one’s fellows*” will contribute to the task, increasing the group’s efficiency. “It is only through the experience of working with each other that players can construct the interpretive schemata required for split-second, on-the-spot, mutual adjustment.”<sup>76</sup>

J. Bennett<sup>77</sup> studied the work of Nashville songwriters collaborating to write popular songs and observed the common practice of writing from the title outward. “These few words are the core of a lyric, the seed from which the lyric grows.”<sup>78</sup> While the title-first method is “just one example -- albeit a popular one -- of a process used by co-writers to kick-start their creative processes... its function in the creative process demonstrates an important point -- that *something* has to come first; I refer to this as the 'initial stimulus'.”<sup>79</sup> Bennett’s “Stimulus evaluation” model for collaborative songwriting shows how collaborators respond to each other’s ideas in the

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<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> de Vann et al., “Game Changer.”

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

<sup>77</sup> J. Bennett, “Constraint, Collaboration and Creativity in Popular Songwriting Teams,” in D. Collins, ed., *The Act of Musical Composition: Studies in the Creative Process*, SEMPRE Studies in the Psychology of Music (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing Limited), 2012, 139-169, accessed July 29, 2020, [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/314079396\\_Constraint\\_Creativity\\_Copyright\\_and\\_Collaboration\\_in\\_Popular\\_Songwriting\\_Teams](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/314079396_Constraint_Creativity_Copyright_and_Collaboration_in_Popular_Songwriting_Teams).

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., 154.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

songwriting: a certain stimulus (an idea for a lyric, melody, etc.) from one team member will be approved, adapted, approval, or negotiated among the other members, resulting in acceptance of the stimulus by consensus; or it will be vetoed, and rejected.<sup>80</sup> “Stimulus evaluation is a workable description of the processes that are used to generate the song in draft form, but rarely does a song arrive fully formed in its first draft—many collaborative teams report extensive additional adaptation and negotiation even of ideas that are initially approved.”<sup>81</sup>

Brian Uzzi and Jarrett Spiro<sup>82</sup> studied collaborative teams who wrote Broadway musicals between the years 1945 and 1989. The authors analyzed the “small world” networks of these creative artists and correlated them with the artistic and financial success of their shows. They discovered that small world effects on creativity tend to graph like an upside down U (parabolic): increasing to a point, then decreasing as the group becomes more ingrown, more homogeneous in their artistic product, and less open to fresh ideas. Of particular interest to worship songwriters is the observation that diversity in the creative team leads to more innovative outcomes:

Any successful production is likely to be a combination of convention and innovative material—material that extends conventions by showing them in a new form or mode of presentation... Just as conventions are learned and gather strength within networks of personal contact and repeated public performance, innovative extensions often emerge when artists are exposed to other conventions besides the ones they have been gifted in applying, inspiring or forcing creativity.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> J. Bennett, “Constraint,” 156.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, 155-156.

<sup>82</sup> Brian Uzzi and Jarrett Spiro, “Collaboration and Creativity: The Small World Problem.” *American Journal of Sociology* 111, no. 2 (September, 2005): 447–504, accessed July 29, 2020, doi:10.1086/432782.

<sup>83</sup> Uzzi and Spiro, “Small World,” 461.

## Who's on the Songwriting Team?

Partti and Väkevää<sup>84</sup> studied a unique pedagogical approach for songwriting in Finnish schools. The program (called Song Pump in its English translation) matched students with teachers and professional composers in collaborative teams. Like their colleagues in the previously mentioned studies, these authors focused on social learning; they found that teachers help students develop creativity through “social interaction and mediated activity.”<sup>85</sup> Rather than being “a specific conveyer of skills and knowledge who ... instructs her pupils in the craft of songwriting ... [the teacher] could be viewed as a general facilitator of the culture of creativity, aiming to ... promote overall attitudes favorable to artistic creation in the classroom.”<sup>86</sup> In one secondary school, the music teacher designed a songwriting camp over the weekend at the school where highly engaged students worked long days in groups to finalize previous lyric work into finished songs, incorporating input from professional composers. “The opportunity to witness the progress of a well-known song from early drafts into a completed recording had finally helped to get the message across... [T]he greatest learning outcome was to see that . . . even professionals need to rework their ideas and make multiple versions [of their songs].”<sup>87</sup> Additionally, “the composers not only provided models of how to create original music, but also contributed in facilitating the creative culture in the school.”<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> Heidi Partti and Lauri Väkevää, "SongPump: Developing a composing pedagogy in Finnish schools through collaboration between professional songwriters," *Musician–Teacher Collaborations: Altering the Chord*, Catharina Christophersen and Ailbhe Kenny, ed. (New York: Routledge, 2018), accessed July 29, 2020, <https://www-taylorfrancis-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/books/e/9781315208756>.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, 74.

<sup>86</sup> Partti and Väkevää, “Song Pump,” 74.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, 78.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, 81.



Rolle et al.<sup>89</sup> studied similar collaborative initiatives in schools, but their focus was on how positive outcomes are diminished by undermining factors. In some cases, visiting artists lacked educational skills; in others, the objectives of the artists, lead teachers, and students were misaligned or at odds.

There is good reason to believe that the various parties involved have different objectives. Apart from their wish to earn money, many of the artists aim to spark interest in New Music; the cooperating teachers often have broader music educational objectives; and the students may have expectations that do not meet the intentions of either of the other parties involved.<sup>90</sup>

The authors also found that artists struggled to offer meaningful feedback on student work:

The composers sometimes have difficulties appreciating students' works if they seem to be too conventional... Maud Hickey and Scott D. Lipscomb, however, claim that "Our music teaching culture tends to favor the 'safe' side" (2006, 97)—which suggests and confirms that issues of assessment are a significant cause for conflict between the education system and the art system.<sup>91</sup>

Numerous studies have focused on the therapeutic effects of collaborative songwriting among at-risk populations. The reader is encouraged to investigate studies involving combat

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<sup>89</sup> Christian Rolle, Verena Weidner, Julia Weber, and Matthias Schlothfeldt, "Role Expectations and Role Conflicts within Collaborative Composing Projects." *Musician-Teacher Collaborations: Altering the Chord*, Catharina Christophersen and Ailbhe Kenny, ed. (New York: Routledge, 2018), 50-61, accessed July 29, 2020, <https://www-taylorfrancis-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/books/e/9781315208756>.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid, 51.

<sup>91</sup> Rolle et al., "Role Expectations," 55.

veterans suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD);<sup>92</sup> male prisoners;<sup>93</sup> homeless children;<sup>94</sup> and bereaved adolescents.<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> Mary Judd, “There’s Something Happening Here: The Positive Impact of Collaborative Songwriting on Veterans Suffering from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder,” *Music and Medicine* 12 no 1 (January, 2020): 49–54, accessed July 29, 2020, <https://search-ebSCOhost-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&db=psyh&AN=2020-12882-006&site=ehost-live&scope=site>; Ronald Hirschberg et al., “Collaborative Songwriting Intervention for Veterans with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder,” *Journal of Alternative & Complementary Medicine* 26 no 3 (March 11, 2020): 198–203, accessed July 29, 2020, doi:10.1089/acm.2019.0368.

<sup>93</sup> Mary L. Cohen and Catherine M. Wilson. 2017. “Inside the Fences: Pedagogical Practices and Purposes of Songwriting in an Adult Male U.S. State Prison.” *International Journal of Music Education* 35 no 4 (November, 2017): 541–53, accessed July 29, 2020, <https://search-ebSCOhost-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&db=eric&AN=EJ1160539&site=ehost-live&scope=site>.

<sup>94</sup> Rebecca Fairchild and Katrina Skewes McFerran, “‘Music Is Everything’: Using Collaborative Group Songwriting as an Arts-Based Method with Children Experiencing Homelessness and Family Violence,” *Nordic Journal of Music Therapy* 28 no 2 (March 2019), 88–107, accessed July 29, 2020, <http://dx.doi.org.ezproxy.liberty.edu/10.1080/08098131.2018.1509106>.

<sup>95</sup> Myers-Coffman, Katherine, Felicity A Baker, Brian P Daly, Robert Palisano, and Joke Bradt, “The Resilience Songwriting Program for Adolescent Bereavement: A Mixed Methods Exploratory Study,” *Journal of Music Therapy* 56 no 4 (Winter 2019): 348–80, accessed August 18, 2020, <http://dx.doi.org.ezproxy.liberty.edu/10.1093/jmt/thz011>.

## CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

### Introduction

The rapid growth of Village Hymns as a support network and creative outlet for worship leaders in South Florida is evidence of its success in identifying and meeting felt needs. In the process of hosting over 50 CREATE collaborative songwriting events, VH identified rules of etiquette, pre-writing drills, and songwriting exercises that increased engagement and generated creativity. While only two songs on VH's three recording projects originated from CREATE events, there were other beneficial outcomes of these collaborative writing sessions—practicing the craft of songwriting and building relational connections—that led to better songs soon afterward.<sup>96</sup> The case study was designed to discover best practices for collaborative worship songwriting by measuring the effectiveness of CREATE events among those who attended them.

### Design

The Village Hymns Case Study collected qualitative data through a combination of surveys and interviews. Three individuals participated in the VH leadership team interview (Focus Group): Julie Anne Vargas (Creative Director of VH), Josh Bramos, and Adam Pizzaro. All three are at least 18 years of age, are founding members of VH and provide leadership for VH activities and events. The 2-hour interview was held at Riverside Church in North Lauderdale, Florida on July 22, 2020.

VH leadership identified a list of suitable potential candidates for the CREATE Participants Group survey. Each participant was 18 years of age or older; was serving in the

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<sup>96</sup> Bramos, Interview, 1:32:35.

worship ministry of a church in South Florida; and had attended at least one Village Hymns CREATE event. The online survey<sup>97</sup> was created and administered using the Qualtrics platform. VH's Creative Director, Julie Anne Vargas, assisted with recruitment by emailing the survey link to candidates. A Consent document preceded the survey, and participants indicated consent by selecting Yes at the end of the document.

In addition, a second Qualtrics survey<sup>98</sup> was prepared for "Worship Directors" (my term) who are 18 years of age or older, serve in the worship ministry of a South Florida church, and have experience leading or actively participating in collaborative songwriting efforts within their church or church network (these churches may or may not be affiliated with Village Hymns). Worship Directors were contacted directly and invited to participate in the survey. A Consent document preceded the survey, and participants indicated consent by selecting Yes at the end of the document.

### **Questions and Hypotheses**

The purpose of the research is to answer the question, "What are the best practices for collaborative worship songwriting that Village Hymns has discovered and field-tested in their 50+ CREATE songwriting events?" Other research questions were:

- How does the specific context and goal of "collaborative songwriting for the local church" impact the creation of new worship songs?

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<sup>97</sup> See Appendix C for a copy of the CREATE Survey.

<sup>98</sup> See Appendix D for a copy of the Worship Director Survey

- What beneficial outcomes are experienced by participants in collaborative songwriting events?
- What are the best ways to introduce new worship songs to a congregation?

Early hypotheses addressing the sub-questions were:

- Collaborative songwriting for the local church (as opposed to solo songwriting for the local church, or collaborative songwriting for the church at large) results in songs that reflect higher skill and achieve greater ownership in the local church.
- Participants in collaborative songwriting events will see an improvement in their songwriting skills and enjoy beneficial outcomes from connections to a worship songwriting community.
- There are many potentially effective ways to introduce a new song to a congregation:
  - Share a personal testimony about the song
  - Share the song story (an event or insight that inspired the songwriter to write the song)
  - Talk about specific lyrics in the song (how they relate to Scripture, a theme, or a sermon)
  - Teach sections of the song (i.e., chorus or bridge first)
  - Perform (or lead the congregation singing) the song in several services

Before research began, it was not known which of these methods would be considered the most effective.

## CHAPTER IV: RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DESCRIPTION OF THE CURRICULUM

### CREATE Survey Results

#### Quantitative Data

Of the 25 respondents who responded and started the survey, 22 qualified candidates who met the selection criteria completed the CREATE Participants survey. Nine of the respondents (42.86%) had attended 1-3 CREATE events; 7 (33.33%) had attended 4-6 events; and 5 respondents (23.81%) had attended 7 or more events. Half of those surveyed said they had contributed an original song of their own at a CREATE event, and 20 out of 22 (90.91%) said they had collaborated on a new song at an event. Fourteen respondents (63.64%) said they had introduced an original worship song (one they had written) to their church, and the same number of respondents said they had introduced an original song they had co-written with others.

When asked what methods they had used to introduce new songs to their congregation, respondents selected “Worship leader teaches sections of the song (i.e., chorus first)” the most (25.76%) of all the methods. Equally chosen (19.70%) were “Someone shares the song story,” “Someone talks about specific lyrics in the song,” and “Perform (or lead the congregation singing) the song in several services,” and “Someone shares a personal testimony about the song” was chosen least (15.15%). Other methods specified included “Release the song on streaming platforms” and “Setting up the song with a themed video.”

A follow-up question asked which of these methods would help the congregation learn and adopt a new song. Here the two highest responses (23.33% each) were teaching sections of the song and performing/leading the song in several services. Other responses in descending order were talking about specific lyrics (21.67%), sharing a personal testimony (18.33%), and

sharing the song story (13.33%). Other written responses to the question stressed the need for repetition:

- “Play them over and over again.”
- “Repeat repeat repeat the song in your sets. People on average only attend church every 1.3 weeks a month so if you play a new song every week in a month most people are only hearing it once.”

### Qualitative Data

Respondents were asked several open-ended questions. Responses<sup>99</sup> were coded according to the following convention:

Table 1 Coding Categories

Category	Principal Focus	Key words
C = collaborative	social	collaborating, community, networking, gathering, shared experience
W = worship	spiritual/ministry	Scripture, worship, worship leader, church(es), ministry
S = songwriting	writing activity	creativity, inspiration, writing/creating music, song(s)

Q8: Respondents were asked, “What do you enjoy most about CREATE events?” All respondents answered the question; a count of the number of responses mentioning each category is below; two or more mentions of a category in one response were counted as one mention.

Table 2 Responses to Q8 (What do you enjoy most about CREATE events?)

Category	Count (Percentage)
C	20/22 (90.91%)

<sup>99</sup> A complete list of responses to all open-ended questions can be found in Appendix C.

W	10/22 (45.45%)
S	11/22 (50%)

A few notable responses were:

- “The unity. It is so amazing to be a part of a network of other worship leaders and musicians from all across South Florida. Each participant brings a unique perspective and flavor that truly represents and reflects the body of Christ.”
- “When many people are contributing their perspectives behind one idea, the song reaches a new level of creativity and uniqueness. I love hearing what people come up with.”
- “I love hearing the creativity of everyone involved. I love meeting new people who serve at other local churches! It's a great time to connect and collaborate.”

Q9: Respondents were asked, “Are there any songs, insights, or experiences from past CREATE events that are especially memorable for you? If so, please give examples.” Using the same coding system, responses tallied as follows:

Table 3 Responses to Q9 (Memorable songs, insights, or experiences?)

Category	Count (Percentage)
C	14/22 (63.64%)
W	7/22 (31.82%)
S	15/22 (68.18%)
No / No response	4/22 (18.18%)

One memorable experience was mentioned by several respondents, and is recalled in this response:

- “We all wrote on the same passage of Scripture. To make this work we had to write in the same meter and key (4/4, C major) while everyone split up into 4 groups. Group one's task was to write V1 based on two or three verses from the passage. Group two wrote V2 based on the next couple Bible verses. Group three and four wrote the chorus and bridge. When we came back together we had a brand new song, based directly out of Scripture, written by over 14 people in less than an hour, represented by 12 different churches... and it worked! It was encouraging to us as writers in a collaborative effort but also as Christians encountering the Gospel together.”



Q10: When asked if the CREATE events had lived up to their expectations, 21 respondents said the events had met or exceeded their expectations. Here are some responses:

- “The CREATE event hasn't only lived up to my expectations, it has exceeded them. The Village Hymns has become more than just a songwriter collective. Each of these people have a special place in my heart. They are my family and some of my closest friends.”
- “Absolutely. They always result in music that is readily singable. Most events include ‘song shares’ at the end, and it is almost impossible to find oneself quickly learning a new melody and singing along with songs that have been written literally moments before. It's very telling of how music and worship tie in so closely to our ‘imago dei’ that we can use our creativity to come up with songs that encourage the collective group to worship almost immediately.”
- “[Y]es. It's always good to join with Christians of all experience levels and use songwriting as a way to meditate on God's goodness toward us. Even when it's hard or it feels like a "throw-away song," I always leave more encouraged than I did before.”

Q11: When asked if the CREATE events have impacted their spiritual life, responses were again unanimously affirmative. Here are some notable examples:

- “They’re good for my soul. An encouragement in tough ministry seasons.”
- “The relationships I have formed through meeting and being vulnerable with other worship leaders has helped me in my spiritual life.”
- “Definitely. Some of these people have become my mentors in the faith. They have encouraged me, disciplined me, and have pointed me to the beauty of Christ when I failed to do it on my own.”

Q12: When asked if the CREATE events have impacted their worship leading ministry, 18 out of 20 responses were positive. Here are examples:

- “The CREATE events have helped my worship leading ministry by being a network that I could rely on and glean from. Whenever I have had a question about anything, I have never felt alone because of this network. There have always been people willing to take the time to teach me what they've learned so that my worship ministry could thrive.”
- “Yes! The events have allowed me to connect with worshipers and worship leaders from all different churches and denominations. I've been challenged to step outside the bubble

of my church community and experience how much of the rest of South Florida worships. Through cowriting, I'm able to catch different glimpse of God's heart through diverse people, deepening my understanding of Him. This has both challenged and encouraged me in ways beyond my ability to express.”

- “[Y]es. [They] encouraged me to write more on my own, share and sing the songs that others have written, and never underestimate the power of a person or groups voice when communicating the Gospel through song.”

Q13: When asked if the CREATE events have helped them become a better songwriter, 21 out of 21 responses were positive. Some examples follow:

- “Yep. I'm a firm believe[r] that creativity breeds creativity; in other words, the more we pursue creative endeavors and glean from / collaborate with others along the way, the richer the end product will be. Sometimes, that end product is a beautiful song that might never have been written; but even better is when the end product is a shift in our own heart. I've experienced both in the CREATE events, and I'm thankful for the new songs but even more thankful for the people whose unique expressions have deepened my own.”
- “These events have given me the freedom to just come up with a wide range of ideas and put them on the table, to try things and not fear failure, and to glean inspiration from other songwriters!”
- “My grasp of lyrical and melodic analysis has improved dramatically. Specifically, I've become adept at identifying songs that contain weak or hastily-written lyrics. I have also developed an ear for understanding how choruses should lift and sustain songs, and where melodies can be improved to better serve the emotional goal of a given song.”
- “Absolutely. The CREATE events always inspire me, especially when I am completely uninspired to write. Watching people create and present songs they have written motivates me to do the same. There have been lessons and ideas more experienced songwriters have shared with me that have helped me to think differently about the songwriting process.”
- “I have learned to throw all ideas out, not to hold anything back and to keep moving if I get stuck. The time frame of only 1 hour is really helpful!”

Q18: When asked if there was anything else they would like to share, respondents offered many more words of encouragement:

- “It's a wonderful mission that seeks to carry out a vision of worship being more than just the top tracks on Christian radio written by ministries thousands of miles away. I believe

it essential for all local churches to develop the ability to analyze their contexts and not only incorporate popular and historical worship songs into their congregational worship, but also write songs for their local church that allow for unique expressions of worship.”

- “Village Hymns' heart for unity really shines through the CREATE event. You're invited to join an environment where your voice matters and you get join with others to worship God.”
- “Really grateful for Julie Anne, Josh, Adam and crew for all the ways they have ministered to my heart. They have been such an encouragement to me and my team at FC.”
- “Village Hymns is an encouragement and inspiration in my ministry life. I'm so grateful that this vision is being carried out with such diligence and excellence.”
- “Keep it up. It's one of the greatest things happening in South Florida!”
- “I'm grateful for all the people who have poured their hearts into making Village Hymns a reality. We need CREATE events in Miami!”

A comprehensive list of responses from the CREATE Participant survey is found in

Appendix C.

## Worship Director Survey Results

Although recruitment was attempted, only one Worship Director survey response was collected. The Worship Director respondent (hereafter called WD), male, is currently serving in the worship ministry of a South Florida church and has experience leading and actively participating in collaborative songwriting efforts within his church network.

WD said what was special about the early songs in his tenure at his current church was “that they got us started. They remind us of simpler yet rewarding times in the life of our church... The congregation was skeptical at first. So we would only do those songs during special events like worship nights.” The songwriting program at WD’s church has grown substantially since then: “We would only write 1-2 songs a year when we started and now we have songwriting events several times a year giving us easily between 50-75 songs per year.”

WD has hosted at least seven collaborative songwriting (CS) events at his church. These events are intentional and strategic. “All of our events are collaborative since we are a network of neighborhood churches. Each campus worship leader comes to write together. Therefore, collaborative songwriting is at the core of what we do.” WD characterizes their CS events as unstructured and predictable: “We used to try to be too structured and we have found that just talking about what God is doing and teaching us and then going to write is the best for us.” WD’s church has recorded original songs for distribution on CDs and streaming platforms; when asked if any of those recorded songs were birthed at a CS event, WD responded Yes.

Asked to describe how collaborative songwriting happens at his church, WD responded, “Sometimes they are scheduled and sometimes they are not. By this point folks that have more chemistry gravitate towards each other and I encourage that since we know the best songs will

come out of those relationships. Writing is very relational for us.” What ground rules have stirred up the most (or best) creativity? “Keep it to a maximum of 3-4 people per song. Every idea should be explored and every group should have a leader, co leader and what we call the fan, This is the person that encourages the ideas and “fans the flame” of creativity in others.”

When asked, What (if any) songwriting principles, techniques, and/or approaches do you teach to your team?” WD responded,

We teach them to always try to picture the congregation singing the song. If they can hear it in their mind, then the song might have legs. We also teach them that we need to approach Songwriting as time spent with the Lord. Therefore, whether the song makes it to the platform or not it is not time wasted. It is time invested in our relationship with the Lord and each other. Another technique “Lyrics, Lyrics, Lyrics”. The music is the last thing. Focus on the lyrics and add music after the fact.

WD says that worship leaders should introduce at least one new song to their congregations every month. He has used each method of introducing new songs to the congregation—sharing a personal testimony, sharing the song story, talking about specific lyrics, teaching sections of the song, and performing/leading the song in several services—and affirmed each method as useful for helping the congregation learn and adopt a new song. Here is WD’s closing comment about collaborative songwriting: “From my experience I’ve seen songwriting develop our team theologically as well. Songwriting requires a certain type of prediction lyrically that we take very seriously. This has allowed us to grow and be intentional about what we are teaching our congregations.”

### **The Curriculum**

The success of Village Hymns’ CREATE events is rooted in the shared experience of a supportive community of like-minded people in a community of musical practice. It is only

natural that a collaborative worship songwriting curriculum inspired by Village Hymns would be built on a praxis approach that gives students practical experience with the task.

The course is structured to span over a 12-week period, meeting once a week for three hours. A variety of large group and small group activities are included in the 3-hour class meeting. The class gathers the night before the first instructional session for a meal and a Song Share. Class participants are asked to sing an original song (one of their own, or one written by someone else) accompanied by a lead instrument (preferred) or a track. The purpose of the gathering is to jump-start the community that will build networks for collaboration and creativity.

The instructor facilitates the early small group activities by assigning students to groups for the first few class sessions. The instructor uses information gathered in a pre-class registration survey, along with observations of the students during the opening Song Share, to identify students who play lead instruments (guitar or keyboard) and who are more experienced in songwriting. At least one experienced songwriter and one lead instrument player (both could be the same person) are assigned in each songwriting group. The early groups are selected for diversity rather than sameness, so that more innovative material can emerge. After two or three class sessions, students are free to choose their own groups for the remainder of the class session. Students will have hopefully identified others with whom they have creative chemistry; working in the self-selected group for several weeks will strengthen rapport and familiarity with others' working styles and lead to greater productivity.

Songs written throughout this curriculum will be: singable in a congregational setting; crafted with memorable melodies; drawn directly from Scripture or based on Scripture themes; structured in a verse-chorus and/or call-response form; scripturally and theologically sound;

consistent and logical in the use of metaphor and imagery; arranged musically to match the tone and message of the lyrics; and taught effectively to the congregation.

A detailed description of the curriculum is found in Appendix A.

## CHAPTER V: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The goal of developing a collaborative worship songwriting curriculum inspired by Village Hymns and incorporating VH's best practices has been achieved. Students of music and worship at Christian colleges and universities can now enjoy a unique opportunity to practice worship songwriting in a group setting while building supportive relationships with their colleagues.

CREATE survey participants expressed the highest level of enjoyment with the collaborative (social/relational) nature of the events. These relationships often led to better songwriting. Therefore, a major focus of the course should be to facilitate a supportive community among the students, through an initial Song Share event, weekly small group learning and writing activities, and frequent Song Share opportunities throughout the course.

Research suggests that collaborative songwriting teams should be diverse rather than homogeneous so that the team can develop more innovative songs. This diversity also celebrates the unity of the body of Christ and can serve as a precipitating factor for regional revival.

Village Hymns is an inspiration to worship leaders of every denomination. May God continue to bless their valuable work; may their vision for community and collaborative songwriting spread far and wide!



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**IRB APPROVAL****LIBERTY UNIVERSITY**  
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

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July 28, 2020

Craig Osterhus  
Keith Currie

Re: IRB Exemption - IRB-FY19-20-453 Village Hymns: A Case Study

Dear Craig Osterhus, Keith Currie:

The Liberty University Institutional Review Board (IRB) has reviewed your application in accordance with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP) and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulations and finds your study to be exempt from further IRB review. This means you may begin your research with the data safeguarding methods mentioned in your approved application, and no further IRB oversight is required.

Your study falls under the following exemption category, which identifies specific situations in which human participants research is exempt from the policy set forth in 45 CFR 46: 101(b):

Category 2.(iii). Research that only includes interactions involving educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior (including visual or auditory recording) if at least one of the following criteria is met:

The information obtained is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that the identity of the human subjects can readily be ascertained, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects, and an IRB conducts a limited IRB review to make the determination required by §46.111(a)(7).

Your stamped consent form can be found under the Attachments tab within the Submission Details section of your study on Cayuse IRB. This form should be copied and used to gain the consent of your research participants. If you plan to provide your consent information electronically, the contents of the attached consent document should be made available without alteration.

Please note that this exemption only applies to your current research application, and any modifications to your protocol must be reported to the Liberty University IRB for verification

of continued exemption status. You may report these changes by completing a modification submission through your Cayuse IRB account.

If you have any questions about this exemption or need assistance in determining whether possible modifications to your protocol would change your exemption status, please email us at [irb@liberty.edu](mailto:irb@liberty.edu).

Sincerely,

**G. Michele Baker, MA, CIP**

*Administrative Chair of Institutional Research*

**Research Ethics Office**

## Appendix A: Curriculum Charts

## CURRICULUM PROJECT – ANALYSIS CHART

## STEP/ PART I: CURRICULUM INFORMATION

<p><b>Student:</b> Craig Osterhus</p>	<p><b>Course for which you are creating curriculum:</b> Collaborative Worship Songwriting for the Local Church (Residential)</p>
<p><b>Required Textbook for Class (at least two textbooks should be entered with complete information in Turabian style):</b></p> <p>Tozer, A.W. 2017. <i>Worship: The Reason We Were Created</i>. Chicago: Moody Publishers. Wood, Clement, ed. 1992. <i>The Complete Rhyming Dictionary: Including the Poet's Craft Book, Updated and Expanded</i>. Revised by Ronald Bogus. New York: Dell.</p>	
<p><b>Identify the problem:</b> <i>(What does the student not know how to do? What is the student's gap in the training or experience?)</i></p>	
<p>Working in small groups, students will learn how to collaboratively create new worship songs for their churches.</p>	
<p><b>Who are the learners and what are their characteristics?</b> <i>(Age, major, pre-requisites, residential, online, or a hybrid of the two)</i></p>	
<p>Students will be adult learners (18+)* who serve in a worship ministry at a local church. Ideally, each group of students will share some commonality (from the same church, same region, or same denomination) as well as some diversity of perspective (age, ethnic background, preferred music style). <i>The class meets in a residential format once a week for three hours over 12 weeks.</i></p> <p>*High school students with exceptional talent and maturity may also be invited to participate.</p>	
<p><b>What is the new desired behavior?</b> <i>(Overall, what is the main change or new addition to the student's demonstrated ability?)</i></p>	
<p>Students will actively engage in a collaborative process to create new worship songs, and then teach these songs in their local churches.</p>	
<p><b>What are the delivery options?</b> <i>(Explain the materials you will develop for the course.)</i></p>	
<p>Students will meet once a week for twelve weeks. Class sessions will combine large-group worship and small-group work sessions. Course materials will be provided in a shared OneNote Class Notebook, and students will use the OneNote app (mobile or desktop version, free with a Microsoft account) to record notes, insights, song clips, etc.</p>	
<p><b>What are the pedagogical considerations?</b> <i>(Describe your general content and methodology for the course.)</i></p>	

The course will follow a question and discovery methodology rather than a didactic approach. Students will be given discussion questions and positive examples to help them identify through discovery the guiding principles and best practices of collaborative worship songwriting.

Topics include:

- Scripture songs – using the words of Scripture
- Songs based on Scripture
- What makes a song sing-able?
- What is OUR song? What is happening in OUR community?
- What do I bring to the table?
- Arranging vocals and instruments for new songs
- Creating a demo recording
- Teaching songs to the worship team
- Teaching songs to the congregation
- Who OWNS the song?

#### **What learning theory applies to your curriculum? Why?**

The course is based on **Kolb's Experiential Learning theory**; students will go through the recurring cycle of Experience, Reflect, Conceptualize, Test/Do.

Here is an example:

1. Large group sings *Build My Life* (Experience) together in worship. Large group leader also plays the melody of *Good, Good Father* as a counterexample.
2. Large group analysis asks the questions: How does the melody of a song speak to you? What makes the first example a great melody for a worship song? (Reflect)
3. Small group task: Brainstorm key features in the song's melody that make it a great song; select one. (Conceptualize)
4. Small group task: Together, write a song fragment (1-2 lines, melody & lyric) that uses the melody feature you selected. Share your song fragment with the large group. (Test/Do)

#### **Step/ Part II: Learning Outcomes**

##### **Learning Outcomes**

**At the end of the course, the student will be able to:**

1. Name the key attributes of a song that make it singable for congregational worship
2. Identify the genres of Scripture that are most useful for creating Scripture-based worship songs
3. Use the call-response and verse-chorus song forms to create new worship songs



4. Examine popular worship song lyrics for theological soundness; dominant subject (God? Or me?); and consistency of perspective, metaphor, and imagery.

5. Arrange new worship songs with three-part vocal harmonies in a key that is optimized for congregational participation.

## CURRICULUM PROJECT – DESIGN CHART

### First: Evaluate the Analysis Chart and Learning Outcomes

<b>Student:</b> Craig Osterhus		<b>Course for which you are creating curriculum:</b> Collaborative Worship Songwriting for the Local Church (Residential)	
<b>Concept Statement:</b> <i>(Briefly describe the overall purpose and point of the instructional unit.)</i> Students will learn and actively engage in a collaborative process to create new worship songs and teach new songs in their local churches.			
<b>Learning Outcomes</b> <i>(List in the order you plan to address in 12 weeks)</i>	<b>Content</b> <i>(What must be learned to reach this objective?)</i>	<b>Learning/Training Activity</b> <i>(How will you teach the content?)</i>	<b>Assessment</b> <i>(How will you know that the student has met the objective?)</i>
Name the key attributes of a song that make it singable for congregational worship	<p>Week 1: <i>Singable songs are written in a melodic range that are optimized for congregational singing.</i></p> <p>Discover the melodic range that is optimized for congregational singing.</p> <p>Review examples of songs that exceed the optimal range (e.g., arranged for soloist; extended melody range; includes octave jump)</p> <p>Recognize the best key for a congregational song, given its melody</p>	<p>Week 1: Text: Read Tozer, chapter 1 and complete the Read and Reflect (R&amp;R) writing assignment</p> <p>Large Group Activity: Welcome/Orientation, and Quick Talk on Co-Writing Etiquette; Group Vocalises</p> <p>Small Group Activity: The Octave Leap</p> <p>Small Group Activity: Hone [In] On the Range</p>	Week 1 Quiz: Covers melodic range, Octave Jump, Optimal Key

	<p>Week 2: <i>Singable songs have memorable melodic lines that step up and down in small intervals or along chord triads</i></p> <p>Review basic intervals and chord triads</p> <p>Identify melodic lines that step up and down in small intervals or along chord triads</p> <p>Review the pentatonic scale</p>	<p>Week 2: Text: Tozer chapter 2, R&amp;R</p> <p>Small Group warm-up (discuss Jason Blume's article, <a href="#">"Top 5 Melody Pitfalls—and How to Avoid Them"</a>)</p> <p>Large Group Worship/Examples: <i>Build My Life</i>; <i>Good Good Father</i></p> <p>Large Group Activity: Christmas Carols</p> <p>Small group activity: Do and Don't</p> <p>Small group activity: The Five (pentatonic scale).</p>	<p>Week 2: Formative Assessment: In your small group, create a 3-song worship set that illustrates the two key attributes of singable songs in congregational worship (best key for congregational singers; memorable melody with steps or triad leaps). Lead your abbreviated set (e.g., sing 1 verse, 1 chorus, optional 1 bridge) in the large group.</p>
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<p>Identify the genres of Scripture that are most useful for creating Scripture-based worship songs</p>	<p>Week 3: <i>Scripture hymns and poetic passages are often ready-made lyrics for new worship songs.</i></p> <p>Identify Scripture hymns and poetic passages in the Bible</p> <p>Compare and contrast narrative, poetry, wisdom, epistle</p> <p>Use YouVersion app to compare different translations of the same Scripture (including MP 1650)</p> <p>Discover the inherent rhythm of poetic passages</p>	<p>Week 3: Text: Tozer chapter 3, R&amp;R</p> <p>Small group warm-up (discuss Jeffrey Kranz’s article, “<a href="#">All the Songs in the Bible</a>”)</p> <p>Large group worship (2-3 songs; perform “Come Let Us Go Up” by Paul Wilbur) and Quick Talk on Scripture genres; demonstrate rhythmic Scripture reading</p> <p>Small group activity: Flip and Find</p> <p>Small group activity: Read in Rhythm</p> <p>Small group activity: YouVersion</p>	<p>Week 3: Formative Assessment: Record a demo of your rhythmic Scripture reading</p>
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	<p>Week 4: <i>The use of rhyming words and patterns can enhance Scripture songs.</i></p> <p>Recognize perfect and imperfect rhymes</p> <p>Recognize common rhyming patterns</p> <p>Use a thesaurus and rhyming dictionary to generate lyric ideas</p>	<p>Week 4: Text: Tozer chapter 4, R&amp;R</p> <p>Small group warm-up (discuss Bobby Gilles' article, "<a href="#">The Two Types of Rhyme That Will Make Your Songs Soar</a>")</p> <p>Large group worship</p> <p>Small group activity: Rhyme Analysis</p> <p>CREATE Drill 1: Eph 2:14-22</p>	<p>Week 4: Formative Assessment: Group writes Scripture song lyrics based on Eph 2:14-22, including perfect and imperfect rhymes and rhyming patterns in each verse and chorus</p>
	<p>Week 5: <i>Different Scriptures that are centered on a common theme can guide and inspire our lyric writing.</i></p> <p>Recognize and practice a Four Step model for interpreting Scripture</p>	<p>Week 5: Text: Tozer chapter 5, R&amp;R</p> <p>Small group warm-up (discuss Jamie Brown's article, "<a href="#">10 Tips for Writing Worship Songs</a>")</p> <p>Large Group Session: Four Step Model (expository, narrative, and graphic organizers)</p> <p>Small group practice with Four Step Model (<i>Psalm 19:1-4; Acts 17:24-28; Romans 1:19-20</i>)</p>	<p>Week 5: Summative Project 2: Each student group will be assigned to write either a verse, a chorus, or a bridge, based on today's Scriptures. STITCH the pieces together in large group (groups line up to play/sing their verse, chorus, bridge; perform the complete song as a unit without stopping) (key of G, 4/4, 84 BPM)</p>

		<p>Regroup (large group) to assess, continue brainstorming lyrics</p> <p>Small group: write a section of a song for Summative Project 2</p>	
<p>Use the verse-chorus and call-response song forms to create new worship songs</p>	<p>Week 6: <i>The verse-chorus form provides a solid yet versatile structure for worship songwriting</i></p> <p>Identify the verse-chorus form in worship songs and hymns</p> <p>Recognize the unique roles of the verse and chorus</p>	<p>Week 6: Text: Tozer, chapter 6, R&amp;R</p> <p>Small group warm-up (discuss Bobby Gilles' article, "<a href="#">5 Keys to Making a Worship Song Singable</a>")</p> <p>Large group worship (2-3 songs with verse/chorus form)</p> <p>Small group activity: Find the Chorus</p> <p>Small group activity: Write On (lyrics for 2 verses, 1 chorus) EXCHANGE/ revise</p>	<p>Week 6: Formative Assessment: Record a demo of your rhythmic reading of your revised TWO verses and chorus</p>

	<p>Week 7: <i>The Call-Response form provides an exciting, alternative structure for worship songwriting</i></p> <p>Identify examples of call and response in Scripture</p> <p>Recognize a hook in a passage that can be used as a response</p>	<p>Week 7: Text: Tozer, chapter 7, R&amp;R</p> <p>Small group warm-up (discuss the article, "<a href="#">What is Call and Response in Music?</a>")</p> <p>Large group worship ("Forever" by Chris Tomlin; "Give Thanks to God" from Housefires, <i>We Say Yes</i>). Play samples of other c/r songs: "He Saved Us to Show His Glory" by Tommy Walker; "Is He Worthy" by Andrew Peterson</p> <p>Small group activity: Call-Response in Scripture (Psalm 136)</p> <p>Small group activity: Write On EXCHANGE/ revise</p>	<p>Week 7: Summative Formative Project 3: Record a demo of your revised song with TWO call-response verses and unison chorus</p>
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	<p>Week 8: <i>Collaborative Songwriting requires rules of etiquette</i></p> <p>Articulate the seven rules from CREATE workshops</p> <p>Identify additional best practice principles learned from group work</p>	<p>Week 8: Text: Tozer, chapter 8, R&amp;R</p> <p>Small group warm-up: “CREATE Co-Writing Etiquette”</p> <p>Large group brainstorming: Co-Writing Etiquette</p> <p>Small group activity: Visual Further study (articles)</p>	<p>Week 8: Formative Assessment: As a group, submit a visual (poster or digital graphic) or mnemonic summing up your rules for collaborative songwriting (no more than 10 rules)</p>
<p>Examine popular worship song lyrics for theological soundness; dominant subject (God? Or me?); and consistency of perspective, metaphor, and imagery.</p>	<p>Week 9: <i>Worship songwriting skillfully manages Godward, inward, and outward points of view</i></p> <p>Identify and define points of view in songwriting: third person narrative, first person narrative, second person narrative, direct address</p>	<p>Week 9: Text: Tozer, chapter 9, R&amp;R</p> <p>Small group warm-up: CREATE Mechanics, Perspectives Handout</p> <p>Large group worship: 2-3 songs; include different perspectives</p> <p>Solo/small group activity: Perspective (John 8:1-11)</p> <p>Small group activity: Write On EXCHANGE/revise</p>	<p>Week 9: Summative Project 4: Record a demo of your revised song with two first-person narrative verses and direct-address chorus</p>



	<p>Week 10: <i>Skillful worship songwriting employs solid theology and logical consistency in perspective, metaphor, and imagery</i></p> <p>Identify resources for systematic theology</p> <p>Evaluate songs for consistency in use of metaphor</p>	<p>Week 10: Text: Tozer, chapter 10, R&amp;R Small group warm-up (discuss Bob Kilpatrick’s article, “<a href="#">How to write a really good worship song</a>”)</p> <p>Large group session: read the prequel, Bob Kilpatrick’s “<a href="#">How to write a really mediocre worship song</a>”</p> <p>Small group activity: Metaphors Be With You Small group activity: Write On EXCHANGE/ revise</p>	<p>Week 10: Formative Assessment Paper (1-2 pages): Song Analysis Evaluate a popular worship song by (choose one): (a) identifying any lyrics that suggest questionable theology, or (b) identifying inconsistencies in perspective, metaphor, and/or imagery. Contrast that song with another worship song that does not have that problematic element. Cite Scripture references and at least two additional sources using proper Turabian format.</p>
<p>Arrange new worship songs with three-part vocal harmonies in a key that is optimized for congregational participation.</p>	<p>Week 11: <i>Good worship songs are arranged musically to match the tone and message of the lyrics.</i></p> <p>Identify the tone and energy of song lyrics as celebrative, reflective, mournful, hopeful</p> <p>Identify tone and energy of major/minor chords, rising/falling melody line</p>	<p>Week 11: Text: Tozer, chapter 11, R&amp;R</p> <p>Small group warm-up (discuss Ed Steele’s article, “<a href="#">What Makes a Song Congregational?</a>” and John Piper’s post, “<a href="#">When Worship Lyrics Miss the Mark</a>”)</p> <p>Large Group worship (“Forever” by Kari Jobe)</p>	<p>Week 11: Formative Project 5: Choose one of your previous songs and arrange it for 3 part vocal and guitar or keys. Choose tempo, rhythm, chords, and harmonies that match the tone and energy of your lyrics. Record and submit a demo of your song, then finalize plans for your video project.</p>

	<p>Identify tone and energy of common rhythms and tempos</p> <p>Identify 3-part harmony options (top melody, bottom melody, sandwich)</p>	<p>Small group activity: Song Study</p> <p>Small group activity: Write On, EXCHANGE/revise</p>	
	<p>Week 12: <i>Congregations learn and adopt new songs best when they are given a chance to learn them well.</i></p> <p>Identify methods of introducing &amp; teaching new songs: chorus only, song story, testimony</p>	<p>Week 12: Text: favorite chapter, new insight</p> <p>Small group warm-up (discuss Musicademy article, "<a href="#">10 reasons why the 'original' version of a worship song won't work in your church</a>")</p> <p>Large Group: teach chorus of the song, "Fix My Eyes" by Tommy Walker; Quick Talk on strategies for teaching new songs to congregation</p> <p>Small group activity: Small group plan: video</p>	<p>Week 12: Summative Final Project: Record a video where you teach your Week 11 song to a congregation or small group</p>

<b>Learning Outcomes</b> <i>(List them in the order you plan to address during the 12 weeks of curriculum.)</i>	<b>Rationale for Sequence</b> <i>(Describe why you believe this sequence is the most effective.)</i>
1. Name the key attributes of a song that make it singable for congregational worship	The course begins with one of the most basic building blocks of a song: the melody. Creating a memorable, easy to learn melody is fundamental to good worship songwriting. Choosing a good key signature for congregational singing is essential for participation.
2. Identify the genres of Scripture that are most useful for creating Scripture-based worship songs	The other most basic building block of a song is the lyric. Worship lyrics are taken from Scripture directly or they are based on Scripture. Certain genres of Scripture (poetry, hymns) are especially useful for worship songwriting. Learning how to use perfect/imperfect rhymes along with rhyme patterns completes the lyric skill set.
3. Use the call-response and verse-chorus song forms to create new worship songs	Along with melody and lyrics, a song requires form. Two common examples of form – verse and chorus, and call and response – are taught because of their widespread use in modern worship. Co-writing etiquette is introduced at Week 5, and expounded in Week 8, to reinforce what students have already learned by experience, and to encourage students to add their own tried & tested rules.
4. Examine popular worship song lyrics for theological soundness; dominant subject (God? Or me?); and consistency of perspective, metaphor, and imagery.	Having considered melody, the source of lyrics, and form, we move on to more technical aspects of lyric writing. Worship songs require correct theology and logical, consistent use of metaphor and perspective, if they are to be useful in congregational worship. These songs should speak truth that is true for everyone, not subjective impressions that may only be true for some.
5. Arrange new worship songs with three-part vocal harmonies in a key that is optimized for congregational participation.	With all the fundamental song pieces now in place, we move on to arranging the song with vocal harmonies and accompaniment, to prepare the finished product for use in our churches. We also discuss effective ways of teaching new songs to the congregation.

## CURRICULUM PROJECT – DEVELOPMENT CHART

<b>Student:</b> Craig Osterhus	<b>Course for which you are creating curriculum:</b> Collaborative Worship Songwriting for the Local Church (Residential)
<i>Consider the 3 advance organizer methods below. You must create an advance organizer for <b>each</b> method below to use as a pre-instructional strategy (to prepare the student to link what they <b>do</b> know to what they <b>do not</b> know).</i>	
<b>Expository</b> (You are verbally describing the new content you are about to cover; enter below what you will say to the class as though it is in a script format)	
(Week 5, Large Group) Here's our question for today: How can we use different Bible passages that share a common theme to create lyrics for new worship songs? Here's the short answer: We have to understand the MEANING of the verses, and faithfully transmit that meaning in our songs. First, read these passages prayerfully; remember, the Holy Spirit is the BEST interpreter of Scripture! Secondly, Scripture interprets itself in context, so look at how these verses fit into the books they come from, and how that context gives meaning. Thirdly, we are in a collaborative process! Each of us has unique life experiences that affect our understanding of Scripture and the meaning of specific words. So as you share your lyric ideas with your group, don't be alarmed if someone reacts strongly to a line or a phrase. Listen carefully to their input, and allow the "abundance of counselors" to refine your ideas.	
<b>Narrative</b> (You are presenting the new information in a story format; enter below what you will do or say.) The following is a Reader's Theatre sketch, to be read by three students.	
Ron: Lord, give us understanding of your Word, and bless our task today. All: Amen. Ron: OK, let's get started! What's the group task for today? Janie: Write a song chorus based on three passages: Ephesians 2:14-16-- Ron: I'll look up that one. Janie: --okay, uh, Acts 11:1-18, whoa, that's a lot of verses! Miguel: That's when Peter told about his visit to Cornelius' house. Ron: We can sum that one up pretty quick. One more? Janie: I'll look up the last one: 1 Corinthians 12:24b-27. That's when Paul talks about the body of Christ! Ron (summarizing his verses): "He himself is our peace, barrier, dividing wall of hostility, one new humanity out of the two." What hostile groups is Paul talking about? Miguel: The Gentiles and the Jews. You can see that in Ephesians 2 verses 11 and 12, and in 19 to the end. Janie: My pastor said there was a dividing wall in the temple courtyard that kept the Gentiles out, and a sign on that wall threatened Gentiles with death if they tried to cross it! Ron: Yup, you can see why the Jewish Christians gave Peter such a hard time about going to	

Cornelius' house. But when Peter told how the whole family was saved and filled with the Spirit, they couldn't argue with that!

Miguel: When I see a big wall around a yard, or a neighborhood, I always think about all the nice, happy, rich people inside, and all the regular people like me on the outside.

Ron: Whoa, that's... different. Never thought about that before... But look, this says Jesus destroyed the dividing wall, and he preached peace.

Miguel: That means God is uniting Jews and Gentiles—

Ron: --AND rich and poor, into one church--

Janie: --so that "there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other."

Ron: That's a great start. Let's write those lyrics!

**Graphical Organizers** *(You are presenting an original visual pictograph, chart, or concept pattern.)*

*Describe the visual below and then copy and paste your original graphic.*

We can discover the meaning of a Scripture passage much like we read a vision chart at the eye doctor's office. God's Holy Spirit is the indispensable light that illuminates the Scriptures, and each passage has a contextual lens that gives it focus. Our life experiences introduce other lenses – some that sharpen and clarify, others that blur or color our perspective. As we share and compare insights in our writing community and our larger church community, we exchange those lenses with each other, to discover richer meaning and recognize our blind spots.

**Copy and paste your original visual pictograph, chart, or concept pattern below:**

# Interpreting Scripture



## Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit illuminates our minds and helps us understand the words of Scripture  
(Ps 119:105; John 16:13; 1 Cor 2:12-13)

## Context

The context of the verse brings meaning into focus. Consider:  
*surrounding verses*  
*the whole book*  
*the whole Bible*



## Experience



Our life experiences and our worldview tint and filter our perspective

## Community

We gain understanding from the insights of others and we discover our blind spots



## Gagne's Nine Events of Instruction

Instruction Event	Describe how each instructional event will be addressed in your instructional unit. Cite a reference from your text as to why this approach will be effective.
1. Gain attention	Begin singing the chorus, "His Grace is Sufficient For Me" by Rob & Wendy Jacobson. Sing it once, then invite everyone to sing the second time. The song illustrates the day's subject matter. <sup>100</sup>
2. Inform learners of objectives	(Displayed on PPT slide) "At the end of today's lesson, you will be able to take a series of related Bible verses and identify a central, unifying idea (or ideas) that you can use to write worship song lyrics." This statement frames the presentation in the context of course outcomes. <sup>101</sup>
3. Stimulate recall of prior learning	After last week's lesson on using the words of Scripture to write worship songs, we now move on to creating lyrics that are "sourced" from Scripture. Review the use of Scripture words in worship songs. <sup>102</sup> Today's chorus is taken from 2 Corinthians 12:9; the repeated phrase is emphasizing the central meaning of the text. When we discover the MEANING of the text we can use our words (lyrics) to say the same thing.
4. Present the content	Open with expository script. Segue to narrative (skit), then recap with graphic. Presenting the content in multiple modes will aid learning. <sup>103</sup>
5. Guide learning	Work through the Four Step Model as a large group – show three related verses on the screen (John 14:11; Colossians 1:19; Hebrews 1:3), and use the four steps to identify the central meaning/idea(s) that could inspire a worship song. <sup>104</sup>
6. Elicit performance (practice)	Students will work in their writing groups; three references will be provided ( <i>Psalm 19:1-4; Acts 17:24-28; Romans 1:19-20</i> ). Students look up the passages and read them together; they will pray for understanding; they will consider the surrounding context of each passage; they

<sup>100</sup> Linda B. Nilson, *Teaching at Its Best: A Research-Based Resource for College Instructors* (San Francisco: John Wiley & Sons, Incorporated, 2016), 192, accessed July 25, 2020, ProQuest Ebook Central, <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/liberty/detail.action?docID=4567495>.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid., 192.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid., 26.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid., 192.

	will reflect on previous teaching and experience with the passages; and they will share and compare insights and perspectives to identify a central idea(s) and lyric phrases for creating a new worship song. <sup>105</sup>
7. Provide feedback	The instructor will move between the groups and listen in on the discussion, to check for understanding and redirect when necessary. <sup>106</sup>
8. Assess performance	As a formative assessment, each student group will write their central idea and lyric phrases in a chart on the whiteboard to show they can successfully use the process. <sup>107</sup> Instructor will ask questions to clarify items that are unclear or ambiguous. Compose a line or two on the fly and write them on the whiteboard. Label each line as a verse, chorus, or bridge. If excitement builds, keep going! Students will learn best when they are emotionally involved. <sup>108</sup>
9. Enhance retention and transfer	Review the Four Step Model graphic and emphasize its application/usefulness for Bible study in general as well as for songwriting. <u>For homework</u> , assign each student group to write either a verse, a chorus, or a bridge, to be “stitched” together next week (key of G, 4/4, 84 BPM). <sup>109</sup>

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<sup>105</sup> Nilson, *Teaching*, 184.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid., 175.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid., 27.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid., 26.



## CURRICULUM PROJECT – IMPLEMENTATION CHART

### Part I: Evaluate and revise the analysis, design, and development charts and the learning objectives

For this assignment, identify all items and tasks that must be prepared before you begin teaching your instructional lesson

List at least 6 necessary, physical items and provide a rationale for its use (e.g., flashcards, PowerPoint presentations, handouts, activity sheets, flipcharts, etc.)

<b>Student:</b> Craig Osterhus	<b>Course for which you are creating curriculum:</b> Collaborative Worship Songwriting for the Local Church (Week 5 Lesson)
<b>Physical Item</b>	<b>Rationale for Use</b> <b>Cite a reference from your text for each item indicating its effectiveness</b>
PowerPoint slide presentation	Displaying learning outcomes and lecture break activity questions is an effective use of slides. <sup>110</sup>
Whiteboard, markers, erasers	Students will write the results of their group work on the whiteboard. Instructor will facilitate a large group review of the ideas and lyrics and add to them. Lo-tech equipment is part of a well equipped classroom. <sup>111</sup>
Classroom furniture and technology infrastructure	Flexible seating (movable chairs and small tables) will allow students to see the screen, whiteboard, and instructor podium at the front for large group activity; then students will rearrange chairs & tables to do small group work. Both whole group and small group activities are useful instructional methods. <sup>112</sup> Classroom also includes a secure wi-fi access point. Power outlets are conveniently located for all participants.
Projector/display and PA system	The projector will display PowerPoint slides and the PA system will amplify audio for the instructor and musician(s). PowerPoint presentation software improves the visual quality and impact of lectures. <sup>113</sup>

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<sup>110</sup> Nilson, *Teaching*, 79.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid., 120.

<sup>112</sup> Harro Van Brummelen, *Steppingstones to Curriculum*, 2nd ed. (Colorado Springs: Purposeful Design, 2002), Kindle, 2743.

<sup>113</sup> Nilson, *Teaching*, 79.

Student device: laptop, tablet, or smart phone with Internet access	Each student will be equipped with their own wi-fi enabled technology so that they can look up the Scripture passages on YouVersion (or other Bible resource) and compare various translations. Students will also access class notes and resources using OneNote Class Notebook, and capture a picture of the lesson's whiteboard notes with their smart phone. A laptop or smart device is the best technology choice to facilitate this learning. <sup>114</sup>
Copies of narrative script	Volunteers will read narrative script in large group session; the scripted role play illustrates the Four Fold Model for interpreting Scripture. Hard copies of learning material are often preferred over e-textbooks or web-based readings. <sup>115</sup>

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<sup>114</sup> Nilson, *Teaching*, 77.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, 93.

**Part II: List at least 6 necessary tasks and provide a rationale (e.g., jobs to be done in advance, such as arranging chairs in a specific formation, photocopying, etc.).**

<b>Task</b>	<b>Rationale for Task</b> <b>Cite a reference from your text for each task indicating its effectiveness</b>
Create PowerPoint slides	The PPT slides should include lyrics for the opening song; the lesson objective; Scripture references; and the graphic organizer illustrating the Four Step Model for interpreting Scripture. Slides should not be made for long Scripture passages since that would be an excess of information on screen. <sup>116</sup>
Test presentation equipment in classroom	Checking technology for proper working order is part of creating a welcoming classroom. <sup>117</sup>
Write narrative script and make photocopies	Students who volunteer for the role play, and those who watch, practice experiential mode learning <sup>118</sup> and having a script in hand (as opposed to improvising) will help all students fully benefit from the experience.
Check classroom environment (adequate lighting, comfortable temperature)	Properly functioning lights and heating/air conditioning systems are important factors for a welcoming classroom. <sup>119</sup>
Create Four Step Model graphic for display on screen, and provide a digital copy in Class Notebook	Visuals help students remember relationships and content. <sup>120</sup>
Assign student seating	Students should sit close to their small writing group. This will allow for a quick transition from large group to small group activities. <sup>121</sup>

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<sup>116</sup> Nilson, *Teaching*, 80.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid., 120.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid., 322.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid., 120.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid., 328.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid., 239.

**Part III: Describe in 4–6 sentences 1 type of Formative Assessment that you would choose to implement and detail its effectiveness for your course.**

Formative Assessment Type	Assessment Details
<p><b>Lyric-Writing (group work)</b></p>	<p>Three Scripture references will be displayed on the projection screen (<i>Psalm 19:1-4; Acts 17:24-28; Romans 1:19-20</i>). Working in their small groups, students will look up the verses, compare a few different translations, and identify a central idea or theme that is consistent in the three passages. Then they will write <i>lyric phrases</i> based on the passages that support the central idea/theme. Students will have 20 minutes to complete the task; by the end of the time, they will write their central idea/theme and their lyric phrases on the whiteboard. Group work will be managed by the instructor.<sup>122</sup> Instructor will then facilitate a large group review of the ideas and lyrics, and then ask for help to identify which lyrics would work in a verse, in a chorus, or in a bridge (labeling them V, C, or B). Students are using higher order thinking skills as they discover an incremental process for writing worship songs based on Scripture.</p> <p>The next step is a homework assignment where each group will be assigned to write either a full verse, a chorus, or a bridge using any the lyric material on the whiteboard. The real fun comes when these pieces of the song are “stitched” together in the next lesson; everyone in the class will hear the whole song for the first time, at the same time!</p>

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<sup>122</sup> Nilson, *Teaching*, 175.

## CURRICULUM PROJECT – EVALUATION AND SYLLABUS CHART

### Your Evaluation Plan

In the chart below, describe your plan for a formative assessment for each learning outcome in this unit

(This is something you would do before a summative assessment or exam to gauge the learner's grasp of the learning objective)

<b>Student: Craig Osterhus</b>	<b>Course for which you are creating curriculum: Collaborative Worship Songwriting for the Local Church (Residential)</b>	
<b>Learning Outcomes</b>	<b>Your Formative Assessment Plan</b>	<b>Rationale for Formative Assessment Type</b> <i>(Describe why you believe this assessment is the most effective and cite a reference from your text for support)</i>
1. Name the key attributes of a song that make it singable for congregational worship.	Week 2: In your small group, create a 3-song worship set that illustrates the two key attributes of singable songs in congregational worship (best key for congregational singers; memorable melody with steps or triad leaps). Lead your abbreviated set (e.g., sing 1 verse, 1 chorus, optional 1 bridge) in the large group. Explain your rationale for the songs and keys you chose.	In this assessment, students will generate new examples of the concepts, and in their rationale they will paraphrase the principles, rules and steps for applying the material. <sup>123</sup>
2. Identify the genres of Scripture that are most useful for creating Scripture-based worship songs.	Week 3: Record a rhythmic Scripture reading of Psalm 67; choose any English translation except MP 1650. Identify the time signature you are using.	A rhythmic Scripture reading is a partially worked example that serves as scaffolding <sup>124</sup> for more advanced songwriting skills.

<sup>123</sup> Nilson, *Teaching*, 184.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*, 28.

<p>3. Use the call-response and verse-chorus song forms to create new worship songs.</p>	<p>Week 7: Formative Project 3: Record a demo of your revised song with TWO call-response verses and unison chorus</p>	<p>This assessment requires writing, performing, and recording a song. The combined demands of the assessment will call for each student's best effort and will require interdependence.<sup>125</sup></p>
<p>4. Examine popular worship song lyrics for theological soundness; dominant subject (God? Or me?); and consistency of perspective, metaphor, and imagery.</p>	<p>Week 10 Formative Assessment Paper (1-2 pages): Evaluate a popular worship song by (choose one):</p> <p>(a) identifying any lyrics that suggest questionable theology, or (b) identifying inconsistencies in perspective, metaphor, and/or imagery.</p> <p>Contrast that song with another worship song that does not have that problematic element. Cite Scripture references and at least two additional sources using proper Turabian format.</p>	<p>By critically evaluating popular worship songs according to these prompts, students will use higher-order thinking skills that will help them write better songs. This formative assessment asks for very specific items in the song analysis. Constructed-response instruments need to be specific and concise when describing the instructed task or desired response.<sup>126</sup></p>
<p>5. Arrange new worship songs with three-part vocal harmonies in a key that is optimized for congregational participation.</p>	<p>Week 11 Formative Project 5: Choose one of your previous songs and arrange it for 3 part vocal and guitar or keys. Choose tempo, rhythm, chords, and harmonies that match the tone and energy of your lyrics. Record and submit a demo of your song.</p>	<p>Writing, arranging, and recording a song are experiential learning activities that involve high engagement and create emotions that cement the experience into students' minds.<sup>127</sup></p>

<sup>125</sup> Nilson, *Teaching*, 242.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*, 380.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*, 222.

## Evaluation and Reflection

Consider all of the charts and stages of development in order to create your syllabus. List at least 6 issues or strategies that must be addressed to make your unit stronger and more concise.

Provide a rationale for your choice.

Issue/Strategy	Rationale for Changing
<p>From the Analysis Chart: “What learning theory applies to your curriculum? Why?” In the example provided, the questions were too vague. Make the questions more specific to focus on the strength of the <i>melody</i>; use the song <i>Build My Life</i> as a positive example, and <i>Good Good Father</i> as a counter-example.</p>	<p>The activity is tied into learning outcome 1, “Name the key attributes of a song that make it singable for congregational worship.” The focus is on the attribute of melody: “Singable songs have memorable melodic lines that step up and down in small intervals or along chord triads” (Design Chart, Week 2). To illustrate this concept, we “point out examples and nonexamples... highlighting similarities and differences.”<sup>128</sup></p>
<p>From the Design Chart: Week 5, “Large Group Quick Talk on Co-Writing Etiquette” should be moved to Week 1.</p>	<p>Originally I thought it would be good for students to stumble along and discover some best practices for co-writing etiquette before revealing the seven points that Village Hymns teaches. However, it serves the students better to give them this information at the beginning of the course, to set the proper tone for class interactions. Policies on classroom decorum and academic discourse help create a learning environment that is free from personal attacks and demonstrations of disrespect.<sup>129</sup></p>
<p>From the Design Chart: Week 5 Learning Activity should be changed from Tool Time (practice with Bible study tools) to Four Step Model for interpreting Scripture.</p>	<p>The Four Step Model is a versatile model that is applicable to routine Bible study as well as worship songwriting. It can be presented using a number of methods: expository, narrative, and graphic organizers. This repetition is not redundant; it employs higher order thinking skills.<sup>130</sup></p>
<p>From the Design Chart: Weeks 1-7 and 11-12 did not specify the articles for Small Group Warm-up. Add titles and links, along with discussion questions, for</p>	<p>Students will benefit from reading the articles, but they will benefit even more when given specific guidance on how to discuss them. “Give groups a specific, structured task with an end product (problem solution, a list of ideas...) to prevent any</p>

<sup>128</sup> Nilson, *Teaching*, 185.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*, 101.

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*, 189.

specific articles that introduce the day's topic.	confusion.” <sup>131</sup>
From the Design Chart, Week 6: Move Summative Project <i>STITCH</i> (combining verse, chorus and bridge written by different groups) back to Week 5, and combine verse/chorus form and call/response form into Week 6.	Performing the song sections allows the students to exhibit products of their learning. <sup>132</sup> The <i>STITCH</i> activity will be more effective and engaging if it closely follows the creation of the song pieces. In addition, a quick deadline motivates students to focus and work efficiently. <sup>133</sup>
All charts: Revise Course Outcome 4 to read, Examine popular worship song lyrics for theological soundness; dominant subject (God? Or me?); and consistency of perspective, metaphor, and imagery.	This revised outcome has more precision than the previous one. <i>Theological soundness</i> is a more consequential attribute of worship songs than <i>major themes</i> . With greater precision of these attributes, students will be able to draft a more useful analysis of a song in the Formative Assessment Paper for Week 10. Analysis is a fourth-level Bloom's task that involves breaking down an item into its components to understand the whole. <sup>134</sup>

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<sup>131</sup> Ibid., 239.

<sup>132</sup> Van Brummelen, *Steppingstones*, 3279.

<sup>133</sup> Nilson, *Teaching*, 239.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid., 49.



## Syllabus Creation

# ***COURSE SYLLABUS***

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## ***NAME OF COURSE: COLLABORATIVE WORSHIP SONGWRITING FOR THE LOCAL CHURCH***

### **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

This course is designed to help students discover and implement best practices for collaboratively creating new worship songs for their churches. The content is research-based and includes insights and methods from Village Hymns, an association of over 150 worship leaders representing dozens of churches in South Florida. After hosting dozens of collaborative songwriting events and recording three CD projects, Village Hymns has learned a thing or two about how to write songs together, songs that their churches can sing together. This course shares their collective wisdom in a 12-week format that gets students actively involved at every step.

### **RATIONALE**

While there are many courses on worship songwriting, only this course has the unique aim of teaching *collaborative songwriting for congregational worship*. Village Hymns ([www.villagehymns.com](http://www.villagehymns.com)) has hosted over 50 CREATE events for collaborative songwriting in South Florida; through this curriculum, you will learn the best practices that have shaped Village Hymns' songwriting culture. Students will learn the practice of co-writing with a small group (3 people) to create new, Scripture-based worship songs that will be useful for worship services in their own church. The goal is NOT to write the next CCLI Top 20 song in this 12-week class; instead, the goal is to learn the PROCESS of building a writing community and using tools and techniques together to create original worship songs for your congregation.

This course combines the following elements:

- a discovery methodology, rather than a didactic approach
- an experiential learning pattern where students experience, reflect, conceptualize, and then **do**
- course content that builds on itself in a logical sequence from simple to complex, from fragments to finished product
- a combination of large-group and small-group activities
- principles and practices that are field-tested

### **I. PREREQUISITES**

- A. Students are actively serving in the worship ministry of their local church as a Worship Pastor or Music Director, or volunteering as a vocalist and/or instrumentalist.
- B. Students have at least basic proficiency in melody and harmony singing.

C. Students have basic Bible knowledge roughly equivalent to a high school or undergraduate Bible Survey course.

## II. REQUIRED RESOURCE PURCHASE(S)

Tozer, A.W. 2017. *Worship: The Reason We Were Created*. Chicago: Moody Publishers.

Wood, Clement, ed. 1992. *The Complete Rhyming Dictionary: Including the Poet's Craft Book, Updated and Expanded*. Revised by Ronald Bogus. New York: Dell.

## III. ADDITIONAL MATERIALS FOR LEARNING

A. Smart phone or laptop computer with audio recording capability

B. Microsoft OneNote app for mobile or desktop (free from office.com) for course materials, notes, and assignments

C. OPTIONAL RECOMMENDED RESOURCES:

1. Sterling, Robert. 2009. *The Craft of Christian Songwriting*. Milwaukee: Hal Leonard. Available on Kindle.

2. Pattison, Pat. 2010. *Writing Better Lyrics*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. New York: Penguin Random House.

3. MasterWriter subscription (\$9.95/month or \$99.95/year)  
<http://masterwriter.com>.

## IV. MEASURABLE LEARNING OUTCOMES

Upon successful completion of this course, the student will be able to:

A. Name the key attributes of a song that make it singable for congregational worship

B. Identify the genres of Scripture that are most useful for creating Scripture-based worship songs

C. Use the call-response and verse-chorus song forms to create new worship songs

D. Examine popular worship song lyrics for theological soundness; dominant subject (God? Or me?); and consistency of perspective, metaphor, and imagery.

E. Arrange new worship songs with three-part vocal harmonies in a key that is optimized for congregational participation.

## V. COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND ASSIGNMENTS

### A. Textbook Readings:

Before each class session (including Week 1), students will complete a Read & Reflect (R&R) assignment; students will read a chapter in Tozer and write a one-paragraph response to a question based on the reading. The schedule of R&R assignments is located in the Class Notebook. Through these assignments, students will be challenged to consider both personal and corporate worship in new ways.

### B. Opening Session (Friday Night): Get Acquainted / Song Share

The course begins on Friday night with a Song Share event. Each student will prepare and present an unknown, original worship song (either one of their own, or one written

by someone else) using a lead instrument (preferred) or MP3 track. A keyboard will be provided. This opening session is a fun way for students to showcase their talents and get acquainted with their classmates.

### **C. Large Group Sessions:**

Each class will include large group time that may include singing well-known worship songs; a brief lecture on the week's topic; and/or a Song Share (class members sing an original song for the whole class).

### **D. Small Group Discussion:**

Each class session will include group discussion and collaborative work. Articles, discussion questions, and illustrative examples will be provided to help students identify and discover key principles for effective collaborative songwriting.

### **E. Small Group Tasks:**

Each class session will also include one or more tasks that the group will perform together, to reinforce the key principles and practice techniques of songwriting. Small groups will present their collaborative work (songs or song fragments) to the large group and/or record a demo.

### **F. Song Analysis Paper**

Students will write a 1-2 page paper analyzing a popular worship song for theological correctness and consistencies in perspective, metaphor, and imagery. Students will cite Scripture passages and at least two outside sources, using proper Turabian format.

### **G. Rules Poster**

Working in groups, students will create a visual (poster or digital graphic) that summarizes rules and best practices for collaborative songwriting (no more than 10 rules).

### **H. Final Video Project:**

Each student will teach a new song to their church in a Sunday service or other meeting venue. This will be recorded on video and uploaded to YouTube (you may post it as Unlisted, rather than Public), and the video link will be shared in the Shared Content section. Each student will also offer three items of constructive feedback on **at least two other students' videos**.

## **VI. COURSE GRADING AND POLICIES**

### **A. Points**

1. Textbook Readings	120 pts (10 pts each)
2. Week 1 Quiz	20
3. Group Work	420
4. Rules Poster	50
5. Song Analysis Paper	50
6. Song Demos (5)	250
7. Song Video	100

8. TOTAL 1,010
- B. Scale
- A = 940–1010 A- = 920–939 B+ = 900–919 B = 860–899 B- = 840–859  
C+ = 820–839 C = 780–819 C- = 760–779 D+ = 740–759 D = 700–739  
D- = 680–699 F = 0–679
- C. Late Assignment Policy: late submissions will be penalized 10% of the earned grade for each week they are late. If you anticipate any problems in submitting work on time, contact the instructor AT LEAST 24 HOURS BEFORE the due date to explain your situation.

## **Collaborative Worship Songwriting for the Local Church**

Weekly Read and Reflect (R&R) Writing Assignments (10 points each)

Text: Tozer, A.W. *Worship: The Reason We Were Created*. Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2017.

Week 1: Chapter 1, “What Happened to Our Worship?”

After reading the chapter, write a paragraph describing the ways of worship that are most familiar to you, and the ways that are more of a stretch for you.

Week 2: Chapter 2, “Failing God”

After reading the chapter, write a paragraph detailing how you agree or disagree with Tozer’s assessment of the church – is it still true today?

Week 3: Chapter 3, “The Reason We Exist”

After reading the chapter, write a paragraph describing your own experience of God: an encounter, an insight, a trial, a healing, an important lesson, or some other experience.

Week 4: Chapter 4, “True Worship Requires the New Birth”

After reading the chapter, write a paragraph in response to Tozer’s thoughts about the fear of God.

Week 5: Chapter 5, “Worship as He Wills”

After reading the chapter, write a paragraph reflecting on one of the types of wrong worship (Cain, Samaritan, pagan, nature) that you have observed or offered.

Week 6: Chapter 6, “Worship He Who is Majestic and Meek”

After reading the chapter, write a poem that contrasts the meekness and majesty of God.

Week 7: Chapter 7, “Awed by God’s Presence”

After reading the chapter, write your own first-person account of Isaiah’s encounter with God. Use descriptive words, employing all five senses.

Week 8: Chapter 8, “Genuine Worship Involves Feeling”

After reading the chapter, write a paragraph reflecting on how you feel when you worship God.

Week 9: Chapter 9, “Worship Like the Seraphim”

After reading the chapter, write a paragraph reflecting on your passion for serving the Lord.

Week 10: Chapter 10, “Worship Every Day of the Week”

After reading the chapter, write a paragraph reflecting on how you could naturally worship God throughout the week.

Week 11: Chapter 11, “Worship Our Beloved”

After reading the chapter, write a poem that contrasts the sorry state of our world with the beauty and wonder of our Beloved.

Week 12: Recap

Choose a chapter or passage that was especially meaningful to you and write a paragraph explaining why.

## Appendix B: Questions for Interview with VH Leadership

### Vision & Philosophy of VH

What are the key principles, activities, and commitments that characterize Village Hymns?

### History of VH

When did Village Hymns begin?

Who came up with the idea of Village Hymns?

In the early stages, *what needs* did you see among worship leaders and churches that you wanted to meet?

What were those *first songs* that you began swapping and singing at each other's churches?

- What was special about those songs?
- How were they received in the other churches?

How did the word get out about what VH was doing?

Growth in last 4 years: First album had about 20 worship leaders; now there are 150, from 54 churches. How has this growth changed the way you "do" Village Hymns?

### Activities and Strategies of VH

CREATE events

How do CREATE events fit into the vision/strategy of VH?

How many CREATE events has VH hosted?

Where do these events take place?

What is the *structure* of a CREATE event?

Has that structure changed/evolved over time?

If so, how has it changed, and why?

Did any of the songs on VH recording projects originate from CREATE events? If so, which ones?

Describe how collaborative songwriting happens at CREATE events.

What *ground rules* have stirred up the most (or best) creativity in CREATE events?

What (if any) songwriting principles, techniques, and/or approaches do you teach at CREATE events?

What songwriting tools do you use at CREATE events? In your own songwriting?

How often should worship leaders *introduce new songs* in their congregations?

With 1 being least valuable and 3 being most valuable, how would you rank and compare the value of new songs that originate

- From sources outside the church and region (the church at large)?
- From sources within the region (South Florida)?
- From within your church/network?

What methods do you use (and teach) for introducing new songs to your congregations?

- Share a personal testimony about the song
- Share the song story (an event or insight that inspired the songwriter to write the song)

- Talk about specific lyrics in the song (how they relate to Scripture, a theme, or a sermon)
- Teach sections of the song (i.e., chorus or bridge first)
- Perform (or lead the congregation singing) the song in several services
- Other methods (specify) \_\_\_\_\_
- None of the above

*Best and worst* outcomes from past CREATE events?



## Appendix C: Survey for CREATE Participants

# Village Hymns: A Case Study (C)

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Start of Block: Event Feedback

### Consent Document

(Please read the entire document before continuing to the survey.)

#### **Title of the Project:**

Village Hymns: A Case Study

#### **Principal Investigator:**

Craig Osterhus, candidate for Master of Arts in Music and Worship, Liberty University

#### *Invitation to be Part of a Research Study*

You are invited to participate in a research study. In order to participate, you must be 18 years of age or older; you must be serving in the worship ministry of a church in South Florida; and you must have experience leading or actively participating in collaborative songwriting efforts within your church or church network (your church/network may or may not be affiliated with Village Hymns). Taking part in this research project is voluntary.

Please take time to read this entire form and ask questions before deciding whether to take part in this research project.

**What is the study about and why is it being done?** The purpose of the study is to document best practices for collaborative songwriting, based on the efforts of Village Hymns and their CREATE songwriting events in South Florida. These best practices will be used to create a collaborative worship songwriting curriculum suitable for church worship teams and other songwriting groups.

**What will happen if you take part in this study?** If you agree to be in this study, I would ask you to complete the following questionnaire. It should take 30-40 minutes.

#### **How could you or others benefit from this study?**

Participants should not expect to receive a direct benefit from taking part in this study.

Benefits to society may include an increase in public awareness of the activities of Village Hymns and the sharing of best practices for collaborative worship songwriting by means of the resulting curriculum project.

#### **What risks might you experience from being in this study?**

The risks involved in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks

you would encounter in everyday life.

**How will personal information be protected?**

The records of this study will be kept private. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records.

Participant responses will be anonymous.

Data will be stored on a password-locked computer and may be used in future presentations. After three years, all electronic records will be deleted.

**Is study participation voluntary?**

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

**What should you do if you decide to withdraw from the study?**

If you choose to withdraw from the study, please exit the survey and close your internet browser. Your responses will not be recorded or included in the study.

**Whom do you contact if you have questions or concerns about the study?**

The researcher conducting this study is Craig Osterhus. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact him at (919) 760-9516 and/or [costerhus@liberty.edu](mailto:costerhus@liberty.edu). You may also contact the researcher's faculty sponsor, Dr. Keith Currie, at [kacurrie2@liberty.edu](mailto:kacurrie2@liberty.edu).

**Whom do you contact if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?**

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall Ste. 2845, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at [irb@liberty.edu](mailto:irb@liberty.edu).

**Your Consent**

Before agreeing to be part of the research, please be sure that you understand what the study is about. You can print a copy of the document for your records. If you have any questions about the study later, you can contact the researcher using the information provided above.

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Q1 Choose a response below.

- I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study. (1)
- I DO NOT wish to participate in the study. (2)

*Skip To: End of Survey If Choose a response below. = I DO NOT wish to participate in the study.*

---

Q2 Are you 18 years of age or older?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

*Skip To: End of Survey If Are you 18 years of age or older? = No*

---

Q3 Are you currently serving in the worship ministry of a South Florida church?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

*Skip To: End of Survey If Are you currently serving in the worship ministry of a South Florida church? = No*

---

Q4 Have you attended at least one CREATE songwriting event sponsored by Village Hymns?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

*Skip To: End of Survey If Have you attended at least one CREATE songwriting event sponsored by Village Hymns? = No*

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Q5 Approximately how many CREATE events have you attended?

- 1-3 events (1)
  - 4-6 (2)
  - 7 or more (3)
- 

Q6 Have you ever contributed an original song of your own at a CREATE event?

- Yes (1)
  - No (2)
- 

Q7 Have you ever collaborated on a new song at a CREATE event?

- Yes (1)
  - No (2)
- 

Page Break

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Q8 What do you enjoy most about CREATE events?

\_\_\_\_\_

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Q9 Are there any songs, insights, or experiences from past CREATE events that are especially memorable for you? If so, please give examples.

\_\_\_\_\_

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Q10 Have the CREATE events lived up to your expectations? Please explain.

\_\_\_\_\_

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Q11 Have the CREATE events impacted your spiritual life? If so, in what way(s)?

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Q12 Have the CREATE events impacted your worship leading ministry? If so, in what way(s)?

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Q13 Have the CREATE events helped you become a better songwriter? If so, in what way(s)?

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Page Break

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Q14 Have you ever introduced an original worship song to your church, one that you wrote by yourself?

Yes (1)

No (2)

---

Q15 Have you ever introduced an original worship song to your church, one that you co-wrote with others?

Yes (1)

No (2)

---

Page Break

Q16

What methods have you used to introduce new songs to your congregation? Choose all that apply.

- Someone shares a personal testimony about the song (1)
- Someone shares the song story (an event or insight that inspired the songwriter) (2)
- Someone talks about specific lyrics in the song (how they relate to Scripture, a theme, or a sermon) (3)
- Worship leader teaches sections of the song (i.e., chorus first) (4)
- Perform (or lead the congregation singing) the song in several services (5)
- Other methods (specify) (6)
- 
- None of the above (7)
- 
-

Q17 Some worship songs we hear once or twice and they don't seem to stick, while other songs get adopted as favorites. Which of the methods listed below would help your congregation learn and adopt a new worship song? Choose one or more from the list.

- Someone shares a personal testimony about the song (1)
- Someone shares the song story (an event or insight that inspired the songwriter) (2)
- Someone talks about specific lyrics in the song (how they relate to Scripture, a theme, or a sermon) (3)
- Worship leader teaches sections of the song (i.e., chorus first) (4)
- Perform (or lead the congregation singing) the song in several services (5)
- Other methods (specify) (6)
- 
- None of the above (7)

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Page Break

Q18

Is there anything else you would like to share about Village Hymns or collaborative songwriting?

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End of Block: Event Feedback

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## Q8 - What do you enjoy most about CREATE events?

What do you enjoy most about CREATE events?

Collaboration between churches!

The atmosphere and being around people from other churches.

The community.

The collaborative creative process of writing worship songs that are expressions of the local community.

seeing the unique and different expressions of how other worship leaders praise and adore to the Father

The practice of creating, hearing and experiencing the creativity of others

The best part is getting to collaborate with other worshipers!

Inspiration! A new musical direction for me.

Meeting fellow ministry leaders who share the same passions and creating together on behalf of our region specifically.

writing with others.. experience

shared experience, unity, writing with purpose from Scripture

Great chance to network with other artists that are passionate about the Gospel.

Gathering with likeminded individuals & the fellowship

Getting together with other creative believers to see what their process is like/

Collaborating with others

The community aspect of creating music together

Pure form of worship

The ability to join with other worship leaders from differing church cultures to collaborate on worship music written by the local church, for the local church.

Meeting other worship leaders from the area!

The unity. It is so amazing to be a part of a network of other worship leaders and musicians from all across South Florida. Each participant brings a unique perspective and flavor that truly represents and reflects the body of Christ

When many people are contributing their perspectives behind one idea, the song reaches a new level of creativity and uniqueness. I love hearing what people come up with.

I love hearing the creativity of everyone involved. I love meeting new people who serve at other local churches! It's a great time to connect and collaborate.



**Q9 - Are there any songs, insights, or experiences from past CREATE events that are especially memorable for you? If so, please give examples.**

Are there any songs, insights, or experiences from past CREATE events that are especially memorable for you? If so, please give examples.

Creating Christmas music last year. I loved being able to see the lyrical, melodic, and conceptual strengths come out from everyone--and no two people were the same.

The time we wrote a song together but separating it into different sections and putting it together at the end.

The ones that tuned into worship were the most memorable.

No specific moments.

At one particular event, we broke into four or five groups, and every group wrote a song on the same topic (a specific aspect of God's character), and then each group played their subsequent songs. It was really beautiful to see such different perspectives, various musical styles, and absolute creativity--even though everyone was writing about the same thing! Such a reminder that our God is endlessly inspiring.

Great to meet with others in the similar positions, - It's encouraging.

I have loved observing and learning from other people's writing styles. I have been able to incorporate them into my own writing.

writing with very talented people

We all wrote on the same passage of Scripture. To make this work we had to write in the same meter and key (4/4, C major) while everyone split up into 4 groups. Group one's task was to write V1 based on two or three verses from the passage. Group two wrote V2 based on the next couple Bible verses. Group three and four wrote the chorus and bridge. When we came back together we had a brand new song, based directly out of Scripture, written by over 14 people in less than an hour, represented by 12 different churches... and it worked! It was encouraging to us as writers in a collaborative effort but also as Christians encountering the Gospel together.

Loved how the song "What Height" came together at the very first Village Hymns CREATE I attended.

We wrote a song based off of psalm 63 and I feel it's very relevant to this time!

I went to one of the first creates and I felt that there was a good collaboration and a great explanation of the process.

One group wrote a bridge that was just one line "This is why we worship" and the whole room was singing and harmonizing. I think we got so into it because we were in awe of the many reasons why we are thankful to God.

I got to cowrite City Lift Church first song at a CREATE and just how it raised spirits in the room.

Na

- being challenged in my own song-writing abilities - being taken out of the "elements" of my musical and lyrical tendencies - expanding my lyrical vocabulary for writing worship music  
One particular experience I had was an occasion when I arrived late to a virtual song-writing

event. I had written down the incorrect time, and therefore showed up with about 30 minutes left of a 2-hour event. I was placed into one of the breakout groups that was tasked with writing a new verse and chorus. Much had already been worked on and established, but I was asked to spend some time thinking on the last two lines of the working chorus. I was able to quickly establish a couple lines of rhyme that both fit the melodic needs of the song AND tied in to the theme that was the goal of the song at the outset. It was an incredible experience to have the opportunity to quickly ingrain into the mental working process of a new group of worship leaders, and be able to contribute a few syllables at the end of the project that ended up making the final cut. It was very revealing to me of the fluid nature that exists when like-minded disciples of Jesus come together with the common goal of worship Him with a new song.

---

I'll be honest, the songs don't necessarily stick with me beyond the times regularly. Maybe it's the groups I'm in, maybe it's me. Probably a bit of both! But what I do take away from these times is the opportunity to hang out with like-minded creatives and worship leaders.

---

The most recent CREATE event was the most memorable for me. The group of Worship Leaders I was paired with got together to write a song about racial reconciliation and God's heart for the marginalized. It was an eye-opening experience.

---

I love the bonding that happens when people combine their ideas and creative energy to make a great song.

---

When a great song is written and everyone joins in, singing harmonies and worshipping that is an incredible moment for me!

**Q10 - Have the CREATE events lived up to your expectations? Please explain.**

Have the CREATE events lived up to your expectations? Please explain.

Absolutely. The unity and creative success that have come from them are always right on the target.

Yes. It's been the most successful writing sessions with outside churches.

They are great. They really help with learning how to Co Write

Yes.

yes

No. Each event I have attended has exceeded my expectations.

I love the premise of getting together solely for the purpose of studying and learning new ideas about worshipping the Lord through music.

Yes. They are always both fruitful and fun!

yes...find more talented musicians from different areas of music and different backrouds

yes. It's always good to join with Christians of all experience levels and use songwriting as a way to meditate on God's goodness toward us. Even when it's hard or it feels like a "throw-away song," I always leave more encouraged than I did before.

Definitely. I count the team as friends and love the work they are doing to pave the way to a unified songwriting front in South FL.

Yes, but wish we can meet up more often !

Yes, there is a part of me that would like to see more one on one work. Realizing that CREATE is not set up that way

They're better than I expected! I thought I would be shy or nervous, but I find that myself and others opening up and being vulnerable as we collaborate on songs.

They have surpassed my expectations. It brought out a community of worship leaders that I did not know I needed

Yes

Absolutely. They always result in music that is readily singable. Most events include "song shares" at the end, and it is almost impossible to find oneself quickly learning a new melody and singing along with songs that have been written literally moments before. It's very telling of how music and worship tie in so closely to our "imago dei" that we can use our creativity to come up with songs that encourage the collective group to worship almost immediately.

In a way yes! But as explained above, more so from a relational point of view.

The CREATE event hasn't only lived up to my expectations, it has exceeded them. The Village Hymns has become more than just a songwriter collective. Each of these people have a special place in my heart. They are my family and some of my closest friends.

Yes. Co-writes sound intimidating, but CREATE events have proved themselves to bring people together and create great music.

Yes, these events have really served to spark my creativity and keep me accountable to writing

**Q11 - Have the CREATE events impacted your spiritual life? If so, in what way(s)?**

Have the CREATE events impacted your spiritual life? If so, in what way(s)?

Perhaps. I think the John 17 aspect of it is the best part.

Yes; it's shown me the beauty of unity and what God's desire is for the Church.

Learning how to work with others. Learning is one thing but also pouring into others for the same cause, writing for the local church.

Yes. It inspired me to use my gifts more often to worship and honor God, and to understand better how to use music to edify the Church.

inspired my personal times of worship

Yes! They have encouraged me to be more collaborative, which has meant trusting God more and relying on myself less.

I like focusing on the composition of tunes and lyrics that are scriptural. It's refreshing.

Yes. They have allowed me to develop relationships with other leaders who are seeking to know God's heart and encourage me in my calling. I also have experienced true worship through the process of pondering the Lord together in songwriting.

always in music.. brings you closer to God...

It's discipleship through song.

They're good for my soul. An encouragement in tough ministry seasons.

Yes, encouraged me to go deeper with relationship.

Yes, not deeply but in the moment it has allowed me to meditate on scripture through music.

Yes, we usually focus on a scriptural topic. The songs we choose help us to meditate and dig into the word and analyze the meaning of a relationship with God. Often it helps in the memorization of scripture as well.

Yes It's allowed me to look at scripture in a different way to look for language to add to song

Confirmed God's presence in all we do

They have helped me grow both spiritually as a Christian, and mentally as a song-writer.

The relationships I have formed through meeting and being vulnerable with other worship leaders has helped me in my spiritual life.

Definitely. Some of these people have become my mentors in the faith. They have encouraged me, disciplined me, and have pointed me to the beauty of Christ when I failed to do it on my own.

They help me realize the importance of community and even vulnerability.

I am encouraged by the people I write with- I love hearing their insights about the word and hear about their faith.

**Q12 - Have the CREATE events impacted your worship leading ministry? If so, in what way(s)?**

Have the CREATE events impacted your worship leading ministry? If so, in what way(s)?

Prompting me to employ different styles of worship, or different approaches to congregational shepherding.

Absolutely. Just being around leaders of other churches has shown me the gaps in my own ministry.

Yes. It gives me direction to work with my team in the same way.

I am not a worship leader.

created more excitement for diversity within the way we lead worship and the songs we sing

Yes! The events have allowed me to connect with worshipers and worship leaders from all different churches and denominations. I've been challenged to step outside the bubble of my church community and experience how much of the rest of South Florida worships. Through cowriting, I'm able to catch different glimpse of God's heart through diverse people, deepening my understanding of Him. This has both challenged and encouraged me in ways beyond my ability to express.

Mainly helped keep me enthused and excited about worship music.

They have inspired me to incorporate more original music into my worship leading ministry.

of course...the music the feeling

yes. encouraged me to write more on my own, share and sing the songs that others have written, and never underestimate the power of a person or groups voice when communicating the Gospel through song.

Definitely. New songs to use, learning from how people outside my normal bubble lead, write, and live.

Changed my outlook on something's as a worship leader.

If i were still the main leader in my ministry i think it would, its impacted more of my personal time in music.

I've gotten to share some of the songs written during CREATE events with my home church!

Yes Its allowed me to look for mentorship and friendship in the road of ministry

There are many moments of fluidity that can and should be encountered in atmospheres of worship. CREATE events have helped me fine-tune a sensibility to the movements and inspirations of the Spirits in both corporate and private worship times.

Not quite as much directly.

The CREATE events have helped my worship leading ministry by being a network that I could rely on and gleam from. Whenever I have had a question about anything, I have never felt alone because of this network. There have always been people willing to take the time to teach me what they've learned so that my worship ministry could thrive.

It reinforces the idea that we are to "sing to the Lord a new song". It is a means of personal expression of worship, and it pleases God.

---

Yes, they make me feel like I belong to a community of worship leaders and I'm not just doing Sunday mornings by myself!

**Q13 - Have the CREATE events helped you become a better songwriter? If so, in what way(s)?**

Have the CREATE events helped you become a better songwriter? If so, in what way(s)?

By being exposed to other people's styles.

I would say so. Every time I write with a different person I see their process and the way they think about ideas and words, which helps me.

Yes because co writing is a hard thing to learn. This helps build a foundation for that.

I believe so, even just attending a couple of CREATEs. Observing how others engage in their process of songwriting taught me a lot.

taught new practical ways to approach songwriting

Yep. I'm a firm believe that creativity breeds creativity; in other words, the more we pursue creative endeavors and glean from / collaborate with others along the way, the richer the end product will be. Sometimes, that end product is a beautiful song that might never have been written; but even better is when the end product is a shift in our own heart. I've experienced both in the CREATE events, and I'm thankful for the new songs but even more thankful for the people whose unique expressions have deepened my own.

Well, I didn't write before so I can only get better.

Yes! I have learned so much from the other writers about song crafting and have been inspired to follow through and bring songs to completion.

starting to...learning better ways forms of songwriting.. etc

yes. being able to write with other people helps (if you get stuck in personal writing). But it also helps you go straight for the heart of the song because of the time crunch.

Of course. Writing with others pushes you to think outside yourself and be challenged by their ideas that you would never come up with. Its a stretching experience.

The creates encouraged me to write more.

Yes, it's provided a process.

These events have given me the freedom to just come up with a wide range of ideas and put them on the table, to try things and not fear failure, and to glean inspiration from other songwriters!

Yes. Its allowed to add more language and add more perspective to my writing

Yes, Exposed to more.

My grasp of lyrical and melodic analysis has improved dramatically. Specifically, I've become adept at identifying songs that contain weak or hastily-written lyrics. I have also developed an ear for understanding how choruses should lift and sustain songs, and where melodies can be improved to better serve the emotional goal of a given song.

They get me to approach songwriting different than I typically would.



Absolutely. The CREATE events always inspire me, especially when I am completely uninspired to write. Watching people create and present songs they have written motivates me to do the same. There have been lessons and ideas more experienced songwriters have shared with me that have helped me to think differently about the songwriting process.

---

Yes, listening to different perspectives and songwriting methods help me to think outside the box.

---

I have learned to throw all ideas out, not to hold anything back and to keep moving if I get stuck. The time frame of only 1 hour is really helpful!

**Q18 - Is there anything else you would like to share about Village Hymns or collaborative songwriting?**

Is there anything else you would like to share about Village Hymns or collaborative songwriting?

Keep it up. It's one of the greatest things happening in South Florida!

so much fun! such a fantastic community!!

I'm grateful for all the people who have poured their hearts into making Village Hymns a reality. We need CREATE events in Miami!

Again, I love the premise. I really like the opening lesson. I hope it stays on track and remains strictly a gathering of musicians and worship teams encouraging each other in their creative endeavors. There is nothing like it!

Village Hymns is an encouragement and inspiration in my ministry life. I'm so grateful that this vision is being carried out with such diligence and excellence.

awesome vibes awesome people

Go JA!

Really grateful for Julie Anne, Josh, Adam and crew for all the ways they have ministered to my heart. They have been such an encouragement to me and my team at FC.

Village Hymns is a great outlet for worshippers, musicians, believers and so on. I'm grateful and thankful for VH and I look forward to more Creates in the future!!

I love to see the unity in the church that comes about because of these CREATE events! I hope to see multiplication in the global church of this model.

It's a wonderful mission that seeks to carry out a vision of worship being more than just the top tracks on Christian radio written by ministries thousands of miles away. I believe it essential for all local churches to develop the ability to analyze their contexts and not only incorporate popular and historical worship songs into their congregational worship, but also write songs for their local church that allow for unique expressions of worship.

So grateful for the community and the unifying effect it is having on the South Florida region!

I love the Village Hymns. As I have said before, not only have these people helped and encouraged me to be a better songwriter, they have become some of my closest friends and incredible mentors in the faith. Jesus has used, and is continuing to use this organization to impact South Florida like never before.

Village Hymns' heart for unity really shines through the CREATE event. You're invited to join an environment where your voice matters and you get join with others to worship God.

It's been so life-giving to me!

## Appendix D: Survey for Worship Directors

# Village Hymns: A Case Study (D)

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Start of Block: Event Feedback

### Consent Document

(Please read the entire document before continuing to the survey.)

#### **Title of the Project:**

Village Hymns: A Case Study

#### **Principal Investigator:**

Craig Osterhus, candidate for Master of Arts in Music and Worship, Liberty University

#### *Invitation to be Part of a Research Study*

You are invited to participate in a research study. In order to participate, you must be 18 years of age or older; you must be serving in the worship ministry of a church in South Florida; and you must have experience leading or actively participating in collaborative songwriting efforts within your church or church network (your church/network may or may not be affiliated with Village Hymns). Taking part in this research project is voluntary.

Please take time to read this entire form and ask questions before deciding whether to take part in this research project.

**What is the study about and why is it being done?** The purpose of the study is to document best practices for collaborative songwriting, based on the efforts of Village Hymns and their CREATE songwriting events in South Florida. These best practices will be used to create a collaborative worship songwriting curriculum suitable for church worship teams and other songwriting groups.

**What will happen if you take part in this study?** If you agree to be in this study, I would ask you to complete the following questionnaire. It should take 30-40 minutes.

#### **How could you or others benefit from this study?**

Participants should not expect to receive a direct benefit from taking part in this study.

Benefits to society may include an increase in public awareness of the activities of Village Hymns and the sharing of best practices for collaborative worship songwriting by means of the resulting curriculum project.

#### **What risks might you experience from being in this study?**

The risks involved in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks

you would encounter in everyday life.

**How will personal information be protected?**

The records of this study will be kept private. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records.

Participant responses will be anonymous.

Data will be stored on a password-locked computer and may be used in future presentations. After three years, all electronic records will be deleted.

**Is study participation voluntary?**

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

**What should you do if you decide to withdraw from the study?**

If you choose to withdraw from the study, please exit the survey and close your internet browser. Your responses will not be recorded or included in the study.

**Whom do you contact if you have questions or concerns about the study?**

The researcher conducting this study is Craig Osterhus. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact him at (919) 760-9516 and/or [costerhus@liberty.edu](mailto:costerhus@liberty.edu). You may also contact the researcher's faculty sponsor, Dr. Keith Currie, at [kacurrie2@liberty.edu](mailto:kacurrie2@liberty.edu).

**Whom do you contact if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?**

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall Ste. 2845, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at [irb@liberty.edu](mailto:irb@liberty.edu).

**Your Consent**

Before agreeing to be part of the research, please be sure that you understand what the study is about. You can print a copy of the document for your records. If you have any questions about the study later, you can contact the researcher using the information provided above.

---

Q1 Choose a response below.

- I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study. (1)
- I DO NOT wish to participate in the study. (2)

*Skip To: End of Survey If Choose a response below. = I DO NOT wish to participate in the study.*

---

Q2 Are you 18 years of age or older?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

*Skip To: End of Survey If Are you 18 years of age or older? = No*

---

Q3 Are you currently serving in the worship ministry of a South Florida church?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

*Skip To: End of Survey If Are you currently serving in the worship ministry of a South Florida church? = No*

---

Q4 Do you have experience leading or actively participating in collaborative songwriting efforts within your church or church network?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

*Skip To: End of Survey If Do you have experience leading or actively participating in collaborative songwriting efforts wit... = No*

---

For the purposes of this survey, the term “church” may describe either a local church congregation or a network of churches.

---

Let's begin with a few questions about the earliest songs written from within your church since you began serving there...

---

Q5 What was special about those songs?

---

Q6 How were they received by your congregation?

---

Q7 How has songwriting grown and expanded within your church since then?

---

Page Break

---

For the purposes of this survey, the term “church” may describe either a local church congregation or a network of churches.

---

Q8 Have you hosted collaborative songwriting (CS) events as a church?

Yes (1)

No (2)

*Skip To: Q36 If Have you hosted collaborative songwriting (CS) events as a church? = No*

---

Q9 How do CS events fit into the vision/strategy of your worship ministry?

---

Q10 How many CS events have you done as a church?

- 1-3 events (4)
- 4-6 (5)
- 7 or more (6)
- 

Q11 Where do these events typically take place? Choose all that apply.

- At our church (3)
- At an off-site location (4)
- 

Q12 How would you describe these events?

- Structured and predictable (4)
- Structured and unpredictable (5)
- Unstructured and unpredictable (6)
- Unstructured and predictable (7)
- 

Q13 Has your structure changed or evolved over time? If so, how has it changed, and why?

---

Page Break

---

For the purposes of this survey, the term “church” may describe either a local church congregation or a network of churches.

---

Q14 Has your church recorded any original songs for distribution on CDs or online streaming platforms (iTunes, Spotify, etc.)?

Yes (1)

No (2)

*Skip To: Q4 If Has your church recorded any original songs for distribution on CDs or online streaming platforms... = No*

---

Q15 Were any of those recorded songs birthed at a collaborative songwriting (CS) event?

Yes (4)

Maybe (6)

No (5)

---

Page Break

Q16 Describe how collaborative songwriting (CS) happens at your church.

---

Q17 What ground rules have stirred up the most (or best) creativity in your CS events or activities?

---

Q18 What (if any) songwriting principles, techniques, and/or approaches do you teach to your team?

---



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Page Break

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Q19 In your opinion, how often should worship leaders introduce new songs to their congregations?

▼ At least one new song every week (25) ... At least one new song every 12 months (29)

---

Q20 Have you ever introduced an original worship song to your church, one that you wrote by yourself?

Yes (1)

No (2)

---

Q21 Have you ever introduced an original worship song to your church, one that you co-wrote with others?

Yes (1)




No (2)

---

Page Break

---

Q22 How would you rank and compare the value of new songs that originate from these sources?

	Less valuable	Valuable	More valuable
	1	2	3
From within your church ( )			
From sources within the region ( )			
From sources outside the church and region ( )			

---

Page Break

Q23

What methods have you used to introduce new songs to your congregation? Choose all that apply.

- Someone shares a personal testimony about the song (1)
- Someone shares the song story (an event or insight that inspired the songwriter) (2)
- Someone talks about specific lyrics in the song (how they relate to Scripture, a theme, or a sermon) (3)
- Worship leader teaches sections of the song (i.e., chorus first) (4)
- Perform (or lead the congregation singing) the song in several services (5)
- Other methods (specify) (6)
- 
- None of the above (7)

---

Page Break

Q24 Some worship songs we hear once or twice and they don't seem to stick, while other songs get adopted as favorites. Which of the methods listed below would help your congregation learn **and adopt** a new worship song? Choose one or more from the list.

- Someone shares a personal testimony about the song (1)
- Someone shares the song story (an event or insight that inspired the songwriter) (2)
- Someone talks about specific lyrics in the song (how they relate to Scripture, a theme, or a sermon) (3)
- Worship leader teaches sections of the song (i.e., chorus first) (4)
- Perform (or lead the congregation singing) the song in several services (5)
- Other methods (specify) (6)
- 
- None of the above (7)

---

Page Break

Q25

Is there anything else you would like to say about collaborative songwriting, from your experience?

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End of Block: Event Feedback

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Appendix E: CREATE Workshop Handbook



CREATE  
Workshop  
Handbook

## Village Hymns: Who We Are

Sometimes, it takes a single spark in the heart of one that God uses to spread something impactful to a community. The vision of Village Hymns began four years ago inside the heart of a local South Florida worship leader.

Josh Bramos pulled together a small group of worship leader friends who wrote songs for their churches. Each of us had something in common: we were writing songs for our church contexts and leading them on Sunday mornings right alongside mainstream worship songs and hymns.

We found that there were themes that were rising up from pulpits and our church communities that needed to be put into song. And so that's what we did! We opened God's word and kept our churches and our community stories in mind as we wrote and led songs. As we began to share the songs with other worship leaders, something amazing started to happen. We began to swap our songs and sing them at each other's churches. We found that these songs began to resonate within our local congregations, and we started to sing these songs of our city.

As our community songs began to spread, we decided that we would make an album to celebrate the songs that God had given us. At that time, we were about 20 worship leaders strong. Fast forward to today—we have 150 worship leaders from 54 different churches. We've made a second album and are working on our third, narrowing down 64 song submissions from dozens of local leaders.

We started organically with a heart to encourage songwriters to write skillfully for their local churches. Currently we host three monthly songwriting workshops called CREATES. Over the past two years, we've hosted 32 CREATE workshops in which worship leaders and songwriters have learned songwriting mechanics and spent time co-writing and growing in relationship with like minds from all different denominations. These monthly writing groups have served as a space for multi-church collaboration, have broken down comparison and competition, and have brought about a spirit of unity in our local area.

This year, we began to see the need for even deeper community and soul care for worship leaders. Our heart is not just for new songs to be written and sung but also for worship leaders to be made new and have personal revival in their hearts. At the end of the day, the vision of Village Hymns is to see vibrant worship fuel a revival in South Florida. Our mission has always been to inspire and equip worship leaders to not only be creative but also to be healthy as they lead their churches in authentic worship.

We've had the joy of partnering with Church United over the past few years. Village Hymns regularly leads the worship at Church United gatherings. We also partnered with Church United in hosting two Worship Leader Gatherings this year where we talked about the importance of personal private worship, valuing our families, having deep accountability in our upfront roles, and making sure that our gifting never substitutes for good character. Our third album focuses on the things that Church United and Village Hymns share in common: prayers for unity, repentance, a move of the Spirit, and Gospel revival. We long to see God's kingdom come in

South Florida, and our prayer is that God would awaken His church once again to love Him passionately and love those whom He loves.

We have some exciting things ahead and believe that God is just getting started with the ministry of Village Hymns. I came on as the first full-time staff member of Village Hymns in July. As a leadership team (Josh Bramos from West Pines Community Church and Adam Pizarro from Riverside Church), we have been prayerfully casting vision for this next season. We have begun an eight-week internship program for worship leaders who desire intensive training within a local host church, and we're also launching a mentorship program for worship leaders who are actively serving in music ministry and would like to grow musically, spiritually, or in their leadership skills.

We know that God has always been the one writing the story of Village Hymns, and we can't wait to hear the songs and see the stories of His faithfulness to His Church in South Florida.

-Julie Anne Vargas  
*Creative Director of Village Hymns*

## Section 2: What is A CREATE?

A CREATE is a monthly workshop made up of local worship leaders who want to grow in songwriting/co-writing and desire to be a part of a creative community. The CREATE leader facilitates these monthly gatherings and invites other worship leaders in their local area to participate. A successful CREATE is one where songwriters feel energized by writing with each other and leave the workshop with a deeper sense of community among each other.

### CREATE Co-Writing Etiquette

We believe something special happens when songwriters collaborate. Being in the writing room with other co-writers can spark ideas and synergy that otherwise wouldn't have otherwise emerged. However, creative minds have the potential to clash as differing opinions and tastes arise. We desire to honor and love each other as we work to create songs for the church. Here are some tips to make the process more effective and enjoyable.

#### 1. Come with an open heart ready to write

Preparing your heart to be open and honest with other writers can seem scary, but it is a great way to prepare for a co-write. Great songs written for God's kingdom come from the stories we hold and the testimony of Christ in our lives, so come to the co-write just as you are - and bring an open heart with you!

#### 2. Respect and trust what your fellow co-writer has to offer

Each writer, beginner or professional, has ideas to contribute. Instead of viewing each other through a lens of skill, view each other through a lens of kindness and equality, valuing each person in the room.

#### 3. Be open to new ideas and creative suggestions

The beauty of songwriting is that you are creating something brand new. There are a million different possibilities for how the song could form, and that's what makes it fun! Bounce around different chord progressions, melodies, and lyrics. Try different combinations and rhythms. Are there three melody ideas for one chorus? Try them all and see which one sticks! Trying out new ideas is part of the process.

#### 4. Give positive reinforcement

If an idea is given during a co-writing session, address the elements you like first. Then, try it out or offer ideas on how to develop it more. Refrain from judgement, as it's all a work in progress.

#### 5. Don't shoot ideas down

Negativity can halt the creative process. Take every thought captive to make it obedient to Christ (2 Corinthians 10:5.) Although it is important to trust each other to speak up if you think an idea doesn't fully fit the song, it is critical that it is done in a loving,

edifying way.

**6. Let the song develop along the way**

The song may develop differently than you imagined in the beginning, but that's okay! Once the writing ball is rolling, the song may develop and change on its own throughout the process.

**7. Plan next steps**

Some songs are written and completed in one writing huddle, but many take multiple sessions to complete. If your group is passionate about the song that has been written so far, plan to meet up in the future to finish it!

Co-writing can be daunting at first, but it is an extremely valuable tool to the songwriter. You'll gain new perspectives, learn different songwriting techniques, and grow as a writer in the process!



## CREATE Checklists

These checklists are intended to make it easy for a CREATE leader to put on a CREATE workshop in their church. Feedback is always appreciated to make things run smoothly!

### One week out prep:

- Text/call your group to ask if they're coming and give logistics of time/location

### Day of prep:

- Print Sign In sheet, CREATE co-writing guide/Who We Are for new people, and any other lesson handouts needed
- Set up writing rooms according to the number of people who RSVP'd
- Coordinate coffee for the group
- Play VH albums in main space (if applicable)
- VH Graphic on the screens (if applicable)

## Workshop

### Post Event follow up:

- Send pic of sign in sheet to Julie Anne: [jvargas@villagehymns.com](mailto:jvargas@villagehymns.com)
- Upload all lyrics/voice memos/videos/pics to Google Drive folder
- Text a "thank you" to each worship leader who came
- Text VH team (Josh, Adam, Julie Anne, and Seth) with quick celebration recap and one improvement to make for next month's CREATE

## Sample Workshops Introduction

These are 6 CREATE workshops that have been successfully led by Village Hymns CREATE leaders. The checklists at the beginning and the end of the workshops are a part of the CREATE process but the workshop content can be adapted to fit the style or vision of the CREATE Group leader. There are three workshops based on lyrical THEMES and three workshops based around songwriting MECHANICS. Use as you find them helpful! The goal is to provide a "concept of the day" and an assignment for the writing groups.

## CREATE Workshop 1 (Theme)

- Have everyone sign in
- Coffee/hang out for 15 minutes
- Upcoming announcements (next month's CREATE date and/or events) and recaps
- What is Village Hymns: Village Hymns serves to connect area worship leaders across denominations and encourage them in songwriting for worship in their local churches
- Introductions: name, church, how is songwriting going personally & for your church?
- Pray
- Go through lesson and assignment (10 mins tops)

### Theme: REVIVAL

Today I want us to talk about revival. What is it? How does it start? = **with us**.

**The cycle of God's people has always been:** Love/worship of Him, Falling prey to idols/distraction/sin, Seeing/feeling the brokenness, Repentance/ asking for forgiveness  
God's salvation/redemption/mercy, Our response = worship (**and then starts again**)

The purpose of God's redemption is to create worshippers. The church brings the Gospel to the Nations by our example of worship. Missions exists because worship doesn't. If the church isn't worshipping God, we have nothing to offer a broken world. We need to wake up and come back to genuine worship of Jesus. Only then will we be able to see restoration in our hearts and then in the world.

**Assignment:** Each group writes a verse/chorus on these revival passages:

Psalm 85:6, 2 Chron. 7:14, Psalm 51:10, Acts 3:19-20, Ephesians 5:14, Acts 1:8

\*Groups pick the key and time signature

- Break into groups and give Google Drive link to all
- Write for 45mins-1 hr
- Playback in main space getting voice memos of the songs
- Close in prayer
- Group photo

## CREATE Workshop 2 (Theme)

- Have everyone sign in
- Coffee/hang out for 15 minutes
- Upcoming announcements (next month's CREATE date and/or events) and recaps
- What is Village Hymns: Village Hymns serves to connect area worship leaders across denominations and encourage them in songwriting for worship in their local churches
- Introductions: name, church, how is songwriting going personally & for your church?
- Pray
- Go through lesson and assignment (10 mins tops)

### Theme: BROKENNESS & HOPE

#### **BRAINSTORMING SESSION: (Get whiteboard and markers)**

Let's have a discussion:

1. What is the brokenness of our city? **Write a heading called "Brokenness" and list things under it**
2. What are the song themes that speak to that brokenness? **Write a heading called "Hope" and list things under it**

#### **Assignment:**

-The groups are assigned a theme from the "hope" section

-Pick a key & time signature for your group

-Invite everyone to a shared google doc to put their song lyrics/chords into

- Break into groups and give Google Drive link to all
- Write for 45mins-1 hr
- Playback in main space getting voice memos of the songs
- Close in prayer
- Group photo

## CREATE Workshop 3 (Theme)

- Have everyone sign in
- Coffee/hang out for 15 minutes
- Upcoming announcements (next month's CREATE date and/or events) and recaps
- What is Village Hymns: Village Hymns serves to connect area worship leaders across denominations and encourage them in songwriting for worship in their local churches
- Introductions: name, church, how is songwriting going personally & for your church?
- Pray
- Go through lesson and assignment (10 mins tops)

**Theme: THE CROSS**

**Object Writing Handout:**

<https://drive.google.com/open?id=1kJI6ykuSFaS1s2Vpgr2yQjhACVObnqbR>

- 1. Take 5 minutes to object write about the cross. Use all 5 senses**
- 2. Split into groups and write different parts of one song**

**Group 1: Verse**

- **What drove Christ to the cross?**

**Group 2: Chorus**

- **Finished Work of Christ**

**Group 3: Bridge**

- **Praise of Christ for the Cross**

Chose Key, Time signature and BPM

- Break into groups and give Google Drive link to all
- Write for 45mins-1 hr
- Playback in main space getting voice memos of the songs
- Close in prayer
- Group photo

## CREATE Workshop 4 (Mechanics)

- Have everyone sign in
- Coffee/hang out for 15 minutes
- Upcoming announcements (next month's CREATE date and/or events) and recaps
- What is Village Hymns: Village Hymns serves to connect area worship leaders across denominations and encourage them in songwriting for worship in their local churches
- Introductions: name, church, how is songwriting going personally & for your church?
- Pray
- Go through lesson and assignment (10 mins tops)

### Mechanics: POINT OF VIEW

#### Perspectives Handout:

[https://drive.google.com/open?id=1gfvVEfAMD2fgRnFF4a\\_8ehYGunV8\\_7ng](https://drive.google.com/open?id=1gfvVEfAMD2fgRnFF4a_8ehYGunV8_7ng)

1. Third person narrative
2. First person narrative
3. Direct address

If we were being really technical, we would keep the same perspective throughout. However, worship songs are generally written to be very interactive and often switch perspectives in a chorus or bridge. A country or pop song would have a way easier time keeping a third person throughout but a worship song often switches perspectives in a new section. The most important principle is not to switch perspectives in the middle of a section.

#### **Assignment:**

Each group writes a full song (verse, chorus, bridge) with these perspectives

1. Group 1 - First person narrative "I..."
2. Group 2- First person narrative "we..."
3. Group 3- Direct address "You..."
4. Group 4- Third person narrative "He..."

#### **Pick a theme, key, and time signature for your group**

- Break into groups and give Google Drive link to all
- Write for 45mins-1 hr
- Playback in main space getting voice memos of the songs
- Close in prayer
- Group photo

## CREATE Workshop 5 (Mechanics)

- Have everyone sign in
- Coffee/hang out for 15 minutes
- Upcoming announcements (next month's CREATE date and/or events) and recaps
- What is Village Hymns: Village Hymns serves to connect area worship leaders across denominations and encourage them in songwriting for worship in their local churches
- Introductions: name, church, how is songwriting going personally & for your church?
- Pray
- Go through lesson and assignment (10 mins tops)

### Mechanics: MELODY

#### Melody Handout:

<https://drive.google.com/open?id=1IBwWPTj8RZv6gm3s96wAMFPXkECU1w0J>

- **3 types of melody** (Ascend, Descend, Repeat)
  - **Example** 10,000 Reasons
    - “Bless the Lord” (ascend) “O my soul” (descend)
  - **Example** What a Beautiful Name
    - “What a beautiful name it is” (repeated melody)
- **How to create contrast in music** section
  - 1. Change level of melodic line (make chorus higher in pitch/intensity than verse)
    - **Example** “O Praise The Name” (low melodic verse/ higher chorus)
  - 2. Change the length of the musical phrase (short/long phrases)
    - **Example** “Good, Good Father” (stretched out melody on verses, busier on chorus)
  - 3. Change the rhythm pattern (straight/syncopated)
    - **Example** “Build My Life” (Chorus- syncopated “Holy, there is no one like You...” and Bridge- straight “I Will Build My Life...”)

#### Writing Assignment:

1. Write a full song- Verse, Chorus, Bridge using the principles of melody that we learned
  2. Passage- Psalm 34
  3. Key/Time Signature- optional
- Break into groups and give Google Drive link to all
  - Write for 45mins-1 hr
  - Playback in main space getting voice memos of the songs
  - Close in prayer
  - Group photo



## CREATE Workshop 6 (Mechanics)

- Have everyone sign in
- Coffee/hang out for 15 minutes
- Upcoming announcements (next month's CREATE date and/or events) and recaps
- What is Village Hymns: Village Hymns serves to connect area worship leaders across denominations and encourage them in songwriting for worship in their local churches
- Introductions: name, church, how is songwriting going personally & for your church?
- Pray
- Go through lesson and assignment (10 mins tops)

### Mechanics: RHYME SCHEME

#### 1. Rhyme schemes

-True rhymes

-False rhymes

#### AABB

*You wrote a letter and You signed Your name  
I read every word Read it page by page  
You said that You'd be coming Coming for me soon  
Oh my God I'll be ready for You*

#### ABAB

*I want to run on greener pastures  
I want to dance on higher hills  
I want to drink from sweeter waters  
In the misty morning chill  
And my soul is getting restless  
For the place where I belong  
I can't wait to join the angels  
and sing my heaven song*

#### ABCB

*You didn't want heaven without us  
So Jesus, You brought heaven down  
My sin was great, Your love was greater  
What could separate us now*

#### Ephesians 2

14 For he himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, 15 by setting aside in his flesh the law with its commands and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new humanity out of the two, thus making peace, 16 and in one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to



death their hostility. 17 He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. 18 For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit.

19 Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God's people and also members of his household, 20 built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. 21 In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. 22 And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.

\*Co-writing Exercise: Write a portion of a collective song:

-Key of G maj

-4/4 time

-78 bpm

-Use one of the three rhyme scheme structures

**How the passage divides up:**

**Verse 1&2**

**Chorus**

**Bridge**

- Break into groups and give Google Drive link to all
- Write for 45mins-1 hr
- Playback in main space getting voice memos of the songs
- Close in prayer
- Group photo

**Appendix F: Village Hymns Songs****Song Catalog**

Format:

Song Title

Album name

Featured Artist

Release Date

Writers / PROs / Percentages

Copyright Registration Certificate

ISWC and ISRC codes

CCLI numbers

All Glory Be to God

Village Hymns, Vol. 1

Sung by Grace Coleman

2017

ISRC: TCADU1830854

CCLI #: 7101402

Writers:

Grace Coleman

Anchor

Village Hymns, Vol. 2

Sung by Seth Carter

2018

CCLI #7112567

ISRC: TCADU1830584

Writers:

Seth Carter,

Winner Olmann

Tyler Sherrod

As It Is in Heaven

Village Hymns, Vol. 1

Sung by Adam Pizzaro

2017

ISRC: TCADU1830857

CCLI #:7098447

Writers:

Adam Pizzaro

Josh Bramos

Come and Make Us Free

Village Hymns, Vol. 1

Sung by Julie Anne Vargas

2017

CCLI #7027946

ISRC: TCADU1830861

Writers:

Julie Anne Vargas

Zac Hicks

God the Spirit

Village Hymns, Vol. 1

Sung by Josh Bramos

2017

CCLI #7098891

ISRC: TCADU1830858

Writers:

Josh Bramos

Julie Anne Vargas

Grace Coleman

He Alone Is Worthy

Village Hymns, Vol. 2

Sung by Danny Luis

2018

CCLI#: N/A

ISRC: TCADU1830581

Writers:

Danny Luis

Josh Varnadore

He Has Won

Songs of Our City

Sung by Bobby Bemis

2019

CCLI#: N/A

ISRC: TCAEN1968096

Writers:

Josh Bramos

Julie Anne Vargas

Adam Pizzaro

Bobby Bemis

Winner Olmann

Holy One

Village Hymns, Vol. 2

Sung by Jamie Jacob

2018

CCLI#: N/A

ISRC: TCADU1830589

Writers:

Jamie Jacob

Lord You Reign

Village Hymns, Vol. 1

Sung by Terrence Gooden

2017

CCLI #7097894

ISRC: TCADU1830862

Writers:

Terrence Gooden

Move Again

Songs of Our City

Sung by Stanley Pierre

2019

CCLI#: N/A

ISRC: TCAEN1968302

Writers:

Julie Anne Vargas

Stanley Pierre

Josh Bramos

Adam Pizzaro

Revive Us

Songs of Our City

Sung by Claire Osborn

2019

CCLI#: N/A

ISRC: TCAEN1968348

Writers:

Winner Olmann

Adam Pizarro

Joshua Raucci

Tasha Theoc

Dailyn Wallace

Strong and Courageous

Songs of Our City

Sung by CeCe Mahfood

2019

CCLI#: N/A

ISRC: TCAEN1968121

Writers:

Jamie Jacob,

Josh Bramos

There Will Be Joy

Village Hymns, Vol. 2

Sung by Jessica Busboom

2018

CCLI#: N/A

ISRC: TCADU1830657

Writers:

Steve Villafane

Adam Pizzaro

Terrence Gooden

Jon Alvarez

Josh Bramos

United

Songs of Our City

Sung by Winner Olmann

2019

CCLI #7133629

ISRC: TCAEN1968361

Writers:

Winner Olmann

Jonathan Acosta

Christian Rodriguez

Tyler Sherrod

Unsinkable

Single

Sung by Josh Bramos

2019

CCLI#: N/A

ISRC: TCAEN1911547

Writers:

Josh Bramos

Bobby Bemis

Tim Ehrhart

Roby Barnes

Julie Anne Vargas

Adam Pizzaro

You Alone We Praise

Village Hymns, Vol. 2

Sung by Jessica Busboom

2018

CCLI #6498711

ISRC: TCADU1830586

Writers:

Jessica Busboom

Jennie Mahood

## As It Is In Heaven [B]

[Adam Pizarro] by Adam Pizarro, Josh Bramos

### INTRO:

**B**

### VERSE 1:

**Bsus B**

God of gracious measure

**E G#m F#**

Hallowed is your name on High

**Bsus B**

Come thou fount of fa- vor

**E G#m F#**

Haste your hand of Mercy Over Us

### CHORUS 1:

**B/D# E F# B/D# E F#**

As it is in Heaven let your kingdom come

**B/D# E F# B**

As it is in Heaven let your kingdom come

### VERSE 2:

**Bsus B**

Have mercy on us fa- ther

**E G#m F#**

Turn our to eyes righteousness

**Bsus B**

Lead us from all vi- ces

**E G#m F#**

So we can see your Glory over us

### CHORUS 2:

**B/D# E F# B/D# E F#**

As it is in Heaven let your kingdom come

**B/D# E F# B**

As it is in Heaven let your kingdom come



**BRIDGE:**

**E** **B**  
 Glorious the day when you shall reign  
**E** **B**  
 When every mind remade to sing your praise  
**E**  
 How the earth awaits to be made new  
**B/D#**  
 And all the saints are found in you  
**C#m** **B/D#** **E** **F#**  
 Come Lord Jesus, come Lord Jesus, come Lord Jesus **(REPEAT)**

**CHORUS 4:**

**E** **F#** **B/D#** **E** **F#**  
 As it is in Heaven let your kingdom come  
**B/D#** **E** **F#** **C#m** **B/D#** **E**  
 As it is in Heaven let your kingdom come

**CHORUS 5:**

**F#** **E** **F#** **B/D#** **E** **F#**  
 As it is in Heaven let your kingdom come  
**B/D#** **E** **F#** **B**  
 As it is in Heaven let your kingdom come

**OUTRO:**

**E** **F#** **B/D#** **E** **F#** **B/D#** **E** **F#** **B** **(REPEAT)**

Song video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rRTN22k-OPw>

# God The Spirit [E]

[Josh Bramos, Julie Anne Vargas, Grace Coleman]

## INTRO:

**C#m A E B/D# (REPEAT)**

## VERSE 1:

**C#m A**  
 Oh Father hear our plea  
**E B/D#**  
 As we're hidden in your son  
**C#m A**  
 Your spirit is with us  
**E B/D#**  
 Inviting us to come

## PRE-CHORUS 1:

**C#m A**  
 Open our hearts with your good news  
**E B/D#**  
 Speak hope to the poor, bind up the wounds  
**C#m A**  
 Bring freedom's song as we sing  
**E B**  
 Oh God the Spirit this is our plea

## CHORUS 1:

**E**  
 Oh that men will fall in awe of your great name  
**C#m**  
 That our hearts begin to weep for the burdens you proclaim  
**A C#m B**  
 That sin would be crushed as the dust under our feet  
**A C#m B**  
 Come, Spirit move, we await for your release so  
**A C#m B A**  
 Come and move in us, Spirit move in us, come and move in us  
**C#m B**  
 We await for you oh God

## INSTRUMENTAL 1:

**C#m A E B/D#**

**VERSE 2:**

We yearn for you to move **C#m A**  
 To see your kingdom come **E B/D#**  
 Breath in us your Spirit once again **C#m A**  
 You can break the hardest hearts of man **E B/D#**

**PRE-CHORUS 2:**

Open our hearts with your good news **C#m A**  
 Speak hope to the poor, bind up the wounds **E B/D#**  
 Bring freedom's song as we sing **C#m A**  
 Oh God the Spirit this is our plea **E B**

**CHORUS 2:**

Oh that men will fall in awe of your great name **E**  
 That our hearts begin to weep for the burdens you proclaim **C#m**  
 That sin would be crushed as the dust under our feet **A C#m B**  
 Come, Spirit move, we await for your release so **A C#m B A**  
 Come and move in us, Spirit move in us, come and move in us **C#m B**  
 We await for you oh God

**INSTRUMENTAL 2:**

**A C#m B (4X)**

**BRIDGE:**

It's the year of your grace **A**  
 So we celebrate our God **C#m B**  
 We long to see the triumph of your hand **A C#m B**

**A**  
 It's the year of your good news  
**C#m B**  
 So we celebrate our God  
**A C#m B**  
 Hear us while we wait for your advance **(REPEAT)**

**CHORUS 3:**

**E**  
 Oh that men will fall in awe of your great name  
**C#m**  
 That our hearts begin to weep for the burdens you proclaim  
**A C#m B**  
 That sin would be crushed as the dust under our feet  
**A C#m B**  
 Come, Spirit move, we await for your release

**CHORUS 4:**

**E**  
 Oh that men will fall in awe of your great name  
**C#m**  
 That our hearts begin to weep for the burdens you proclaim  
**A C#m B**  
 That sin would be crushed as the dust under our feet  
**A C#m B**  
 Come, Spirit move, we await for your release so  
**A C#m B**  
 So pour over us for your presence is our need  
**A C#m B A**  
 Come and move in us, Spirit move in us, come and move in us  
**C#m B**  
 We await for you oh God  
**A C#m B A**  
 Come and move in us, Spirit move in us, come and move in us  
**C#m B**  
 We await for you oh God

**OUTRO:**

**A C#m B (3X)**  
**A C#m B A**

Song video: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vVANp1f\\_IDk](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vVANp1f_IDk)

**DEGREE COMPLETION FORM**

Craig Alan Osterhus

Candidate for the Degree of

Master of Arts

Thesis:       A CURRICULUM FOR TEACHING COLLABORATIVE WORSHIP  
SONGWRITING INSPIRED BY VILLAGE HYMNS

Major Field: Worship and Music Studies

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Personal Data:

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\_\_\_\_\_ (date).

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**ADVISER'S APPROVAL:**