

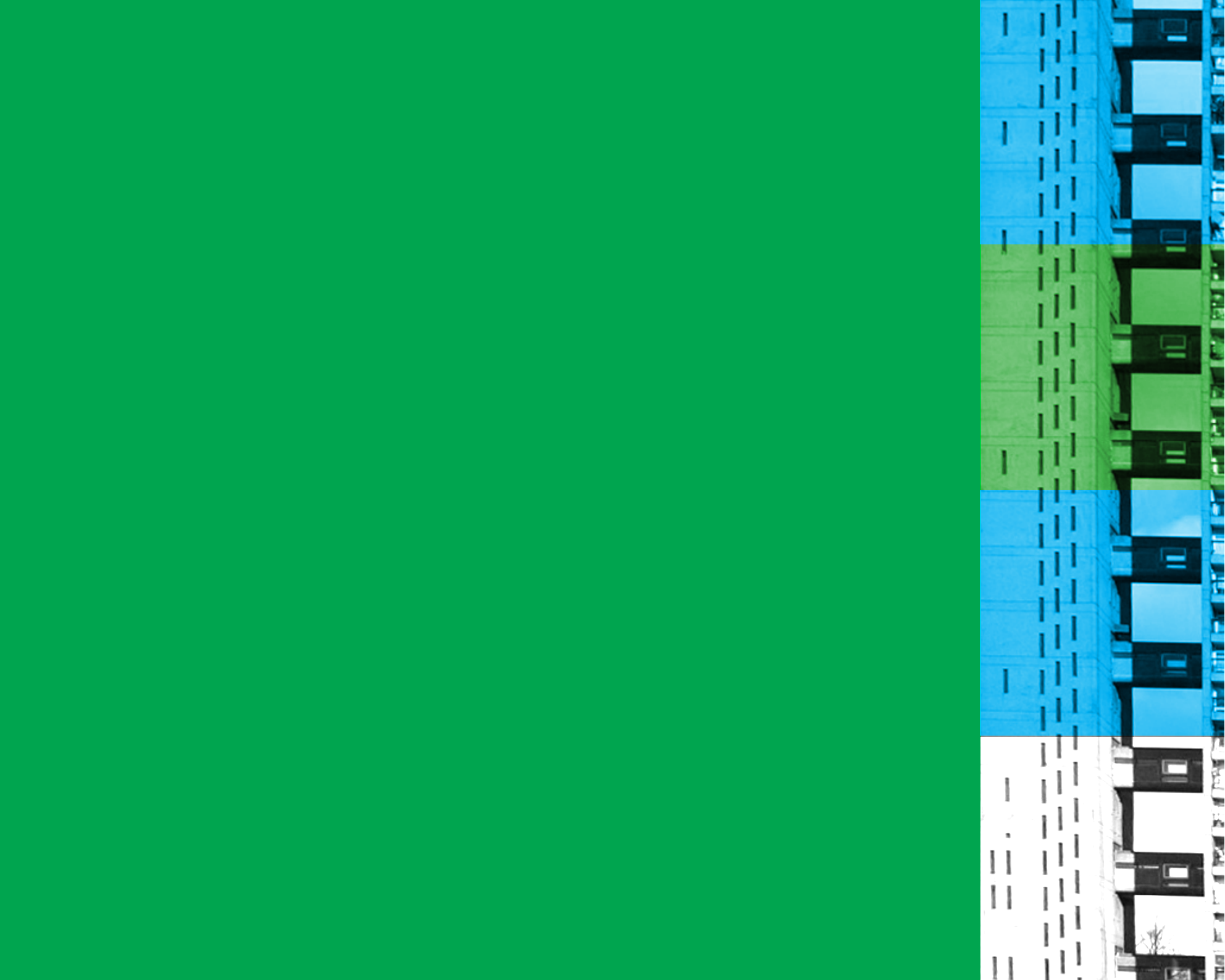
ALOVE+



The Salvation Army for a new generation

I WORSHIP AT THE SALVATION ARMY





WORSHIP 24/7 is a concept and theme that my wife Andrea and I have used a lot recently. We really are trying to live our whole lives as a worship 24/7 offering to God, so that everything we do and everything we say is given to him. It's not always been easy, but this is our goal. It's about trying not to compartmentalise and separate aspects of our life into different boxes, but seeing that God is interested in everything about us and wants us to get the best out of every area of life. We've discovered that by bringing him into all things we get the best out of living. So we would encourage you and hopefully inspire you to do the same, to give your whole life as a worship 24/7 offering to a God who knows what's best for you because he made you. So it makes sense really to make him the focus of everything. I think it's what Paul was trying to say when he wrote: 'So here's what I want you to do, God helping you: Take your everyday, ordinary life – your sleeping, eating, going-to-work, and walking-around life – and place it before God as an offering' (Romans 12:1, The Message). So as you get stuck into reading the stories and testimonies of those featured in this resource, I hope and pray that you will find inspiration to help you live a worship 24/7 life!

Love and prayers,

Mark

**Director of ALOVE UK
and Territorial Youth Secretary**

Introduction - Matt White

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Whilst walking through London one morning I caught a glimpse of a ShortList magazine lying in a puddle. ShortList is a magazine that gets given out free at train and Tube stations in London every Thursday morning. It's filled with film reviews, gadgets, interviews, articles and other brilliant stuff. I'll plan meetings in London specifically for Thursdays just so I can get a copy, and I certainly can't understand why someone would throw one in a puddle. Because the magazine is free they sell a lot of advertising space including the front cover. On this particular edition they'd sold the front cover to a well known holiday and events website. The cover was a picture of a man holding a fish with the tagline: 'Aren't the best stories lived?'

This particular morning I was running late and so I hadn't got my copy at the station. As I rushed down the busy street I was faced with the dilemma of picking up ShortList from the puddle or taking my chances at the next station I passed... I took my chances, and I never got the

magazine. However, the cover has stayed with me ever since. What an interesting question – aren't the best stories lived?

This resource is filled with stories of people from around The Salvation Army and the ways in which they worship. The stories, we hope, will inspire you and provoke you in your worship. As you read about these people we hope you'll be challenged to think in new ways and consider new opportunities for worship... but if that's all you do then we've failed. You see, we don't want you just to read about worship. We don't want you just to think about worship. We want you to live your worship.

And so in this spirit of sharing and story-telling I thought it best to start with part of my own worship story...

Growing up in The Salvation Army, I found a lot of my worship was based around performance. I sang, played and performed in a variety of

settings and groups from a young age. This was how I expressed my worship. For me, music was a key and central part of my worship. I would imagine that it might be the same for you reading this. We're really blessed in The Salvation Army to have so many opportunities to make music that honours and brings glory to God. But it's not the only or best way we can worship. So if music isn't your thing, don't panic as there's lots more in this resource than music... However, it is an important part of my story, and so it's here we begin.

At some point in my young life I was taught that 'you can't bless people with wrong notes'. I can't remember when or from whom I first heard it, but that's not really important as it was a phrase I seemed to hear a lot, and even if it wasn't said explicitly it was always present. It wasn't just music it would be applied to. All sorts of things had to live up to this imaginary scale of blessing: sloppy paintings, forgotten drama lines, mistimed dance steps – I was convinced it was true! I'd make sure to practise my own parts for the band extra hard. I'd make groups I was involved in rehearse two or three times more than needed. I was determined to ensure maximum blessings were received by all those whom I had the chance to bless. It wasn't just me, though. I'd get frustrated if others weren't practising as much as I was. I'd become disparaging about those whose worship wasn't what I considered 'Grade A'.

I'd cast a judgmental eye over everything put before God as an offering to make sure it measured up and could really be a blessing in my eyes. Then something happened...

I was 17 or 18 years old and it was a Sunday morning meeting at The Salvation Army in Bangor in my home division of Ireland. The corps has within it a community of adults called 'The Croft'. These men and women have a variety of conditions that meant they aren't able to live fully independently and so they live within a community in which they can be cared for and looked after according to each of their special needs. Each year at the corps this group would lead a Sunday morning meeting. It was always a great day – there'd be lots of moving moments, lots of funny moments and a real sense of family in that place. This particular Sunday I was in a hurry. I'd been out late the night before playing with an orchestra and I had to lead the singing company that morning. The music wasn't where I wanted it to be, my drums were in the wrong part of the hall and I hadn't really wanted to get out of bed that day. As I eventually sat down in my seat, The Croft got up to sing. The piano started to play, and two of the members, Peter and Maureen, started singing in duet Graham Kendrick's song 'I'm special'. I'd heard Peter and Maureen sing this before a couple of times. They both had great voices, and as they finished the verse and chorus I was impressed that they'd both

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sung it note perfect. The piano played another short intro – and then something incredible happened. All 30 members of this community began singing 'I'm Special'. It's fair to say not everyone in the group had the tune-carrying abilities of Peter and Maureen... in fact I'm not sure anyone else in the group had the tune-carrying abilities of Peter and Maureen. Some of the group couldn't speak or communicate in words, so instead of singing they'd just cry out or groan. Others had great confidence in their singing and so would just loudly sing out whichever random words of the song they could remember.

As the song continued, the group revealed a selection of triangles, tambourines, shakers and other percussion instruments. I don't know if you know 'I'm Special', but it doesn't naturally lend itself to the plethora of percussion on offer that morning. Tambourines were banged, shakers were shook and triangles were dropped at random moments. If people couldn't be blessed with wrong notes then no one would be blessed that morning. Yet as they sang and played I was so deeply moved by their worship that I began to cry. Every wrong note, every groaned lyric, everything they did was being offered back to God from the depths of their hearts as they worshipped that morning. It was a privilege to share in it and I don't think I've ever been the same again.

I was striving for perfection but forgetting I was meant to be worshipping my perfect God. I was aiming at 'right' and getting it all horribly wrong. I realised that morning that worshipping God wasn't about the right or wrong notes; it's about offering everything you've got back to God.

In recent months I've been looking at David from the Bible. He is often said to be 'a man after God's heart' as he seemed to be continuously worshipping God. His Psalms race us through so many emotions that it can sometimes be hard to keep up. In times of difficulty, he worshipped. When life was great, he worshipped. When tough decisions faced him, he worshipped; and even after making monumental errors, he returned to God and worshipped. We know of him as a songwriter or poet, but he was also a musician who entertained kings and princes with his harp. It's easy to forget that he was such a wild dancer that he got reprimanded for his outlandish moves.

As I began looking into David I spent a lot of time considering how he managed to make his worship fit into his everyday life. I wanted to know how you can find space and time to worship when you're a king... or maybe just when you're really busy. I figured that if I looked hard enough I'd find a secret or a tip that would help me make my worship fit more. I'd find ways of finding more time to really worship

God. Perhaps I too could strive to become a man after God's heart if only I knew how. What I discovered has changed everything again. You see, I don't think David did make his worship fit into his everyday life. I wonder if he just lived his everyday life and offered it all back to God as his worship. Romans 12:1 is paraphrased in The Message like this:

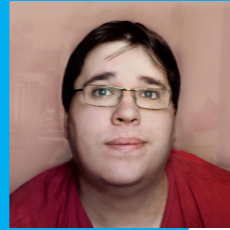
'Now here's what I want you to do, God helping you. Take your everyday, ordinary life – your sleeping, eating, going-to-work and walking-around life – and place it before God...'

Perhaps this is how we truly worship at The Salvation Army. We take every part of our everyday lives and we give them back to God as our living, breathing acts of worship to our perfect God.

These stories are just a snapshot of some of the ways that people in The Salvation Army worship. If you have another way or another story, then please get in touch with us here at ALOVE UK – we'd love to hear from you.

I hope this resource is useful to you as you seek to give back your life as an act of worship. And remember: **the best stories aren't written down or read – they're lived.**

Art - Adam Howie



happening around you, using it as a focus in some way to distil the spirit of that worship into an artwork. It is about being open to the Spirit and allowing him to be involved, and to be sensitive to his inspiration and guiding. It gives an immense feeling of creative freedom in worship as you draw on the creative aspects of God to worship him.

Art can be used to reflect what is inside us. It allows us to explore what we could not, or would not want to, put into words. In a way, art can be our deepest and most open, honest, and even vulnerable prayers, as well as our greatest joys, highest hopes, and purest joys. Art can inspire, challenge, and even provoke thought and emotions. It can be a powerful part of our worship as individuals and collectively.



I'm Adam Howie, I live in Edinburgh and attend Gorgie Corps.

I first got into art as a kid when my parents got me to draw to keep me quiet during the services. As I grew up I kept my love for art but I never did much with it; it remained a constant part of my life, just not one that I focused on. Then in 2006 I had the opportunity to try being an artist full time, so I took the step of faith and started working for myself, rekindling my love not just for creating art but also for studying it.

In 2008 I was asked by ALOVE if I would paint during the youth venue at ROOTS. I was nervous about going as I had never painted in worship before. I had seen people doing it but had never tried it myself, except during some prayer events, and certainly never publicly. The folks at the venue were fantastic and supported me through my nerves. As I painted during the weekend I began to realise something...

I felt more connected in worship than I had in many years. I was more able to let myself go in worship as I painted, to be free and open before God. I was also using my gifts and talents not just for myself but also for others to help them in their worship.

Since then I have painted as a part of collective worship at various corps and divisional events, as well as the 2009 Youth Rally, the week before which I was in Berlin with some other Christian artists who were graffiti/street artists, doing an exhibition. I also tried giving talks/sermons while painting, which is an interesting experience to say the least! Most recently I was invited to paint at Deep Impact, an inter-denominational weekend for youth workers in Aviemore.

Using art in worship is not about the skill or style of the artist, it is not about creating a masterpiece, or the attention. It is about worshipping a creative God through creativity; it is about reflecting the worship that is

Draw your own picture here

Music - Antony Thompson



My name is Antony Thompson.

I am a professional trumpeter working mostly in orchestras, but also in solo performances, recording sessions, TV and radio. It's a nice life! I live in Castleford, near Leeds in West Yorkshire. I have (nearly!) always been a member of Castleford Salvation Army and it was here that I started to play the cornet and joined the junior band and singing company. Having said that, my mum insists that I would kick her in time to whatever music she was listening to during pregnancy, so some musical initiative must have been innate! I've always struggled to separate so-called Christian from secular music – they both use God's creative system, after all. Likewise, I see all my trumpeting these days as worship, no matter what the setting, no matter who composed the music.

More recently I came to a realisation that if I want to be a practising Christian, perhaps I could practise this too. Perhaps I could try

different structures of praying, perhaps I could find ways to support my Bible reading to get more out of it, and perhaps I could free myself from the restraints of printed music – to 'Sing to the Lord a new song!'

When I pray, I try to listen to whatever instincts pop into my head and follow them. Some of these are my instincts and some are of him. However, I often find that God backs up the more important instincts in some way. So it was with worship, when three men approached me together (bandmaster, corps officer, worship group leader) to discuss the possibility of my playing a few 'wrong notes!' Believe me, this is true! The bandmaster said that if I felt something stirring, maybe in the last verse of a hymn for example, maybe I could shut the tune book once in a while and go with it. The worship leader said that when I play with that group, I should feel free to express things that are not necessarily pleasant (much music in worship is sugary sweet, but life is not). The officer gave

me permission even to get it wrong trying, in case it opened up something more of God.

So, those instincts I try to follow when I pray are now also instincts I try to follow when I play in worship!

I'll leave you with some words from my dear friend, Nigel Swinford:

'Worship at its most pure and profound is offering Christ to God. We contemplate Christ, we identify with Christ, ie, consider our redemption, and then we offer all of that to God. We don't offer ourselves; we offer to God what delights him most of all, namely his Son. As musicians we need to keep this in the forefront of our minds. We can get seriously distracted by the idea that we are presenting our performance to God – giving him a concert, if you like. No, our gifts are priestly tools which prepare the sacrifice and they must not distract from the substance of what is offered, which is Christ.'

MUSIC EXERCISE

I realise, dear reader, that this may seem distant from your own experience. But I didn't arrive at this expression suddenly. In fact, I'm still a long way from arriving. It is a journey, but an enjoyable one; and I do have some practical advice. The way I started was to choose some easy and familiar slow worship song. Using your instrument or voice, find a single note that fits

the harmony. If you listen carefully, you'll find that you have the inbuilt ability to spot when it doesn't fit and when it does. At these times, just shift to another adjacent note and back again. It's often a semitone down or a tone up, or vice versa. In our worship group we often use this technique, so I might play in roughly the range of an alto voice, whilst the saxophone or trombone might play in the tenor range.

Finally, the golden rule of improvising in public – if you can't make it better, don't play at all!



Audio Visual - John-Marc Swansbury

My name is John-Marc Swansbury. I live in Herne Bay in Kent and I worship at Herne Bay Salvation Army. For a living I run my own business providing PA and AV services.

I guess it started when I was about eight or nine years old. My dad had a small PA system that would get used at church. One year they did a musical and I helped with setting it all up for the rehearsals. We have also always had a computer at home since I was young and so I had a fascination with that from an early age too. Anything technical, I loved to find out what and why...

Anyway, my family and Salvation Army upbringing provided me with a love of music, and so when the chance came to combine this with technology my hobby was born. A music degree specialising in some more of the practical, technical sides of music as well

as performance aided my learning. I was given the opportunity whilst at university to help the then Mission Team to run events called Passion in the London South East Division as one of the 'techies' and this led me to work at numerous other events like music schools, youth councils, summer schools, youth events, ROOTS and so on. Each occasion allowed me to use my gifts and talents to help other people worship.

At first I didn't realise that I too could worship as a techie, though I knew that providing the mix in the PA system or using multimedia could aid others. However, I soon realised that this wasn't the whole story, and whilst working in the 'Shocking' venue at ROOTS I felt so close to God myself with some of the visuals that I had been playing on the video screens. It seemed so personal to me, more than just pressing 'play' on the video player (a long time ago, I know!). I knew then that this was more than a job, it was almost a calling!

I learnt that so long as what you do is aiming to be pleasing to God, worship is whatever you make it to be. My life now allows me to use my gifts and talents not only in a working environment with my business, but also to worship God and give back to him what he has given me – and also help others in new ways with the use of multimedia.

There are times when the atmosphere at an event is such that God just takes over everything, whether that's the songs that the worship leader is choosing or which video background clip I choose to play. I am very conscious that I allow God to work through me, which allows me to be a part of that worship.

Being a very visual-based person, I am always looking for ways in which media can have a very real impact in worship, even with content that was never created for that purpose. The first clip that springs to mind, and one of the first I can remember using, is the scene from the film *The Shawshank Redemption*. It's when Andy (Tim Robbins) has crawled through a sewer to escape from prison and ends up in a river, running through the rain, and at the end of the scene finds himself clean. The film producers at the time may well have not even thought of how significant this is from a perspective of worship, but the analogy of being dirty, escaping from a prison, crawling through the sewer with all that was in there, and then coming out being cleansed by the rain says so much more in the

minute or so of footage. It is an example of media that seems ordained in a way that, since I first saw it, has allowed me to worship in a way never thought possible before the use of AV.

I appreciate that for some people the use of AV in church is an issue and they feel it detracts from the message. I would be the first to join that queue! That may sound strange, but when I'm training people in the use of a newly installed AV system or when providing workshops / media training classes etc, the first thing I always say through my own experience is that sometimes the most effective use is also the most simple use. Sure, there are times when having a million video screens, the world's largest PA and a lighting rig that could be seen from space is amazing and you are joined with thousands of other worshippers all together with God. But also the simplest method – watching a film clip or listening to a piece of music or just a single photo – can make you feel that much closer to God if the act of worship is in you.



Audio Visual - Exercise



This is an exercise that I have used quite a few times to allow people to worship with the means of audiovisual stimulus. Some people find it hard, others find it easy... unfortunately, time doesn't always allow to just let things take their own course, and so the best way to do this is to try and find a space when you have time!

Requirements:

- 1 x Bible*
- 1 x imagination*
- 1 x blank canvas (not literally, though it can be)*

Method:

Pray that you can enter God's presence.
Find a place where you feel comfortable.
Either with music or in silence...

Watch, draw, paint, photograph, film, doodle, write, think...

You may find that the 'canvas' is still blank at the end, but don't fret! If this is a new exercise and you don't feel particularly creative, keep trying... it's an amazing experience to feel creative in God's presence. After all, it's his creativity in the first place that allows us to be creative. For me, that way is with the use of media, and what it allows me to do is to worship our creator.

A blank canvas

Song Writing - Matt Leeder



My name is Matt Leeder and I live in the sunny suburbs of Chelmsford in Essex.

I've grown up worshipping at The Salvation Army, right through from my roots in Diss, Norfolk, through to my current spiritual home which is CARUS, a new expression of The Salvation Army based in Chelmsford and part of the main Salvation Army corps there.

As long as I can remember I've enjoyed listening to, creating and generally immersing myself in music. I've been in bands since I was 14, and over the years I've created a lot of different noises – some of them good, some of them, well, just nasty really...

Over the past ten years of my life, music and worship have become intertwined into what makes me who I am. I studied music, theology and worship at the London School of Theology, following which I became a member

of the band Electralyte. Over the six years that Electralyte existed we led many people in worship and created songs which we hoped would communicate something of God's character or tell the story of his people.

Over the years I've been involved in many conversations regarding the nature of music and worship. How does a song written by a Christian for the glory of God differ from that of a non-Christian? Both 'works' might equally communicate something of God's character or heart for his creation. So is there a difference? I don't believe there is, although the so-called sacred/secular divide is a theological rut I've found myself stuck in when my guard is down.

Admittedly songs written as 'worship songs' will probably communicate more clearly or succinctly an aspect of God's 'worth-ship', but equally many songs or compositions written by secular artists can (almost accidentally) enlighten us as to God's plan for his creation,

including us. After all, the earth is the Lord's, and everything in it, and art is in the eye of the beholder. In this case the art is the song and we, the beholders, can search for God within it.

As I've grown up, the music I immerse myself in has grown up around me. I've selected a soundtrack for my life, a constant playlist of sounds ready to enhance or refine any emotion which I'm prepared to throw at it. And if there isn't an appropriate song I'll have a go at writing one.

Songwriting is an art. Inspiration can come and go in the blink of an eye. I find that I write best when exploring sounds and chords that move me. Eventually a melody might spill out of me – often before the words have been shaped – and so a new song begins. Messy, untidy and bulky, probably, but ready to be chipped away into something more concise and toned up – literally and metaphorically!

I will never give up on songwriting. Often the songs won't meet anyone else's ears but mine. But they help me to make sense of my faith in a world that often needs a soundtrack.

Songwriting Exercise

The impetus for songwriting can come from so many different directions that I'm amazed more people don't do it. Songs are made up of four key points: lyrics, melodies, harmonies and rhythms. You can start at any one of these starting points and finish at any of the other ones. As long as you visit each point along the way you should have a song by the end.

Try this yourself. If you've never written before, it doesn't need to be a new 'Bohemian Rhapsody', maybe just one or two lines of poetry (lyrics) set to a melody. You'll find a chord to go behind... and then a rhythm. Then mix it up. Swap it around. Play with it... don't plan it. Take it where it goes, and maybe God will show up and take you somewhere amazing in the process.



Social Action - Graeme Hodge

JUSTICE



Growing up in the Philippines gave me a unique insight into life lived in extreme poverty.

I didn't live in poverty myself, but many of my friends did and I was surrounded by an environment which was packed full of people, problems and poverty. As an adult living in Sutton (southwest London, UK) the experiences of my childhood have really motivated me to get involved in social justice.

Anyone can be an activist – literally anyone. But for me it goes a step deeper. I try to be a Christian activist. I feel like there is more than just a moral rationale for getting involved in ending injustice. I feel like there is a call from Scripture, from my faith, from God himself, to get involved in renewing his perfect creation. It's a creation that has been destroyed and exploited, starved and wasted. God calls us to more. It's not enough for me to sing songs or read Scripture about injustice on a Sunday and continue living a life

that doesn't take even the most practical steps to ensure that I live ethically, live in a way that expresses that spiritual call and motivation. At Sutton Salvation Army Church, we have tried to live out this call. This community approach, central to how we express and live out church in our community, helps me massively. It holds me accountable, and it means that 'we're in this together'. We have a fair-trade cafe, we recycle, we profile issues and ask people to get involved, we protest, we pray, we defend and we advocate. We don't always get it right or perfect, but we're trying.

If worship is a lifestyle and God created the world, then surely worship is giving back to God, playing our part in restoring creation – both people and planet. It's not an optional extra; it's intrinsic to living a worship-full lifestyle. To be honest, I can't actually see how you can be a Christian and not be involved in social justice and activism. It doesn't mean you have to tie yourself to a tree and lay in front a bulldozer

– you just have to think about what you buy, what you do, what you say, what you are willing to stand up for. It sounds like a lot, but small changes can have a big impact. 'Walk humbly, act justly, love mercy' – that's what I want for my life, for my family, for my kids, for my church, for my community. That's what I want for you, whoever or wherever you are. Because that's what God wants.

SOCIAL ACTION EXERCISE

Have a look at these clips. I hope they're inspiring and challenging for you.

http://youtu.be/zsnDgznc0_U

a good summary about justice and God from our partners at Micah Challenge.

<http://youtu.be/kCOnsLdRoaE>

a good song outlining Scripture.

<http://youtu.be/tl7otYAcjDI>

a great song about giving freedom to the captives.

<http://youtu.be/WQ-7mITSnI0>

a hero of mine.



Social Action - Claire Whybrow

JUSTICE

Claire Whybrow is a 22 year old instructor at a Christian outdoor adventure centre in Northamptonshire.

She is a soldier at Peterborough Citadel and also worships at Rushden Corps. Here she gives some top tips for getting involved in social action...

The first time I got involved in social action was a response to the Territorial Youth Rally in 2005 focusing on human trafficking. Throughout the day God really spoke to me about standing up for those trapped in slavery and about fighting for freedom. This resulted in my organising a display in a shopping centre and taking part in a café church and school assembly.

At the end of 2009 I visited Chikankata Mission in Zambia, working in some desperate situations, hoping to bless others but being blessed abundantly more myself. I had an

unforgettable time, meeting so many awesome people and experiencing God in a whole new way. This started a link between me and The Salvation Army's International Development UK Department which has allowed me to spend a couple of weeks helping them at THQ and also encouraged me to participate in 'Live Below The Line'.

TOP TIPS

- Keep God at the centre. Pray about where God wants you to serve him.
- Use your passions, skills and experience. Each of us is unique and God has something for us to do to make a difference in our world.
- Join others who share your interests. Social action is a fantastic way to meet other people, share your faith and enjoy yourself.
- Find out what social action projects are taking place in your area and join in. Many of your corps already have programmes for the elderly, young people or the homeless which they would be really excited for you to get involved in.
- Read the Bible to discover why social action is integral to worship: 'What does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God' (Micah 6:8).
- Be creative – there are so many ways in which you can take part in social action whether that be through raising awareness of an issue you are passionate about, offering practical support to vulnerable people or raising money for charity.
- To get involved in social action overseas, contact The Salvation Army's International Development UK Department or visit www.salvationarmy.org.uk/id
- Ask for advice from friends and family to see what might be the best area of service for you.
- Believe in yourself: 'What you do in your corner of the world can really make a difference to the lives of others all around the world.'
- Have fun! Getting involved in social action is an amazing experience and creates unforgettable memories.



Prayer and Fasting - Vanessa Stringer



I live in London where I'm in my second year of training to become a Salvation Army officer.

I love trying out different ways of doing extreme prayer; it doesn't need to be boring with everyone falling asleep in a circle! You might have already tried some different ways of praying by being a part of a 24/7 prayer week, or going on a prayer walk.

Fasting is one way of bringing my relationship with God into everyday life, seeing more of his power at work in the things I care about and getting closer to his heart. I love it because it's radical and hard-core in a world where most things are made as easy as possible.

I first tried fasting when I was 8 years old and took part in a sponsored 24 hour fast to raise money and pray for famine victims in Africa. I was doing really well until I had some cheese on toast at lunch time, but it really made me

think about children in other parts of the world who couldn't just eat when they wanted to.

My next experience of fasting was about 10 years later. I was reading Richard Foster's book 'Prayer' and was really excited and challenged by how he described fasting, not as some self torture device, but as a way to cut out all distractions and priorities and really show God you mean business. I can't say it was fun, but I decided to start giving it a go and fast once a week for a while, and occasionally for longer periods of time when I felt convicted to really see God at work in particular situations.

Since then I've seen God answer prayer in some amazing ways, bring answers to problems I couldn't see any way round, and have seen people meet Jesus. Sometimes it hasn't seemed like anything has happened at all, but I've become closer to God and then later discovered that he's been sorting everything out without my knowing.

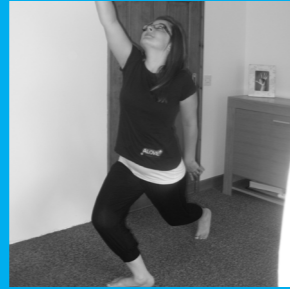
It can be tempting to see fasting as a sort of spiritual blackmail: 'God if I don't eat, will you heal my pet bunny...' but it doesn't work like that. It's more than voluntary starvation. What it does do is make me realise how vulnerable I am and how actually, I can't make anything happen by myself. In a lot of situations I'm weak and powerless; but in fasting I remember that I'm communicating with the God who created heaven and earth and raised the dead, and that he can do immeasurably more than I can ever ask or imagine (Ephesians 3:20). Fasting says, 'this thing that I'm praying about is more important to me than how I feel and I'm passionately committed to seeing something done about it.'

If you want to try it out, here are a few ideas:

- Have a particular focus for what you're praying for – it helps you keep motivated.
- Start fasting after your evening meal and then end with a celebratory dinner the next night, it makes 24 hours seem a lot shorter.
- The point is connecting with God, not starvation. When you get hungry use it as a reminder to pray.
- Block out time in your day to pray, e.g. times when you would have been eating.
- Try fasting TV, Facebook, your mobile... whatever will help you give more time and attention to what God is doing in the world and what he wants to say to and through you.



Dance - Sara-Jayne Blair



My name is Sara-Jayne Blair. I am 24, I am married to Chris Blair and we have a beautiful two-year-old son called Malachi.

I am currently living in Norwich after having spent four years living in Cornwall. I attend a Salvation Army outreach unit on the Dussindale estate in Norwich where I help out in numerous ways, including at our kids club where I teach some of the children dance at the end of each session.

I first started dancing when I was two years old! I spent most of my childhood dancing, learning ballet, tap and contemporary dance. I passed a lot of grades, did lots of shows and entered a few competitions. But I decided to give this up when I was 16 after failing to get through a tough audition. However, I found a new opportunity to dance within The Salvation Army. At the time I was attending Ipswich Citadel and one of our youth leaders, Emma,

was a dancer. She started up a dance group and we had a great time learning some fun dances and performing them to the church. Emma was the first person who showed me that I could use dance as a form of worship. Watching her dance it was always so obvious that she was connecting with God and using her talent for his glory. She was an inspiration and a great role model to me.

So I continued to dance, and now regularly use it as an act of worship. Something that is important to me is knowing the biblical grounding for dancing in worship. Dance is referred to throughout the Bible as an act of celebration, in mourning and in praise and worship. (See for example Ecclesiastes 3:4; 2 Samuel 6:13-15; Exodus 15:19-21; Psalm 149:2-4.)

Before I come to prepare a dance I always spend time praying and asking God to guide me with how I choreograph it and to ensure that

he is at the centre of why I am dancing. For me, dance is not about being perfect or performing but about connecting with God, just dancing for him even if I mess up! Often dancing is a way of communicating a message. It might be in the lyrics of the song or just in the way you dance. It's important not only to worship for yourself but also to be aware that you are also leading others into a time of worship.

Often I might only be dancing at home and worshipping there. But over the last few years I have danced in church services, I have co-led a dance school in Falmouth at the local high school, and for the last three years I have led dance at a Salvation Army summer school. I also had the opportunity to dance whilst out on a mission trip in the Czech Republic, and this was great since everyone could experience the dance and enter into worship no matter what language they spoke.

Any opportunity to dance is a privilege; anyone can dance and anyone can glorify God. I am by no means a professional, but God still uses me and I am very blessed by that.

DANCE EXERCISE

Put on a quiet piece of music, preferably with no lyrics, and think over some names of God (you could search some videos on YouTube to aid you with this) – such as King, Healer, Provider, Everlasting or Prince of Peace. Choose names of God that have a relevance to you.

Think about what these words might look like in a movement or a still pose. Put five or so of these poses or movements together, and you will have a short dance sequence worshipping God for what he means to you.



Sport - Sarah-Jane Alley



I live in Brockley, South East London and love where God has placed me in this amazing city.

I began attending Deptford Salvation Army soon after moving to the UK from Australia as it is my closest corps. I moved to London to take up a position at THQ as the More Than Gold Coordinator. In this role I encourage corps and centres to think about ways they can engage with the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games. There is also an emphasis on sports ministry within the territory, helping people to understand the importance of sports within our country and how through it we can share Jesus with others.

I praise God for blessing me with this job. When applying I could see how over the past 10 years he has really had his hand on my life preparing me 'for such a time as this'. In 2000 during the Sydney Olympic Games, I was involved with More Than Gold coaching at church

sports clinics. This led to further training in sports ministry, as well as opportunities to serve on mission teams at the Manchester Commonwealth Games, Athens Olympic Games and the Cricket World Cup in Jamaica.

My family are all quite sporty and I have early memories of playing 'footy' (which in New South Wales is Rugby League!) with my brothers in the backyard. When I was 9 I started playing netball with a club and played at representative level for my town when I was a teenager. At school I was in every sports team, not so much because I was good at it but because I loved it and actually liked the training involved. I have always been fascinated with the human body and as my faith has grown I am more and more in awe of the God who created our bodies to be able to do so many amazing things!

I don't see my sport, training or fitness as being separate to any other part of my 'worship'. God has gifted me specifically in this way and

my most intense times of worship are often while I am moving, running or playing. I love listening to my fave worship songs on my iPod while running. Sometimes I cannot help but raise my hands in praise to my Creator God while pounding the pavement or running the trails. This is also my most intimate prayer time and when I really hear from God. He speaks to me through my gifting and it is where I am most inspired.

Before a game of netball I always pray for the Holy Spirit to be with me and fill me with his peace, joy and wisdom. I pray that I may display Christ on the court through my words, responses and actions. I play with the intention of being the best player on my team not just in ability but in attitude. I want team mates, opponents and spectators to see a difference in the way I play and in the way I respond to the referee, other players and the result. I congratulate and praise good play even if it is by the other team. God created them also with skill and loves watching us all enjoy what he has gifted us to do! When I feel myself getting frustrated or overly aggressive (because it's OK to be aggressive and competitive) I say to myself "Christ in me" over and over so that I remember who and what I am playing for.



Top Tips

While putting this resource together we wanted to get as much input as we could, so every time we bumped into someone at THQ or out and about we asked them for a top worship tip or thought – and we've printed them below:

- Worship takes on many different forms; don't limit yourself to one set worship style or action. Try new things to see what works best for you! I once read that if you worship for 60 minutes and it takes you 59 minutes to come into God's presence, then the time is not wasted.
- Take a verse of Scripture – put it in your own words – meditate on the verse before your move off into worship – see where your thoughts lead you.
- 'Worship' means (by one translation of the Greek) to 'come forward to kiss'.
- Prayer is an act of worship!
- Whatever way you choose to worship, your aim should always be the same – showing God his worth to you.
- Worship doesn't necessarily need to be an action; it could be silent contemplation.
- Worship has to be identifiable, engaging, invigorating and vibrant. God deserves our best and he has made us each to be different, so our expression, by nature, needs to be diverse. Every time you engage in worship, look for a 'magic five minutes' where you feel God can speak to you clearly and abundantly. In giving wholeheartedly you will receive immeasurably.
- 'But the time is coming – indeed it's here now – when true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth. The Father is looking for those who will worship him that way' (John 4:23 NLT).
- Here are two quotes from a Henri Nouwen talk about prayer more than worship but my top tip is to try and see my whole life as a prayer/worship – it's an ongoing dialogue with God where we can bring all that we are and every area of our life before God.

Prayer is first of all listening to God. It's openness. God is always speaking; he's always doing something. Prayer is to enter into that activity. ... Convert your thoughts into prayer. As we are involved in unceasing thinking, so we are called to unceasing prayer. The difference is not that prayer is thinking about other things, but that prayer is thinking in dialogue, ... a conversation with God.

To pray, I think, does not mean to think about God in contrast to thinking about other things, or to spend time with God instead of spending time with other people. Rather, it means to think and live in the presence of God. As soon as we begin to divide our thoughts about God and thoughts about people and events, we remove God from our daily life and put him into a pious little niche where we can think pious thoughts and experience pious feelings. ... Although it is important and even indispensable for the spiritual life to set apart time for God and God alone, prayer can only become unceasing prayer when all our thoughts -- beautiful or ugly, high or low, proud or shameful, sorrowful or joyful -- can be thought in the presence of God. ... Thus, converting our unceasing thinking into unceasing prayer moves us from a self-centred monologue to a God-centred dialogue.

CONTACT

We really hope this resource has inspired you in your worship. Don't forget that these stories are just a few of the ways you can express your worship. So add your own stories by contacting us. You can email

alove@salvationarmy.org.uk

or 'Like' us on Facebook and put your story on our wall. We'd love to hear from you.

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