

“For the Lord is good; His steadfast love endures forever.” Psalm 100:5a



Christian

KINGS COUNTY NewsMagazine

DEAR
NOELLE
SEEKING AFTER
God's wisdom



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VOLUME 2 ISSUE 9

“A Voice for the Christian Community”

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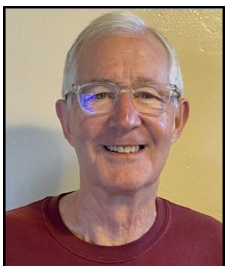


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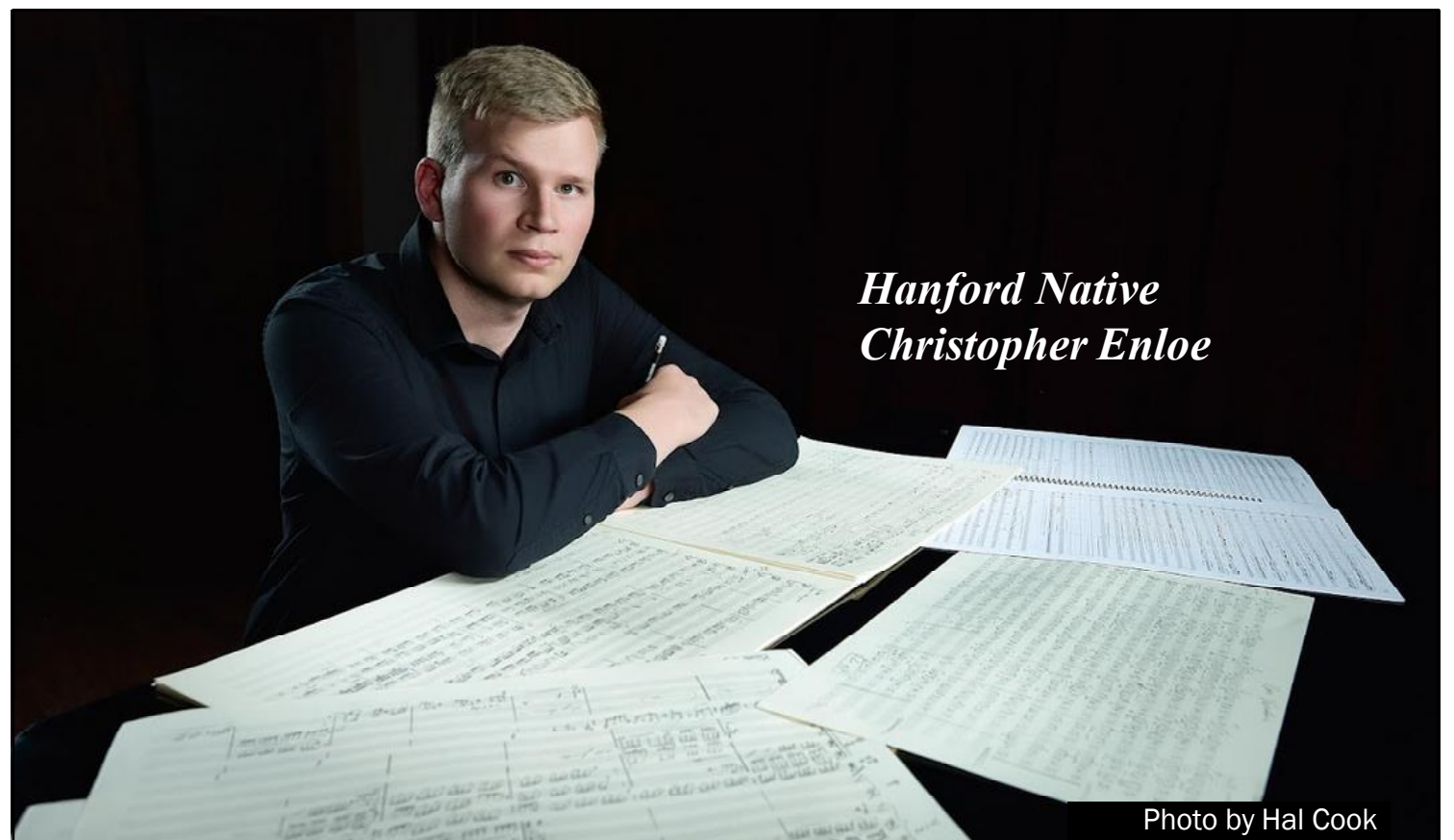


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Glorifying God With Music:



*Hanford Native
Christopher Enloe*

Photo by Hal Cook

By: T. M. Dinkins

*“Make a joyful noise to the LORD,
all the earth! Serve the LORD with
gladness! Come into his presence
with singing!”*

Psalm 100 starts with a call for God’s creation to use their voices to praise him! Throughout history, God’s people have been responding to that call by singing songs and hymns and spiritual songs to the Lord. Although instruments and styles of music have changed over time, there has always been a need for the church to guard the truth of Scripture in the music that is played and the songs that are sung.

One person who has committed his life to serving the Lord through music is Christopher Enloe. He is a Hanford native who is well on his way to becoming an established composer and professor of music composition. He is currently working as a professor in the school of music at Bob Jones University in South Carolina. I was recently able to catch up with Christopher and learn more about his training, trials, triumphs, teaching and family.

TRAINING:

The Central Valley was home for me until I married Becky and moved to

Baltimore. I fell in love with choral singing under Licia Clark at PSCA (now Inspire One) in Fresno. I joined as many choirs as I could (I think I was in four or five at one point). Later in high school I studied composition with two local composers, Kevin Memley and Walter Saul. I also had a phenomenal guitar instructor, Mel Miller, who was both an astounding musician and a prolific composer in his own right; he wrote me reams of short pieces to practice in all sorts of styles. I played piano for a few small events, but for the most part, I was spending my time improvising and learning to compose.

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Your generous donations to our summer fundraiser were a huge success!
All proceeds from the fundraiser were given to Lemoore Christian Aid



KINGS COUNTY

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

SEPTEMBER5 First Fridays at 11:30 am. Lunch provided at KCFB office	SEPTEMBER6 Catfish Crawl - Kids Fishing Derby at Hidden Valley Park	SEPTEMBER20 Fall Vendor Market - 9 AM - 4 PM - 108 E. Eighth St.	SEPTEMBER20 Selma Chamber Car Show
SEPTEMBER20 Free Blues & Roots Festival - Downtown Hanford	SEPTEMBER27 Classic Car Show & Farmers Market - Clovis, CA	SEPTEMBER27 GraceFest in Santa Clarita, CA	SEPTEMBER27 Vossler Farms Pump-kin Patch Opens in Visalia
OCTOBER4-5 Renaissance of Kings Fair - Civic Park	OCTOBER11 Fall Fest at College of the Sequoia in Hanford 10 am	OCTOBER31 The Night of Light at Grace Bible Church Hanford	NOVEMBER1 Counseling Conference - Grace Church of the Valley Kingsburg



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For general questions call 559-272-0581

Kings County Publisher: Tim Dinkins

For questions about the Kings County edition, including placing an ad in the Kings County edition contact:

Tim@ChristianNewsMagazine.com

www.ChristianNewsMagazine.com

Tel: 559-272-0581

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Physical Wealth or Spiritual Health?

Christ & Common Sense



T.M. Dinkins: County Publisher

Is it easier to live as a faithful Christian in a rich country or a poor country? Is it better for your spiritual health to be surrounded by possessions and the temptations of wealth or to live in a poor country with less distractions? I needed to spend time living outside the United States before I realized that wealth can be one of most dangerous enemies of the Christian life.

The Bible teaches about the dangers of wealth. 1 Timothy 6:10 says, "For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs" (English Standard Version). Jesus Christ surprised his disciples when he said, "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God" (Matthew 19:24). I know American Christians would agree with this statement, but how many of us would call ourselves rich? How many of us want to admit that we are a part of the group that would find it difficult to enter heaven?

This is important to consider because we can deceive ourselves into thinking we are not wealthy. Many American Christians wouldn't think of themselves as rich because our society often uses that term for the upper 1% of a society. The truth about wealth, that is often overlooked in our country, is that the majority of Americans are richer than the most of the world. I found a website that lets you enter your income and family size in order to see how much of the world is richer and poorer than you (howrichami.givingwhatwecan.org). I entered the average US household income from 2025 (\$80,610) with two

parents and four children into the wealth calculator. The results are that if you made that much you would be richer than 82.1% of the world!

In Jesus' time the majority of people were living in what would be described today as abject poverty. Most people were subsistence farmers who did not own the land they farmed. They had to pay significant taxes to the land owners and to tax collectors who kept a large percentage of profits for themselves and gave the rest to their Roman rulers. If people from Jesus' day could come and see how we live today, they would think we were even wealthier than the rich young ruler. They might have been impressed with the many possessions that he had, but what would they think about the cars we drive or the homes we live in? What would they think about air conditioning? They wouldn't even have a category to describe the kind of wealth we have and take for granted.

I think this is fascinating to think about because Jesus' point in Matthew 19 is that it is difficult for rich people to enter heaven. Rich people, like the rich young ruler, have "great possessions" that can get in the way of their relationship with God. The rich young ruler went away "sorrowful" because he knew he would have to give up the idol of his wealth in order to serve God faithfully. I often think about this in terms of living in the United States. It is a common occurrence to see Christians get drawn into the rat race of riches. It is easy to find yourself looking around, thinking that we need more wealth to be happy. I have to constantly remind myself that God does not want me to store up treasures here on earth, "where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal." (Matt. 6:19) He wants me to live for eternity. He wants me to live ready to give up any of my physical possessions to follow after him. He doesn't want me to be sorrowful when I think of giving up time and money for him. He wants me to be joyful!

When I read the account of the rich young ruler, I am sobered because I know I am in danger of acting like the rich man. I am in danger of being caught up with the temptations that wealth and comfort bring. I am so glad

that I have had the opportunity to live in less affluent countries like Albania, **Malaysia, and Thailand.** **My time in those** countries convinced me that with wealth comes spiritual apathy. Instead of relying on God for our daily bread, people in wealthy countries often forget about God (Proverbs 30:8-9). Instead of learning to walk by the Spirit in slower economies, American Christians often feel the need to keep apace with the frenzied pace of an affluent society. I often think about how different life would be if people couldn't afford the automobile or internet access. Would we immediately discover that we have more time to fellowship with people the way believers did in the early church. We would have time to practice the "one anothers" as we are commanded to in Scripture (1 Cor. 11:33, Gal. 5:13, 6:2, Eph. 4:2).

God may bless you with wealth and great possessions, but the Christian must always remember that this world's wealth is transitory. The wealth that God is concerned about is spiritual wealth and riches and that can only be found by keeping focused on God and dependent on him.

Tim Dinkins serves as a pastor at Grace Bible Church Hanford. He can be reached with questions and comments at timothydinkins@gmail.com

We want to hear from you. Send your questions to:

DEAR NOELLE

SEEKING AFTER

God's wisdom



DEAR NOELLE by Noelle B. Nightingale

Biblical Counsel for Christian Women

SEND IN YOUR LETTER TO:

**Noelle@
ChristianNewsMagazine.com**

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THIS MONTHS
LETTER TO
NOELLE**

**Noelle is a wife and mother and enjoys counseling women in the church.*

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FAITH IN ACTION

Pastor Brad Hayen Israel Trip Leader Grace Chapel Lanchaster

1. Lord willing, a group of believers will be traveling from California to Israel next spring. The trip dates have been set for April 24 - May 7, 2026. The trip requires careful planning, considerable cost, and an extended amount of time. Why do you believe it is so important for believers to go on this trip?

Springtime is a bit cooler and greener in Israel, so it is a very pleasant time to travel. A trip to the Holy Land is impactful for Christians because it helps them move from an abstract view of the places of the Bible to a more realistic one. I often tell people that they may unwittingly read the Old and New Testaments as they would read a fantasy book like *The Lord of the Rings*. The names and places are foreign to us and difficult to pronounce, let alone picture accurately in our imaginations. But once travelers have experienced these real places on our planet, they have a better connection to them. The historical accounts of Scripture become more vivid because they can visualize the places where these events happened. They no longer have to imagine, they can picture these places. It helps them to read with more engagement.

2. The trip will include churches from Lancaster, Tulare, and Lemoore. Is this your first time organizing a trip with Pilgrim Tours? Why did you choose to use that organization?

Lord willing, this will be my sixth trip with Pilgrim Tours. I initially picked them because they offered retail trips that were similar to what I was looking for. But then I discovered that they offered custom tours, and that their prices were very reasonable. So, I decided to try leading one on my own with Pilgrim handling the logistics. The first trip was excellent, so I have worked with them for eight years now. They offer great customer service and an unbeatable price for the kind of experience that I like to give travelers.

3. Once the tour arrives in Tel Aviv, it will move from the coast towards Northern Israel. What are you looking forward to seeing at Mt. Carmel, Megiddo, and Nazareth?

Mt. Carmel has an amazing view of the Jezreel Valley and offers a great introduction to the geography of the Holy Land. From here you can see the Coastal Plain, the Hill Country and into

Galilee. Megiddo is irresistible because of its long history of occupation and warfare. It guards the pass into the Jezreel Valley, and is well-known for its association with Armageddon. Many of the world's most famous battles from ancient to modern times have played out on this stage. Nazareth is one of my favorites because Jesus spent so much of his life there. Though the modern city is much larger than the first-century village was, the geography hasn't changed. From the cliffs outside the city, you can see the same view, the same sunsets as Jesus would have seen in his day. The emotions always run high for people as they sleep just steps from where Jesus lived for 30 years.

4. On Day five of the trip you will be going to the sea of Galilee. How incredible will it be to see Capernaum, where Jesus' did many miracles and teaching? How do you think someone's appreciation of God's word will deepen after taking a boat ride on the sea of Galilee?

Modern excavations in Magdala on the shores of the Sea of Galilee have uncovered a first-century synagogue where Jesus undoubtedly spoke. The one in Capernaum, though built a couple of hundred years later, lies on top of the very spot where the synagogue was in Jesus' day. John 7 records the miracles and teaching that Jesus did in and around this synagogue. So, when you visit today, you can have a high degree of confidence that you are walking in the very footsteps of the Lord. As a teacher of the Word, it is amazing to get to teach where Jesus did.

The boat ride on the Sea of Galilee is for many their favorite memory from the trip. The Sea has not changed in 2000 years. So, when you are on a boat on that sea, you are sharing an experience that Jesus and his disciples had.

5. On day seven the tour will visit Jericho and the Dead Sea. How much of ancient Jericho do you anticipate being able to see? Why is that one of the stops on the tour?

Jericho is one of the most excavated sites in Israel. Archaeology, by nature, is a destructive science. So, while there have been great efforts to preserve these World Heritage sites, it does not look today like it did 100 years ago. However, Jericho is a great example of some of the controversy inherent in archaeology. There is a science to it, there is data to be discovered and catalogued. But there is also a great deal of interpretation involved in archaeology. There are various



methods, schools of thought, and theories attached to any given interpretation of an archaeological site. Jericho is a prime example. I believe that the best explanation of the data found at Jericho is the one given by the text of Scripture. That is why I love to read the account of the book of Joshua at that place as I explain to people what they are seeing in front of them.

6. The next day will include a trip to Masada, the desert fortress that was eventually taken by a Roman army. Will people be able to walk up the goat path or will all the tour take the cable car to the top?

It's interesting, some people have it as a bucket-list item to climb the snake path at Masada. There are even t-shirts you can buy that say "I've climbed the snake-path at Masada." I myself have done it three times. However, I haven't included that in the last several tours. People just get too worn out from doing that first thing in the morning on a long day of touring. I've found that they are often too exhausted to enjoy Masada, or even the next couple of sites that we visit that day. And, since only a few of the 45 people who go want to do it, the rest have to wait for them somewhere. It is possible to make arrangements for the few to do it. But it is not easy. Depending on the weather, the path can also be closed.

7. The tour will include five days in Jerusalem. Why is so much time given to that one city? What do people consider to be the most popular things to see there?

In Matthew 5:35, Jesus calls Jerusalem "the city of the great King." There are Psalms written about it. It is sacred to Jews, Muslims and Christians. There is just nothing like it on earth. It has tremendous Old and New Testament significance. And there is a lot to see there. The Church of the Holy Sepulcher marks the very spot of the crucifixion, burial and resurrection of Christ. That alone is worth the price of admission. But I also love to take people to the site of the Upper Room, to the stairs of the

Temple Mount, to the City of David (with Hezekiah's Tunnel), to the Mount of Olives and the Garden of Gethsemane. And, of course, everyone must experience the Western Wall of the Temple Mount. Six days is barely enough to get a taste of Jerusalem.

8. Many people are concerned about safety when traveling to Jerusalem. Do you believe the situation will be calm enough for the trip next year?

Dr. Doug Bookman, my mentor, who taught me how to lead trips to Israel, is fond of saying "If you want to wait until there is peace in Jerusalem until you visit, that's fine. You will meet King Jesus there!" Jerusalem and the Holy Land have been the center of attention for thousands of years, and they will be until there is a New Heaven and a New Earth. Even then, the New Jerusalem will be the center of attention because God will make a special dwelling there. Then it will be absolutely safe.

In the meantime, I think the concept of safety is relative and subjective. I believe that all believers are "safe" until the Lord calls them home, and then it gets even better. He has our days numbered, and we won't live one day more or less than he ordains. I realize that people have to make decisions regarding how to spend their time and money. I realize that we have a been given a stewardship by our Lord in terms of time, health, money, safety, etc. I have had to cancel trips in the past (one even this year). We will not go if it is unwise to do so. But I would add that going to the Promised Land to walk in the footsteps of Abraham, Joshua, Jesus, Peter and countless others from inside and outside the Bible is a wise stewardship choice. I will choose to do that and take others with me any opportunity I get. I don't think that anyone except for God himself knows what the situation will be like in April 2026. I couldn't claim that I know better than anyone else. I will wait to hear from the Lord before making a final decision to go or not, and I hope our other travelers will as well.

STUDENT SPOTLIGHT



MICHA GOLDSMITH / SOPHMORE AT SIERRA PACIFIC (SP) HIGH SCHOOL IN HANFORD

1. What is it like going to Sierra Pacific (SP) High School in Hanford? What are your favorite classes?

What it's like going to Sierra Pacific to me is really fun! The community is really nice and the sports system is great. My favorite class has to be my business management class because of my teacher, he's the funniest!

2. Are you involved with the Christian club on campus? How is your faith in God encouraged by other Christians on the campus?

Yes, I have gone to the Christian club sometimes, but there are times I don't go because I hang out with my friends. Sometimes I invite my friends to go with me during lunch and sometimes they will say yes and some will say no, but when they go they usually really like it and have fun.

3. You played soccer last year for Sierra Pacific. What was it like being on a team that had a winning season? What was the most exciting game of the season? Also, who is your favorite soccer player and why?

Being on the SP soccer team last year was really fun because we had a really successful season. I have to say that my favorite game is when I scored a hat trick against Immanuel HS or when we won the silver bracket tournament. My favorite soccer player has to be Messi because he is just that good and has some of the best dribbling skills.

4. Sports play a big part of your educational experience. How are you able to find a balance between sports, academics, and other extra curricular activities?

Yes, sports have played a huge part in my life by far, so in order to maintain good grades and keep my skill up on the field I have to get my homework done in class. After school I focus on soccer. I've taught myself pretty well how to balance both but it's mainly because I get my work done in class.

5. You have been doing some welding in your spare time. What do you like about welding? What are some of the benefits of choosing that as a career path?

What I really like about welding is the creativity part of it and how precise you



have to be. Once the project is over, I like to step back and look at it and see the creation I've made because it feels really rewarding. And one of the benefits of welding for a career is that you get a ton of money for doing something really fun.

6. You play piano in the worship band at your church in Selma. What is it like using your talent to help people worship God? What would you tell someone if they want to learn how to play an instrument and play in their church?

What I really love about using my talent to worship God is that I get to worship God and allow others to worship, so that gives me a lot of joy being able to watch and see others worship God. If someone would want to start trying to play for their church I would say try to talk with your pastor and worship leader and see what they say about it, and maybe they can help you.

7. Your family has had a big impact on who you are today. What are some of the ways your parents and your siblings have encouraged you as you play sports and serve God?

My parents have played a huge part in allowing me to play the keyboard for my church. They drive me to and from church twice a week, which I'm very grateful for. They've also encouraged me by coming to watch me play at youth group whenever I play on stage. My parents help me and encourage me with anything so I thank them for that.

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FAITH IN ACTION

Nick Francu Director Lemoore Christian Aid

When did Lemoore Christian Aid (LCA) start serving the community? How long have you been involved?

Lemoore Christian Aid began in 1985. I have been serving here for six year years.

What is your role at LCA and why do you think it is worth investing in?

My role is to ensure that this project runs smoothly. We need to overcome obstacles. We want to make sure people are fed and taken care of. I came from a family that was successful. My dad worked for Ford. We always had food on the table. I grew up thinking that was true for everyone and then I realized that wasn't true. I want to help people have food and clothing. I want to do this because I believe that is what God would want me to do. I enjoy it.

One of the saddest things I have seen was when a woman came early one morning. She said, "I know I'm early, but I'm starving." We usually have set times when we feed people. One of our volunteers had brought sandwiches for the volunteers. Our volunteer asked the lady if she would like the sandwich. She took the sandwich and she went outside and she stuffed it in her mouth.

What is the mission and purpose of Lemoore Christian Aid?

Our mission is to feed those in need and to clothe children who are in need. We also give blankets to people. The blankets come from Shaw's Air Conditioning.

You have many volunteers. What is it like working with them?

Here is the deal. We have a great team. We have Karen Christensen. She is very helpful and kind and generous. Soli Perez is a strongworker. We have a lady named Angie Rodriguez who comes and volunteers. They all work hard and they serve the mission and they do a great job. There

is a man named Alvin Swint who runs the pantry. The pantry is named after him. We had a lady named Clara who ran the clothing. We called it Clara's clothing.

The churches and community have been very supportive. One lady came and she said, "I can only give \$5." I said "Ma'am you gave from your heart and that is what matters. There are people who have much more than you or I and they don't give at all."

Lemoore Christian Aid recently partnered with Grocery Outlet Lemoore with their "\$5 for \$5 fundraiser." How will Lemoore Christian Aid be using the funds that were received?

We will use the funds to buy food. The owners of Grocery Outlet are my friends. I am going to say something, but I am not saying it because Fernando is my friend. He has been a real blessing to LCA. He is always giving us food that has to be removed from the shelves, even though it is still good. Natasha has also been very good to us. Grocery Outlet has a yearly fundraiser and we have been blessed by them every year.

What is one way you have seen your work bless people in the community?

Sometimes when we have a lot of stuff we give to the Senior center in Lemoore. We partner with the Lemoore Police Department for Reason for the Season. That is a fun time because they go out and get toys and they give them to the kids. We give out food boxes. We help people in Avenal, Coalinga, Huron, Kettleman City, Lemoore and Riverdale. People from these cities come here and we give them food. We require a valid ID and a current bill. We give food to people. We don't judge how much people have. We are ready to give food to those who need it.

What are some of the most interesting things people have donated to the store?

We get donations and sometimes we give them to Renewed Thrift Store in Lemoore. The items are sold and the funds we make are used to buy food. We are a 5013c nonprofit. We don't have to get a food permit because we are not cooking anything. We give pre-packaged food. We serve about 230 or 240 families, which is around 800 people. We give different portions depending on family size. If there are



four or less people in a family we give a different amount than if there are five in a family.

Is there a Bible verse that inspires you in your daily work?

1 Corinthians 10:31 says "So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God". That verse captures the essence of what we are doing. I know what we are doing is right

and that is why we are doing it. I have been blessed and that is why want to bless others.

As you look to the future are there any obstacles that you see coming?

As I look to the future I would like to have a bigger place. It would be nice to have more space for food. It is small and tight and it would be nice to have more space.

CULTURE & CHURCH



AB 495 Risk to Child Safety and Parental Authority

The California Senate Appropriations Committee is currently scheduled to review AB 495, sponsored

by Assembly Member Celeste Rodriguez, on August 18, 2025. We urge you to take the following actions to protect our children and parental rights:

1. Get Educated: A copy of AB 495 can be found here: [AB495 | California 2025-2026 | Family Preparedness Plan Act of 2025. | TrackBill](#)
2. Contact Your Senator: Call or email your state senator, especially if they serve on the Senate Appropriations Committee. Urge them to oppose AB 495 due to its risks to child safety and parental authority. Find your senator's



contact information at <http://findyourrep.legislature.ca.gov>.

2. Submit Public Comments: Submit written opposition directly to members of the Senate Appropriations Committee by August 15, 2025. Email your comments to appropriations.senate@senate.ca.gov, clearly stating your concerns about AB 495's lack of safeguards and potential for abuse.

3. Spread the Word: Share this email with your family, friends, church members and community. Post about AB 495 on social media using hashtags like #StopAB495 and #ProtectParentalRights to raise awareness of the far-reaching implications of AB 495.

4. Attend the Hearing: If you're able, attend the Senate Appropriations Committee hearing in Sacramento on August 18, 2025, to show your opposition in person. Details on the hearing location and time can be found at <https://www.senate.ca.gov>. Let me be clear: Our children's safety and your parental rights are at stake. AB 495's well-intentioned facade cannot mask its dangerous implications. Together, we can stop this bill and ensure California prioritizes the protection of our families over risky, unchecked policies.

Parents Urged to OPT OUT CA Students Larry Pegram



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by just
going
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Founder, Informed Parents of California

As a new school year begins, Christian parents across California are being urged to take a closer look at what their children are being taught—and take action. Informed Parents of California, a statewide grassroots organization, offers parents the opportunity to OPT OUT their children from inappropriate curricula, books, gender studies, counseling, and intrusive surveys. The OPT OUT System is designed to help moms and dads safeguard their children from controversial lessons and activities that conflict with their faith and values.

For too many years, parents have assumed that public schools would respect their role as the primary educators of their children. Yet in recent times, troubling trends have emerged. Curriculums increasingly include sexual content, ideologies about gender and identity, and political activism that many families believe has no place in the classroom.

The Bible reminds us that parents, not the state, are charged with raising children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. The OPT OUT Notice is a practical way for parents to reassert their God-given authority. The system works simply: parents visit the Informed Parents of California website, www.ip-ca.org, Click on the green OPT OUT button, complete an information

form that identifies them, their child and their child's school, DocuSign on the screen, click submit and a legally binding OPT OUT Notice is sent by email to the child's school principal and school district superintendent...all in less than two minutes!

For many Christian families, this means protecting children from lessons promoting radical gender theory, graphic sexual education, or surveys probing into private family matters. By filing the OPT OUT Notice, parents stand on firm legal ground while ensuring that their voice is heard in the classroom.

Advocates stress that the OPT OUT system is not about withdrawing from education, but about reclaiming it. Our children deserve an excellent education that strengthens their minds without compromising their souls.

The call to action is clear: parents should not wait until harmful lessons are taught to react. Instead, they can be proactive—submitting the OPT OUT Notice at the start of the year.

As the culture continues to press into America's schools, Christian families have both the right and the responsibility to set boundaries. The OPT OUT Notice is one way to do just that—equipping parents to raise up the next generation to walk in truth.



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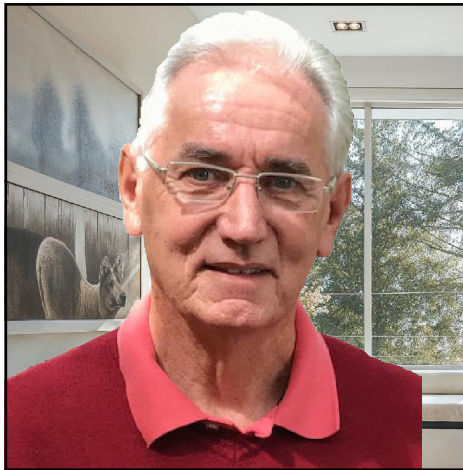
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NATION'S FORMATION!**

From the Founder:



By Terrence Wild

The essence of being a Christian is not first a set of activities or even a creed we recite; it is a living relationship

recite; it is a living relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. Scripture names Him “the fullness of the Godhead bodily” (Colossians 2:9), meaning that in the incarnate Son the very life of the Triune God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—meets us personally. The Trinity can be hard for us to grasp, yet the Christian life is communion with all three: we come to the Father, through the Son, in the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 2:18). The Father loves and adopts; the Son redeems and reigns; the Spirit indwells and empowers. Our faith is not a ladder to climb to God but a participation in the life He graciously gives.

One of the most misunderstood aspects of this relationship is its basis. In shorthand, the Old Testament can be summarized as “obey and live,” while the New Testament centers on “live and obey.” That contrast does not deny grace in the Old Testament—God rescued Israel before He gave the law—but it highlights a covenant shift made explicit in Christ. Under the law, the terms of life with God were written on stone and addressed to a people often hard of heart. In the gospel, the terms are written on hearts of flesh by the Spirit (Jeremiah 31:33; Ezekiel 36:26–27). The order is changed: God gives life, then commands; He grants a new heart, then calls us to walk in His ways.

This change in order rests on a decisive gift: imputed righteousness. We do not work our way into right standing; we receive it. “For our sake He made Him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God” (2 Corinthians 5:21). Christ’s perfect obedience and atoning death

grateful response, not a desperate attempt to buy God's favor. Grace does not relax holiness; it produces it (Titus 2:11–14). The Spirit who unites us to Christ also renews our desires so that we begin to love what God loves and hate what harms His image in us.

Union with Christ anchors this relationship. By faith we are joined to Him in His death and resurrection (Romans 6:3–5). What is true of the Son becomes true of His people: His status becomes our status (justified), His access becomes our access (welcomed by the Father), His power becomes our power (the Spirit’s indwelling), and His mission becomes our calling (witness and service). Because we live in Him, we obey with Him and for Him. Our obedience is not payment; it is participation.

Practically, this changes everything. Prayer is no longer a performance but

a conversation with the Father who already loves us in the Son. Scripture reading is not a test but nourishment. Repentance is not dread but freedom, because the verdict has already been rendered at the cross. Good works are not leverage; they are the fruit of a living root. And when we fail—and we will—our standing with God does not evaporate. We return to the fountain of grace and rise to walk again (1 John 1:9).

To say, then, that “the essence of being a Christian is our relationship with Jesus Christ” is to say He Himself is the way we know the Father and receive the Spirit. In Him the fullness of God meets our emptiness; by His imputed righteousness we stand accepted; through His Spirit we grow in actual holiness. We have been given life—new, undeserved, and irreversible—and now, gladly, we obey.

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DEAR NOELLE by Noelle B. Nightingale
Biblical Counsel for Christian Women

Dear Noelle,

I think I have a pretty good family. My husband and I have a good relationship. Our kids are good kids overall. The only thing is that our kids fight with each other a lot. I know it's normal for siblings not to get along, but sometimes I wish there was more peace in our house. I see some Christian families where the kids actually care about each other, and I wish we had that. Is there hope that our family could ever be like that?

~ Wishing for Peace

Dear "Wishing for Peace,"

Yes, there is hope that your home can become a loving place! The message of the gospel has the power to transform your family. I have personally seen the gospel transform my own kids' relationships with each other, and I believe that there are things you can do as parents to help bring this about in your family as well.

The first thing to do is pray. It is the parents' job to train up their children in God's ways, but parents are powerless to change their children's hearts. Only God can change the heart. So pray for your children. Pray for their salvation and for repentant hearts. Depend on God's help to transform their attitudes. Remember that your job is to train your kids and trust God to bring lasting change.

Second, teach your kids. Yes, the world thinks it's normal for siblings to hate each other, but God's word teaches the opposite. The book of 1 John explains that we love others because Jesus loves us and laid His life down for us (1 John 3:16). 1 John also says that anyone who hates his brother or sister is not saved (1 John 3:15; 4:7-8). So anytime your children act like they hate each other, this is a chance for you to share the gospel with them and talk about how Jesus had to die because of this sin of hatred. You can tell them that they need to repent of their sin and give their lives to God. You can help them pray and ask God's forgiveness. And even if your kids are not ready to commit their lives to God, you can help them memorize a verse about kindness that they recite anytime they are mean to each other. My favorite verse for this is Ephesians 4:32, "Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you."

Third, lovingly correct your kids when they are unkind to one another. This step takes a lot of time and patience. It is tempting to yell at our kids or maybe just send them to their rooms in order to keep the peace. But if parents get angry when they are correcting their children, it will just add fuel to the fire. In fact, your kids will probably justify any anger they have by pointing at your anger. So be careful not to act in anger. Also, sending kids to different rooms might be a good first step to calm the situation, but there needs to be a time for parents to talk to their children to correct their words and actions. After this, the children need to ask forgiveness and grant forgiveness to one another for being unkind, regardless of how

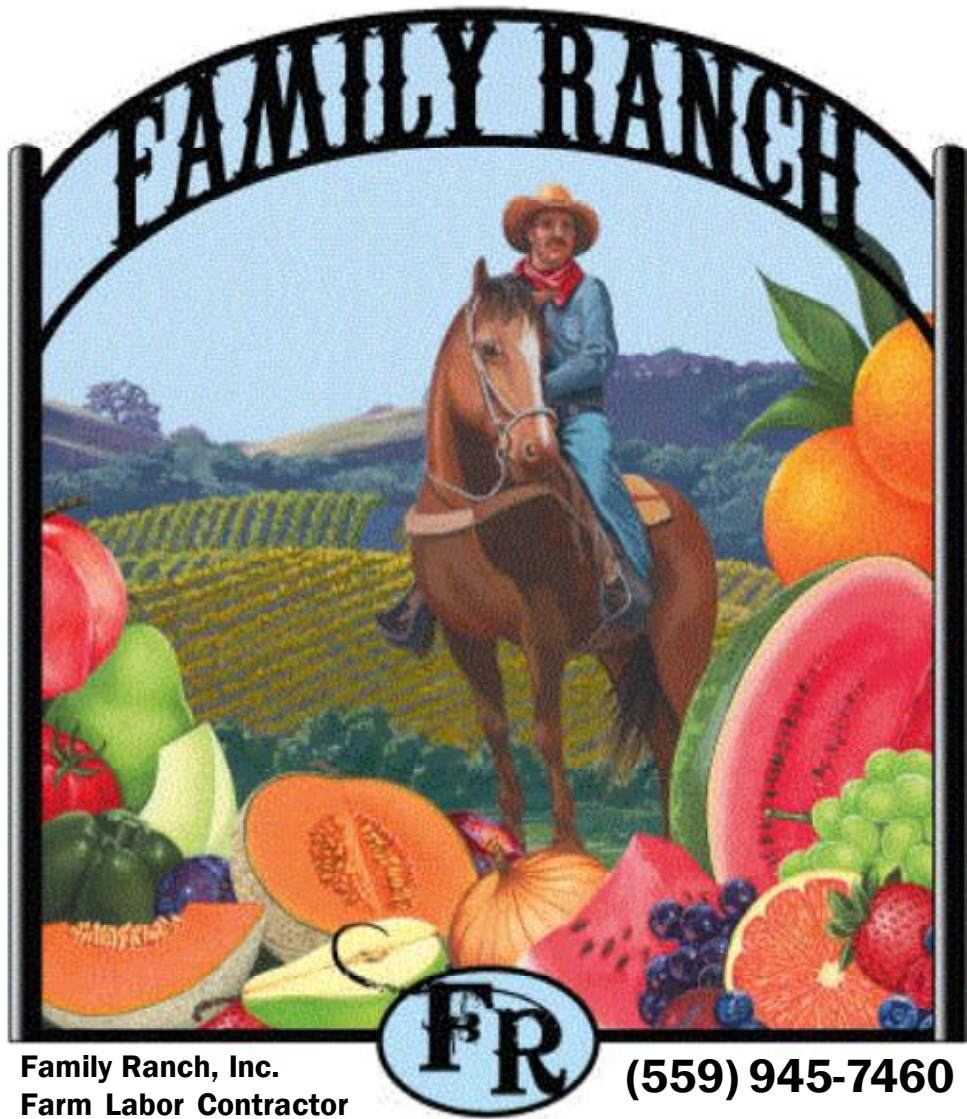


they feel about it. And finally, your kids need a chance to redo the original situation, saying kind words instead of mean words. As a parent, you might need to help your children by showing them what to say or how to say it. If your kids still say it in a mean way, you can have them try again, using a nicer tone. Habits die hard, and it might take several tries before your kids can speak kind words to each other.

Finally, try to be a model of graciousness for your kids, but be ready to ask them for forgiveness whenever you fail to speak or act with kindness. It is really important that your children can see that you are trying to put kindness into practice, modeling it for them, and not just expecting it of them. But the reality is that we all fail at times. Your kids will respect what you have to say if you can admit your failure and ask for their forgiveness. As you put all these things in to practice, I believe that your home will gradually become a more peaceful place.

***Noelle is a wife and mother and enjoys counseling women in the church.**

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Continued from Page 1

I think the people, places, and experiences of your childhood find their way into your art one way or another. Growing up in Hanford, most of my early musical experiences were with genres outside of classical. I used to worry that this put me too far behind – it’s tricky to get into a conservatory if you weren’t steeped in the “art music tradition” from an early age. But that eclectic exposure has its benefits. I think about composition a little differently than those who grew up solely playing classical music, and that helped me cultivate a more distinctive compositional voice (though I did eventually immerse myself in classical music in college and grad school).

As you think back about the beginning of your career as a composer, what did you love about the artistry of composing music? Was there something special about choral music that drew your interest or was it musical composition in general that interested you?

Two thoughts on why I love composing: first, composing is this extraordinary mixture of emotional expression and careful design. It mixes left- and right-brain thinking in a way few other artistic endeavors can. In high school I was interested in STEM fields, especially physics and robotics; to me, writing music feels like building a kind of machine. You design it, wind it up, and send it out into the world. But a piece of music also contains deeply communicative, emotional, and aesthetic components. You can appreciate music from both an analytic and emotional perspective, though they are tightly interwoven with each other. Music unifies these two aspects in a way I find deeply compelling.

Second, beyond the craft itself, I realized in college that music is one means of expressing beauty, and all beauty ultimately points back to the character of God. To paraphrase Jonathan Edwards, beauty is the diffuse refraction of God’s glory shining through his image bearers. This threw the whole compositional endeavor into a new theological perspective. I can genuinely say with each piece, as Bach did, “solī Deo gloria,” not just because it’s an offering of service, but also because there’s something in music itself that reflects Him.

God’s word tells us that all people are made in the image of God (Genesis 1:26-28). How does composing music for choirs reflect the image of God?

As I mentioned in my previous answer above, excellent art made by God’s image bearers will reflect His character (whether intentionally or not). But I would also add that choirs are a unique reflection of God’s plan for humanity. Humanity was designed to be a community; we were meant to be culture-creators. We were created to live in harmony with God and each other, making cosmos out of chaos. The choir is a microcosm of the reality that will one day come, when all of God’s people will (literally and figuratively) sing together in one voice.

I think even the secular world tastes the beauty of this. Who hasn’t been awed by Jacob Collier’s immense “audience choirs”? Or you can look at the explosion of school, church, and community choirs in America in the last 100 years. Choral music is resonating with people because they have a deep need for genuine community, and that’s an idea embedded right into the heart of Christianity and the church (it is no surprise that choral music in the Western world began in the church).

What was the name of the first piece of choir music that you wrote?

My first choral piece in high school was called When Roses Cease to Bloom. I had a lot of creative energy built up, inspired by choral composers that I’d loved dearly. I didn’t really know what I was doing at the time, but I made it a point to only use techniques and textures that I had seen other composers do before. It turns out that’s a great way to learn in the beginning. The piece was a finalist in a competition at Ithaca College in New York. My experience hearing the piece and talking with the choir left was overwhelmingly positive, and I felt quite strongly that the Lord was calling me to do this as a career.

What was it like being trained musically at The Master’s University?

My years at Master’s were formative musically and spiritually. Coming to TMU was great for me primarily because I had exceptionally supportive faculty who pushed me to excel. My private instructor, Grant Fonda, had a relatively small studio of composition students, and he became both a musical and personal mentor. He and other faculty were models to me in pursuing excellence in your musical craft as a follower of Christ (I often tell students that learning how your professors think is as important, if not more important than what they teach).

I needed many gaps in my knowledge filled and misconceptions challenged,

and that certainly happened (and is still happening – you never stop learning. I often think, “maybe one day I’ll finally learn how to compose!”). It was a safe environment for me to try things, and it laid the groundwork for everything to come.

How significant was it for Dr. Plew to direct your composition?

When the Rose Is Faded is probably my most performed concert work almost entirely because Dr. Plew championed it. He was very kind to program it. He treated me like a “real” composer, putting his full artistry into bringing the piece to life. It was one of the greatest musical encouragements of my undergraduate years. Master’s kept performing the piece even a few years even after I graduated, and I still occasionally hear from students or listeners that appreciated it. It also led to them performing a few other pieces of mine, so it didn’t end there!

How does your relationship with your wife help you in your life and work?

In every way. If Becky weren’t in my life, I would be a lot less happy, sanctified, and creative! I think the best work I can do pours out of the abundant life that comes from following Christ and pursuing a God-honoring marriage (with a little seven-month-old now!). I don’t buy the stereotype of the “ivory tower” composer who lives a contrarian and isolated life. Some composers have needed to live like that, but nobody (should) want to.

Practically, Becky is an extraordinarily sensitive musician and a better performer than I will ever be. Having her ears (or flute playing) on my projects usually makes them better.

How did your time at the Peabody Conservatory of Music at John Hopkins University help refine and focus your interest in composition?

Peabody was a wonderful experience for me. My professors there are internationally renowned composers, and they gave me the creative freedom to develop my unique voice while also pushing me to stretch my wings more. I also benefited greatly from teaching and working in the theory department as a graduate assistant, where I immersed myself deeply into the analysis and music cognition, which is now a part of my doctoral research.

Why is your involvement in the local church so important to you?

In Baltimore I learned how essential the local church is to my own spiritual growth. That emphasis is all over the New Testament, but I didn’t really understand it until I saw a small local church abounding in love and offering consistent spiritual accountability. I had a joyous time of serving at our local church (Baltimore Bible Church) and another church (Valley Presbyterian Church). It was a full schedule of planning, leading congregational music, and organizing concerts. Musically, this gave me an awareness of the practical concerns that go into programming a piece of music, especially for volunteer choirs.

In that context, we also got to practice and refine a biblical theology of congregational singing, which is, I think, something that the modern church (particularly in America) has been missing, to the detriment of both music and the congregational gathering. Becky and I have a heart to do some teaching on this topic in her home country of Romania in the future.

TRIALS

What motivated you to put in the time and study needed to excel in music composition?

I think there are many motivations. Most importantly, I feel this weight of joyful responsibility before the Lord driving me forward. God has graciously allowed me to have a life filled with music, and He has called me to do everything as unto Him. I want Him to be pleased with how I steward my gifts.

Additionally, I just love music as a craft – so much so that I need to be cautious about making it into an idol. I could spend all day writing or improvising or playing a concert, take a quick break, and find myself sitting at the piano five minutes later trying out a new idea. I was the kind of oddball student that read theory books for fun. So it’s hard to imagine doing much else!

That being said, loving something doesn’t mean the work is always easy or enjoyable (it’s often not in the short term). It takes diligent work and study for many years, and composing itself is an exercise in delayed gratification. I learned to embrace the fact that there is always more room for me to improve. I have also grown to enjoy the process of studying and getting better, bit by bit. I’m always doing little composition exercises and challenging myself because I know it will pay off in the long run.

Is there a certain time in your life when God helped you overcome a trial in your personal life or in your professional career?

Many times, certainly – “Great is Thy faithfulness,” as the hymn says. One testament of God’s faithfulness would be in His comforting us through a health scare with our daughter. We had a few doctors warn us during pregnancy that she might have a genetic skeletal disorder. The whole ordeal caused us to lean on the Lord. We realized that every ounce of health is a gift of God, and we would love our little girl however she came to us. God surrounded us with a loving family and a church home to comfort us. And (so far) our little one is perfectly healthy! But I would say our trials have been comparatively small compared with friends around us, and we recognize that this is purely God’s sovereign grace.

TRIUMPHS

What is it like to see your compositions performed by international musicians in churches, concerts, and festivals in Europe and the United States?

It’s always enjoyable to see my music “out there” living a life beyond the premiere. The amount of collaboration varies depending on the specifics of the project. Often pieces are done without me even knowing it! If it is a premiere performance, then usually I will have more opportunity to collaborate, edit, etc., sharing audio files or sketches to make sure what I’m writing will work the way I imagine it.

Your website at www.enloemusic.com lists many of your accomplishments: Can you tell us which one of them is especially significant to you?

Sure! All these were exciting opportunities, but the BMI award stands out to me. It’s an old competition, and past winners include stars in the field like John Adams and Philip Glass. I believe there were six winners out of a few hundred applicants, and the winning piece (Frika) is now in the New York City Public Library. It was particularly meaningful because I met a few of my biggest compositional heroes at the awards ceremony in New York City.

What is it like working with production companies such as Paramount+, Fox Sports, and Amazon?

Those projects were all unique! Most of them were exciting and fast-paced. Working in media is quite different from the concert world, as you are just as much a filmmaker as you are a composer/orchestrator/editor, and I really enjoyed stretching my muscles in that skill set. I worked on those as an assistant to Grant Fonda, who gave me fantastic on-the-job training. Now I feel equipped with the technology and skillset to take on solo projects, which I’ve started to do!

TEACHING

What is it like teaching students about music theory and technology at Bob Jones University?

I love it! I pursued graduate work in part so I would be qualified to teach if a composition career didn’t pan out. Once I started classroom teaching (first at Peabody), I didn’t expect that I would enjoy it so much. I have wonderful students who want to honor God by honing their craft, and I love seeing them far exceed even their own expectations. I hope to be a mentor to them the same way others mentored me.

Why is teaching about music technology so important for modern students?

Funny enough, I spent most of my student days avoiding technology. But we live in a day when technology has become an essential part of a musical career. If you want to be competitive in the job market, you need to know how to navigate technology on top of mastering your craft. Even classical performers should know something about how to mic themselves, how to make a good recording, and how to create a presentable website. If you’re doing anything else besides being a classical concert musician, technology will be a necessary part of your life. It’s part of my job to help my students foster a healthy relationship with technology so they can navigate the job market.

FAMILY

What is it like being a husband and father while teaching and composing?

A mentor of mine texted me after Aura was born and said (paraphrasing), “It may feel like you’ll never write music again, but it will get better.” And that proved true!

Really, it’s the daily sacrifices of my wife that make it possible for me to write. It’s not always easy – when I’m working on a piece, it can start infecting all of life. I can get quite absent minded! I try to keep a consistent work schedule, which helps.



Do you have any plans to have your music performed in the central valley or in California in the coming years?

Any time I can do something in California, I try to make it happen! No specific plans at the moment, though I have a great relationship with The Master’s University, who recently commissioned my setting of Psalm 148. Because of my connections to LA from my work in film and my time at TMU, there’s always potential, and I love coming back to visit when I can.

FUTURE:

As you look to the future, what goals do you have for your professional career, for your involvement in the local church, and in your own family?

I want to be faithful with what God has given me. I’m always reminding myself that I need to be ready to give up composing if that’s what following Christ requires. If composing just became the thing I do “on the side,” I’d be content with that. It’s far more important that I am a loving husband and father, growing in Christ-likeness and connected to the local church. Music is optional, but those things are not (and sadly, composers of all stripes often end up sacrificing their family for career, and that’s not something I could ever do in good conscience before God).

I ultimately hope that my music can be one small reminder that there is more to this world than just physical “stuff” – that God’s beauty is reaching out, primarily through His Word and His church, but also through the beauty found in “the things that are made.” That’s the motivation.



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