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## Homebound Nashville style: Studio musicians' video reaches one million

by Laura Erlanson, posted Thursday, March 26, 2020 (one month ago)

NASHVILLE (BP) -- Last week, lying in bed, music arranger and producer David Wise had an idea. Like seemingly everyone else in the world, he was troubled by the ongoing crisis of the COVID-19 pandemic and wondered how he might help.

Today, that moment of inspiration has encouraged more than a million people. The video of singers joining together on the hymn "It Is Well with My Soul," produced by Wise, was released only yesterday (March 25), and its exponential impact caught him off guard.

"Our intention was we felt God was prompting us to release this song," Wise told Baptist Press. "Not knowing that in 24 hours, we would have a million views. ... Every five minutes another church is wanting to stream it. Radio stations are wanting to play this for people."

The project started as a way to encourage his friends.

"I was just overcome with the spirit of the song 'It Is Well,'" Wise said. "The Lord laid that song on my heart. I just said, 'Wouldn't it be so cool if right now, we were able to find a way to make music in a time when we can't be together anymore?'"

He called a friend who is a music engineer and asked if the idea just might work -- or if his friend thought he was crazy.

"I'll do the dirty work," he told his friend. "I'll do the arrangement. I'll make it as easy as I possibly can. Can we do it?"

His friend liked the idea and agreed to help. Things went very quickly after that.

"This song feels anointed," Wise said, "I can't even remember doing the arrangement. I sat down, and in less than two hours, I had it. My hands cannot manipulate something like that."

He divided the arrangement into parts and sent a different part to each of 31 Nashville studio singers he works with regularly. Each singer got an email with the full arrangement chart, the part they were supposed to sing, and an example audio track of their part, which they could listen to as they sang to ensure they stayed on the beat.

"Every single solo and the choir is 100 percent recorded on cell phones," Wise said.

After each singer recorded their part, Wise pieced them all together.

One of the singers featured in the video is Kirk Kirkland, who, in addition to being a professional studio singer, also serves as music minister at Judson Baptist Church in Nashville. The decision to participate was an easy one for Kirkland.

"First of all, we're out of work," he said, referring to the fact that all Nashville studios are shut down under COVID-19 social distancing guidelines.

"Everything I had on the books is canceled or postponed. It's a bunch of studio musicians that were bored. ... Since we're home and can't be together and working, what if we use what we do to try to be a blessing to some people?"

Kirkland said what makes the video special is that the people singing the words really believe them, and that comes across.

"When you watch that video, people will know that these are Christian musicians," he said. "We work for virtually anybody, we're work for hire. We sing for Disney, video games. ... But the beauty of [the video] is it's a bunch of believers. ...

"For me as a pastor and worship leader and church musician, the idea that the truth of that song is reaching so far is really exciting."



A video of Nashville studio singers joining together on the hymn "It Is Well with My Soul" reached more than 1 million views in less than 24 hours. The project's producer says what started as a way to encourage his friends has grown beyond what he imagined. Screen capture from YouTube

Wise's vocal arrangements have appeared on recordings by artists like Lady Antebellum, Dolly Parton, Sandi Patty and many others, and he has many church choral arrangements to his credit for LifeWay Music, Word Music and others. He's lived in Nashville nine years.

Having worked for Disney and other secular entertainment outlets, Wise said when he moved to Nashville, he was struck by the genuine faith of his colleagues in the Christian music industry.

"[Music] wasn't a gig," he said. "It was a career for them. The heart of these people was different. People don't realize how much Christian music happens in Nashville. All these people that are singing on these recordings, these are all believers. They aren't just random people. It's the difference, the heart of people believing what they're singing. Every person on that video is a believer in Christ and follower of Christ. They walk with the Lord. You can't make that up. That makes Nashville different, the heart of the people behind what they're singing."

And as for those churches who are asking about using the video this Sunday? Wise is telling them yes. He has registered it with a performance-rights organization, but that's only for someone wanting to buy the arrangement.

"Hey churches," he said, "We want to give this to you. Play it at your churches. Stream the YouTube video. We haven't made a dime, and that was not our intention."

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Laura Erlanson is production editor of Baptist Press.