

About the Songs

Jubilee ~ A theme song written for a national UMC youth ministry event in St. Louis in 1987. The biblical meaning of “Jubilee” proclaims that once in every 50 years there is an economic, cultural, environmental and communal reset, when the land and people rest, and all those who are in slavery are set free to return to their communities. Our song sings this biblical vision for a Jubilee in our time.

Sing Praise for the Harvest ~ Written for Larry Hixon and Church World Service to honor their global empowerment of local communities to create sustainable agriculture and industry for their food security and well-being.

Walk with Me ~ With this moving song, our friend John Rice invites us to respond to God’s call even though we may see ourselves as “unlikely servants.” In saying “yes” we will find that God’s love flows through us to heal the world.

Walking to Bethlehem ~ written in response to the 1986 Trans-Continental “Great Peace March” for global nuclear disarmament. Hundreds of people walked from Santa Monica, CA to NYC, then to Washington DC. They stopped in communities all along the way to meet with local people, in schools, churches and community centers to share their passion for a nuclear-free world. This song is dedicated to dear friends, Pat and Kilty Smith, a mother-daughter team, and to all the brave souls who marched. We traveled to DC to join them at the end of the march along with 10,000 others whom they had met along the way. I imagined the journey of Mary and Joe walking to Bethlehem, the place of peace and love, as a metaphor for the Great Peace March.

Where Two or Three Gather ~ These words by Pastor Gordon Jardine, from Fort Qu’Appelle, Saskatchewan remind us that when two or three gather in the name and spirit of Christ, the world can be transformed. This fortunate collaboration with Gordon also reminds us of the many years of amazing hospitality and welcoming love we received at the Calling Lakes Centre (Prairie Christian Training Centre) and from congregations in every region of the province. We are grateful!

Look Beyond the Refugee ~ Currently about 300 million people are leaving their homes because of climate issues, drought, floods and fires, wars, gang violence and poverty. When this song was written in the ‘80s, many US companies had already closed their farms and factories and relocated overseas for cheap labor, but not a living wage. Currently, some corporations

are funding local governments to strongly and violently discourage local labor from organizing or protesting harmful business practices -- such as the extraction of natural resources from indigenous people's lands, ruining their livelihood and culture, or the clear cutting of all the hardwoods on a mountain side to make furniture assembly kits, resulting in whole villages being washed away during hurricanes. Many of these refugees are seeking asylum at our borders. Do we have a responsibility for these people as we have taken for refugees from our wars in Vietnam, Iraq, and Afghanistan?

What Does the Lord Require (Micah 6:8) ~ This foundational scripture asks biblical people "to seek justice, and love kindness, and walk humbly with our God." This is a three-part song for high, medium, and low voices. It can be a choral piece, or with a minimum of teaching, it can be sung by a congregation. There is a powerful version of this hymn in Spanish sung by the congregation of the Primera Iglesia Bautista de Managua, Nicaragua in our "Servir a Dios" project.

Part of the Family ~ Jim Manley's well-known gathering song invites all of us, no matter what our circumstances are, to "Come in, come in and sit down for we are a part of the family,"... "to share in the laughter and cry in the pain"... for we are all God's beloved community. Many folks have written additional verses to include people in their context. Jim Manley encourages this. Here is one of ours not included in this recording.

"Wealthy or homeless, we all belong
wheel-chaired or walking, our spirits are strong
If we're trans or we're queer, we join in the song
For we are a part of the family..."

**Come in, come in and sit down,
you are a part of the family..."**

You can hear this version on our singalong video at this link

~ <https://vimeo.com/459168108>

Naramata ~ Founded by the United Church of Canada in 1947, the Naramata Centre, on the shore of Lake Okanagan in BC, is an educational resource and retreat center. With its Christian roots, radical inclusion of all people, celebration of the treasures of many spiritual paths, Naramata has been a "home" for us for over 50 years. We have made what feels like an annual pilgrimage to share our music there. We've always found a beloved community of friends committed to justice, healing, and care of Mother Earth. It would be impossible to measure Naramata's influence on our spiritual journey. This song was written to celebrate the Naramata Centre's 40th anniversary in 1986.

To Serve You ~ This song was written for the Oklahoma UMC Annual Conference summer training events for congregational youth workers. For many years we had the privilege of being the musical resource for these top quality workshops. "To Serve You," a song about offering our deepest love and talents for God's work, was written for the commissioning service for those lay youth workers who completed the program. Over the years we've remained in touch with many of these amazing and creative pastors, church leaders and difference makers.

Cristo es Nuestra Paz (Christ is our Peace) ~ During one of our tours in Nicaragua I wrote a simple chorus for congregations to sing. The English translation is "Jesus Christ, savior, brother, Jesus Christ, redeemer, grant us peace." My sister Katie (Katherine Strathdee Hirschy, Ph.D. in Hispanic Literature and celebrated translator of poetry) wrote the verses based upon Ephesians 2.

With Pain to Deep for Words ~ This song journals a very emotionally painful day we experienced while on tour in Nicaragua during the US-sponsored Contra war. This war was run by the CIA with the help of mercenary soldiers. It was waged against the people of Nicaragua following their successful overthrow of generations of a US-supported dictatorship. This victory resulted in their first free and fair election.

Ben Linder was killed by the Contra. One morning we visited his grave in the Matagalpa cemetery. He was a young mechanical engineer from Portland, Oregon who was helping the village of Bocay build a fresh water and power system. That afternoon we traveled to the military hospital at Apanás to sing our songs of hope and peace to hundreds of soldiers wounded by bullets, land mines, hand grenades and mortar fire provided by our country, the U.S.A. The hospital director was not at all pleased that we were there having all his wounded soldiers on display. However, on this tour we had, in a roundabout way, official government sponsorship. The director finally let us sing for some of the staff. He seemed to like what he heard, because he led us into one of the wards where soldiers were being treated, then to another ward, and another. Finally, we sang to the very critically wounded, including many amputees. As we left, about 100 patients came outside the hospital, all in their same yellow pajamas, and formed a circle around us to say goodbye. We sang one more song together, "There'll Be Sunshine in the Morning," "Brillará el Sol en la Mañana" which included "paz a todas las naciones,"

“Peace shall come to every nation.” This entire visit was a very humbling experience for us.

We asked the director if there was anything else we could do for him. He said with strength and passion, “Go home and tell what you saw here!” Which we did. For most of the next year we traveled widely, sharing stories and songs about our Nicaraguan journeys and telling people about the campaign to insist that congress stop the funding for the Contra war. Which they did in 1987.

O Come and Mourn ~ Here is a new setting of a traditional Good Friday text asking us to come and stand at the cross and deeply mourn the crucified Christ. I’ve named this tune *APANÁS* to acknowledge the present day crucifixion named in the preceding song, “With Pain to Deep for Words.”

In Defense of Creation ~ In 1986, as a call for hope and action, the United Methodist bishops created a study document, “In Defense of Creation: The Nuclear Crisis and a Just Peace.” We were asked to write a song in response to this work. It was first sung at the California/Nevada Annual Conference meeting at that time. Twenty-five years later, this song still speaks to our need to guarantee the well-being of all life on our planet home.