



Tell Out My Soul

Music that Moves You

An Interview By the Very Rev.

Julia McCray Goldsmith

Everyone loves the hymn version of “Tell Out My Soul.” It’s just so singable, and also so central to how we think about church. Stewardship may be about nuts and bolts, but—like everything we do in church—it needs theological context. The Magnificat beautifully supports a generous theology. There is an innate beauty to what Mary is saying, but it is framed within an expectation of justice and equality. Her words are a Gospel imperative. Church music should always be like that: it should grab people where we are and take us to a new place. Through the music, the message gets into our souls and minds and hearts, where we can’t get rid of it.

I was a childhood church nerd who felt called to music ministry from a young age. I’ve been fortunate to have worked in many fabulous places, and each place opened up new horizons for me. I’ve had to be open to each parish and their traditions, which means that I was learning as much as I was teaching. I feel especially grateful to my home parish in Kennewick, Washington. They took the risk of having me serve as their music director while I was still in high school!

Church musicians have a strange and mysterious gift. It can’t be seen, and people can’t always tell you what they’ve received, but I know that they do. All of our arts “tell out” what our bodies and souls are doing, but music has a pride of place. Alignment to the liturgy is what makes it principal. And because of this, music serves to deepen community and strengthen commitment. It builds energy around belonging to each other. If we’re not doing that as church musicians, then why are we doing it? Our work is to amplify the Gospel, lift people up, and bring them into the fold. TENS.org



Questions for Reflection:

Music is one way that we tell story and align our words and actions, what are others that you have experienced or practice? How do you engage your creative efforts with your story?



After having served several parishes and cathedrals over the course of a half-century, **Bruce Neswick** now works in “semi-retirement” as the Artist-in-Residence at St. James by-the-Sea, La Jolla, California.

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Tell Out My Soul

There is Little To Say That We Cannot Say Through Song

When I was in high school, my drama teacher told us that when we are creative - whether we are performing, drawing, playing music, etc. - we are participating in our own small way in the holy act of Creation in much the same way that God created all things. It had never occurred to me that something as simple as writing a song was an echo of God creating the universe.

The human voice is the vehicle of the soul - it is the means by which we communicate with one another from the moment we emerge screaming into the delivery room. Song is an illumination of that communication, a way to come together as an entity and speak with one voice. As a congregation, song is a means by which we breathe as one body and pray as one soul. As I've heard it said, "when we sing, we pray twice."

Composing music is not only my form of praying as an individual, but my way of bringing the choir together to pray as one with music written especially for them. It's my way of giving a gift to the congregation as well as using the gifts given to me to participate in my own tiny echo of Creation.

Music can serve as a vehicle for healing, for social justice, for experiencing grief, or for expressing great joy. We see senior choirs form for the benefits to the mind and body, choirs for the unhoused to feel the benefits of community, and social justice choirs form to spread the word of change throughout the world. There is little to say that we cannot say through song - and little more powerful than saying those things as a gathered community of love sharing in the act of Creation. TENS.org



Questions for Reflection:

Does art need to be good to be valuable? We talk about sharing the gifts that God gave us - but what about the areas we are not especially gifted in - should we create art anyway - as we Tell Out Our Souls?



Mickey McGroarty is the keyboardist and Choir Director at Church of Our Saviour in Akron, OH in addition to directing the choir at the University of Akron, directing Sing Stark's Vox Audio, playing at Temple Israel in Fairlawn, and composing.



Tell Out My Soul

Getting Above the Noise

My faith re-formation journey has happened through creating acrylic, ink, and gold leaf canvas paintings of Sunday School stories. They include primary colors in a simplistic, folk-art style. I wanted to depict new interpretations because I was raised in a tradition that made no room for my own curiosity and experience. I was told, "Here's the story, what it means, and what you're supposed to do with it." Anything else was a sin. As I aged, I wanted to look with fresh eyes at a welcoming God. I longed to discover what the Spirit was telling me through Jonah, David and Goliath, and so on. Their all-black silhouettes allow them to represent all genders, nationalities, and cultures. My figures wear gold leaf crowns to represent that we're all made in God's image. I even chose to put a crown on Goliath because he's a child of God too. Every painting includes at least one bright heart to remind the viewer it's all about love, no matter who is represented in the stories and on the canvas.

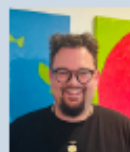
One painting is of Zaccheaus (Luke 19:1-10). He was short and overwhelmed; he couldn't see Jesus and had to climb a tree. Zaccheaus was able to get above the noise and was gifted with a new perspective, literally and figuratively. I was trying to express how new viewpoints allow us to hear and see things differently. It's an example of the ways alternative approaches still point to a loving God and not a god who wants to scare us. All perspectives are welcome, even when they may not seem like they're "right" or "acceptable." We all have the love of God inside us and the crown on our heads that mark us as God's beloved, always.

This project let me approach Bible stories in creative ways that were about what I saw and not what I was told to see. It's important to me that all of us experience scripture in healthy, affirming, and welcoming ways. These paintings healed my soul from childhood experiences full of judgment and fear. Now I find so much joy and creative expression in worship and my faith. I hope to offer that same lightness and possibility to other people too. tens.org



Questions for Reflection:

How do you use your creative energies to find your path?



Jason Jansen is grateful to combine his faith with art as he and his wife raise four young children in the Episcopal Church, hoping to inspire awe, wonder, and questions in them as they develop their own relationships with God.





Tell Out My Soul

Truth-telling and Creativity

As a visual artist and author, I speak Truth (capital T) and love through creativity. I weave prayer and poetry into every word on the page and color on the canvas. I create to communicate with the One who gives me breath.

In my writing, photography, and painting—I hope to capture the essence of what is holy and complex, inspiring and life-giving.

This hunger for Truth-telling began at my grandmother's kitchen table, where the colors of grief, loss, remembering, and hope spilled across its surface. My painting and writing table was once my Grandmother's kitchen table.

Purple hull peas, green okra, yellow squash, and red tomatoes adorned the table – precious jewels colored by hard work and Louisiana sunshine—a meal prepared with love in the tiny kitchen of their home. The fragrance of summer filled the air, and we held hands and offered thanks. After each meal, the children would find themselves under the kitchen table, planning their next wild adventure. Occasionally, we would get quiet, listen to what the adults were saying, and giggle out loud when we heard something we shouldn't have.

I inherited that old table when my grandmother died. It is no fancy antique; it is an inexpensive furniture store table. But for me, it has become an altar of remembrance and hope. I now paint, write, and pray at my grandmother's table, the same table I once played under as a child. Each brushstroke and written word is infused with memories, carrying on the breeze the whispers of my ancestors and hopeful prayers for the future.

My Grandmother's greatest gift was teaching me to love in the truest sense of the word. And so, with each brushstroke and written word, I tell out my soul, honoring my grandmother's legacy of love, transcending the ordinary to echo the sacred in every creation. tens.org



Questions for Reflection:

What does “Truth-telling” mean to you, and how can you incorporate that into your own artistic or creative practice?



Roger Hutchison is a best-selling author, artist, award-winning nature photographer, and Episcopal lay leader recognized for his work with children and openness about his mental health journey.



WEEK 5



Tell Out My Soul

A Woven Prayer

*"For the joy of ear and eye, for the Heart and mind's delight,
for the mystic harmony linking sense to sound and sight,
Christ our God, to thee we raise this our hymn of grateful
praise," - Hymn "For the Beauty of the Earth"*

I love fabric: the colors, the texture, the vast diversity of uses, and all of the connections that are made because of these beautiful possibilities. When I look back through the years of my life, bits of fabric wrap many of my memories... silk samples from an aunt's decorating business, given to me to play with, in colors too beautiful to cut up; scraps from garments my mother made, cottons and wool and corduroy; a yo-yo bed cover another aunt made me, bright and heavy, hugging me at night; someone's crazy quilt, all silks and velvets. These pieces, and so many more tied up in thread and yarn and ribbon, shared and created by women to express their love.

As I sit in a pew in church surrounded by the symbols of the love God has shown us in the words of our gospels, prayers, hymns, and in the color and beauty of hangings and vestments around me, I can feel the same kind of love wrapped around me.

When I was first given the opportunity to create a stole, and then a chasuble, a frontal, banners, and paraments, I felt like finally I could share some of the love I felt with those around me. God has gifted us with so much beauty, so much color, and so very much love that, for me, there are not enough words to express it all. But each piece of fabric art and beauty is piece of prayer in process and a mite of thanks for the blessings all around.  tens.org



Questions for Reflection:

What are your activities or hobbies that you see as prayerful, or offer you an opportunity to channel your prayers?



Mary Franklin is a lifelong Episcopalian with a love of and fascination for fabric, color and words, especially words of praise and gratitude.