

Learning the Living Christ Through Music: Sandy Utah East Stake Women's Conference
Talk given by Leann Hansen, Stake Relief Society 1st counselor, March 7, 2015

The centerpiece of our Women's Conference is a musical presentation by the Young Women of the 3rd Ward. I would like to share with you some history about how this came to be.

In [D&C 107:23](#) we are told the prophets, seers, and revelators of our day are "special witnesses of the name of Christ in all the world." On **January 1, 2000**, they publicly declared their testimony of a **living** Christ.

In a letter to Priesthood Leaders introducing "**The Living Christ: The Testimony of the Apostles**" the First Presidency wrote: "*The Prophet Joseph Smith declared: 'The fundamental principles of our religion are the testimony of the Apostles and Prophets, concerning Jesus Christ, that He died, was buried, and rose again the third day, and ascended into heaven; and all other things which pertain to our religion are only appendages to it.'* In that spirit, we add our witness to that of our predecessors.

"We encourage you to use this written testimony in helping to build the faith of our Heavenly Father's children" ([First Presidency letter, Dec. 10, 1999](#)). Signed Gordon B. Hinckley, Thomas S. Monson and James E. Faust.

"The Living Christ" is a document of epic proportion! I have loved it since I first read it. About ten years ago, while serving as the Young Women's president, I challenged my girls and the other leaders to learn it. I think about half of them took the challenge and succeeded. The other half became very familiar with the document as we recited it each week. I saw lives change before my eyes as it was memorized. Through the words and the Spirit my girls gained a testimony of Jesus. It became another layer of protection from the world.

It also changed my life! Because of the power of the document that I saw first hand, we began to memorize it as an extended family. Even my three- and four-year old grandchildren were successful in memorizing parts of it. As a mother and grandmother, I will be forever grateful for the prayerful inspiration behind putting the words to music.

Fast forward to January of 2014. The 3rd Ward young women have been issued the same challenge -- memorize "The Living Christ" to be performed at their Young Women in Excellence program in November. They were encouraged to work on a different paragraph each month.

There were a couple of girls, who happen to be sisters, that accepted the challenge and worked together and had it memorized within a month. The rest of the young women weren't quite as enthused. They tried learning through traditional methods. They even found other music on the Internet but that wasn't effective either.

By August, Sister Connie Slaughter, the 3rd Ward Young Women's president realized their November goal may be out of their reach. While walking through the neighborhood one morning she came across Sister Carrie Wrigley, a member of the 8th Ward. Connie and Carrie are good friends but their walking paths never crossed until that morning. Through the years they had collaborated on music for Stake Girls camp and other Stake Relief Society events.

As Carrie and Connie were visiting, Connie shared with her how her young women were trying to memorize "The Living Christ." Before she realized it, Connie asked, "Carrie, would you write music to 'The Living Christ?'" Carrie graciously responded, "I would love to!"

Later that week they met to discuss it. Connie felt the document needed to be divided into six different parts: three parts to be spoken and the other three parts put to music. So Carrie composed three songs in one evening.

At the first practice, things did not go well with the speaking parts – the words were spoken robotically, in a monotone. But when the girls came to the first song, the difference was amazing. The words and the Spirit were felt. The girls sang "*with the spirit, and with the understanding also.*" ([1 Cor. 14:15](#))

The next morning Connie received a call from Carrie telling her she felt the entire Living Christ needed to be put to music and she had composed the music for three additional songs. Now the entire document could be sung. The young women began to learn the song in the middle of September, and it was ready to be performed in November. A newly-called leader learned the music and the words in less than two weeks.

After consulting with Elder Ballard, the General Young Women's Presidency, the Church Music department and the Church Copyright office, permission was granted for Carrie's inspired music to be shared beyond the bounds of the 3rd Ward. Today we are the beneficiaries of her great gift.

Elder Russell M. Nelson said, *"Worthy music is powerful. It has the power to make us humble, prayerful and grateful... Music has power to provide spiritual nourishment. It has healing power. It allows us to contemplate the Atonement and the Restoration of the gospel.... It provides power for us to express prayerful thoughts and bear testimony of sacred truths."* (["The Power and Protection of Worthy Music,"](#) May 4, 2008, CES fireside.)

The scriptures are full of examples of the power of music.

In [D&C 25:12](#) the Lord says: *"For my soul delighteth in the song of the heart; yea the song of the righteous is a prayer unto me, and it shall be answered with a blessing upon their heads."*

In the preface of the Hymnbook, the First Presidency has written, *"Hymns can also help us withstand the temptations of the adversary. We encourage you to memorize your favorite hymns and study the scriptures that relate to them. Then, if unworthy thoughts enter your mind, sing a hymn to yourself, crowding out the evil with the good."*

Because of the power of this music, as a Stake Relief Society Presidency, we are putting forth the challenge to each one of us to memorize "The Living Christ." We know that by doing this we will be strengthened to withstand the power of evil. We will become women of Christ – anchored by our testimonies in the Savior. We want to echo our Stake Presidency's challenge given at each ward conference, which is to gain an understanding of the enabling power of the Atonement and to find a way to come closer to the Savior each day.

We will be singing the song as group after the broadcast of the General Women's Meeting the end of September. To help facilitate this challenge, each ward Relief Society president will be given a copy of the music. Also Carrie Wrigley has created online access on her [website](#), in accordance with instructions she was given, allowing password-protected access to the music.

I have a firm testimony that Heavenly Father leads and guides His children. To see how beautifully our Relief Society theme for the year and plans for this Women's Conference fell in line with counsel from our Priesthood leaders leaves no doubt in my mind that Heavenly Father is aware of each one of us. I am grateful to Heavenly Father for the "matchless gift of His divine Son," and for the enabling power of the Atonement.

*"The world is moving away from the Lord faster and farther than ever before.
The adversary has been loosed upon the earth.*

*We watch, hear, read, study, and share the words of prophets to be forewarned and protected.
For example, "The Family: A Proclamation to the World" was given long before we experienced
the challenges now facing the family.*

***The Living Christ: The Testimony of the Apostles" was prepared in advance
of when we will need it most."***

---Elder Robert D. Hales, [October 2013 General Conference](#)