

Theme Song

Greetings in the spirit of Jesus Christ ... the shepherd who rescues the strays and guides the lost!

My name is Tom Bandy. For over twenty years I have consulted with churches of all sizes, cultures, theologies, and traditions ... in North American and around the world. My website is www.ThrivingChurch.com.

Many churches are involved in visioning processes. Visioning is a matter of spiritual discernment ... not strategic planning. Visioning leads to strategic planning, and comes before strategic planning. However, the goal of visioning is to align ourselves with God's purpose to bless the world. Motivation and direction comes first ... tactics come later.

A good visioning process results in three very practical tools that will be used in future strategic planning: Theme Song, Inspiring Image, and Mission Statement.

Today I want to coach you to develop a Theme Song.

I speak especially to those musicians in the congregation, and to anyone who appreciates music as a means to motivate and guide effective mission. God values any genre of music ... choral or instrumental ... ancient, traditional, or contemporary ... that reveals God's purpose to redeem the world.

Imagine a theme song that captures the heart and purpose of a church. It is like a national anthem that unites multiple cultures in a common national purpose. It is like a university fight song that motivates defense and offense to strive harder for the goal line. It is like a marching cadence that sustains an army to keep going even when they are weary.

Imagine such a song that could be sung in every worship service; begin every meeting of Session or congregational pot luck supper; and hum when every member is out jogging, walking, or exercising at the gym.

For example, my own church that replaced its traditional building with an 11 story high rise for bachelor apartments for refugees and a

worship center on the main floor. We routinely sang a song from our hymnbook entitled *From the Slave Pens of the Delta*.

Another church in North Carolina used the well known song *The Lord of the Dance* by Sydney Carter. As you know, each verse of the song comes from the life of Jesus: his birth, calling the disciples, healing the sick, teaching the crowds, crucifixion and resurrection. They picked a special verse for each season for the Christian Year, but always sang the refrain:

Dance, dance, wherever you may be
I am the lord of the dance, said he
And I lead you all, wherever you may be
And I lead you all in the dance, said he

I know a church in Australia that is reaching out to blue collar young adults, and is starting a special worship service for long-haul truckers between Perth, Adelaide, and Melbourne. The distances are so long and deserted they have signs along the highway saying “Powernap Now!” Their theme song in worship and radio is “I’m On My Way” (written and recorded by the Scottish folk/pop group *The Proclaimers* and popularized in the Disney movie *Shrek*).

I'm on my way from misery to happiness today (uh-huh, uh-huh, uh-huh, uh-huh)

I'm on my way from misery to happiness today (uh-huh, uh-huh, uh-huh, uh-huh)

I'm on my way to what I want from this world
And years from now you'll make it to the next world
And everything that you receive up yonder
Is what you gave to me the day I wandered

I took a right, I took a right turning yesterday (uh-huh, uh-huh, uh-huh, uh-huh) (yea)

I took a right, I took a right turning yesterday (yea, yea, yea, yea)

I took the road that brought me to your home town

I took the bus to streets that I could walk down

I walked the streets to find the one I'd looked for

I climbed the stair that led me to your front door

Believe me, the place is rocking, and the truck drivers are singing, and everyone is celebrating Jesus Christ in their lives, as they barrel down the road.

Forgive my inability to carry a tune. But the truth is that musical talent is secondary. Musical intentionality is everything.

What is your song? What is the song that captures the vision of your congregation ... in your neighborhood or community?

Here is a great opportunity for choirs, instrumentalists, and anyone who loves music, to focus the vision of the church. I imagine a variety of musical impressions sung in worship in the weeks ahead. The pastor and board will decide what song best captures the vision of the congregation. But wouldn't it be wonderful to create a CD of songs that could be given to newcomers and visitors to our church?

Thank you! And thank God for your commitment to bless the world and renew the church. God bless all here!