

Lord, Bless This Home

Sing to the Lord, all the earth!

Tell of his salvation from day to day.

Declare his glory among the nations,

his marvelous works among all the peoples!

For great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised,

and he is to be feared above all gods (1 Chron. 16:23–25).

Music Is Gospel Work

In our Home and Family discussions, we often speak of the importance of preventative gospel work. Music and singing in the home is just that. It brings family and friends together. The songs and hymns of Zion tell of God's salvation plan. We are reminded of His goodness and grace. Songs are good summaries of sermons. When combined with a melody, the words seem to settle deeper into our heart. Singing comforts and uplifts a traveler on their journey of faith.

God saw the need to have a special section of Home and Family songs in our *Songs and Hymns of Zion* (SHZ) hymnal. *We Gather All in Song Together* (SHZ 433) is one of them. In this *Voice of Zion* spread, Barbara Byman shares how she was moved by the Spirit to write this song. In another writing, Doug Bratt shares how the Spirit moved his wife to write the words to *The Lord Has Given Us His Word* (SHZ 446). God has given words for songs to several other North American believers. Look them up in your songbook, together with your family. How many can you find? Do any of the writers live close to you?

As a youth, I remember how singing songs in the homes was a great gift and support to my life of faith. I was starting a new job. There was only one believing family living in that city. Sixty miles away lived my grandmother, aunt and uncle. I was 300 miles from young people my age. God granted times to visit with believers each week. We often sang songs of Zion during our visits in the homes and at the youth events. I especially marveled when singing with my grandmother. She only spoke Finn, and I only spoke English. We sang in our native tongue. At these times, I clearly understood what my grandmother was saying. She was singing of heaven!

God Gives Hearts to Serve in Music, Too

I am especially thankful to see how God has blessed music activities in His congregations. We have been blessed with many albums (CDs) in recent years and now also in the coming year. Presently there are eight new albums scheduled to be published this year! These support our homes and families, and we thank the directors, musicians, and all that have participated in this work. They have put their gifts on the exchange table for the benefit and upbuilding of God's congregations. They have toiled many hours and we thank God that He gives the heart and mind to work.

When the congregations' Home and Family committees were first formed, hope was expressed to have a music album with a Home and Family theme. *Lord, Bless This Home* is just that. In this spread, Arika Byman shares a few thoughts about this album, which was done by the Longview congregation musicians, directed by Ross Byman, and will be available for purchase soon. Buy the album, enjoy the music, and sing along!

One of the songs on this album is song of Zion 226—a song used at baptisms. It is a clear exhortation to sing to the Lord and includes the prayer that each one would remain secure in the family of God.

Sing to the Lord! Glory and praise—our Father on high, gives of His grace.

He sent His Son! Vict'ry is won. Christ has redeemed all His brethren.

*Dear one, for you we pray, stay in His grace each day,
always secure in the family of God.*

Rod Nikula

The Joy of Singing

In March 2016 believers from the Longview congregation gathered in Olympia, Wash. to record a selection of songs and hymns of Zion focused on the home and family theme. It was a festive occasion. It followed weeks of Thursday evening practices, during which choir members enjoyed the fellowship of believers and the gift of music.

Participants expressed the joy of gathering together to share in God's gift of music. "It was a comforting experience," Gabi Heim says. The joy and comfort of the believing home was a common theme in the songs selected. "Father, bless our sons and daughters...Draw us, with our children, closer to the heart of our Redeemer" (SHZ 246:1). These familiar words echo the heartfelt prayer of each believer that God would bless and carry our families in living faith.

God blessed the work that went into this recording, and it is a true blessing to enjoy the gift of music with believers near and far away.

Arika Byman

Music Is a Blessing in Our Home

"Christian music is comforting in times of sorrow," **Stan Laulainen** says. "We can also sing praises to God. Songs are like prayers—in times of hardship and times of happiness. It is comforting when we gather with other believers to sing or listen, and we enjoy the fellowship of believers. Through songs of Zion children learn about God's kingdom. These songs are examples: *Jesus Loves Me* (SHZ 451); *Lord, I Am a Little One* (SHZ 467); and *There Are Treasures for Children in Heaven Above* (SHZ 448)."

"Listening to church music is peaceful," Stan's wife **Briana** adds. "So often when I actually take time to read the words and comprehend them, they are sermons in themselves. I'm comforted and uplifted when I can listen and/or sing along. Turning to church music is comforting, especially during times of sorrow and difficulty. When God gives joyous times Christian music praises Him, and my heart rejoices. Often I have felt that we believers are so incredibly lucky that we own this precious gift of faith, and imagining—what will heaven be like? God has written in Scripture that it will be everlasting peace and joy, and that is often the feeling I get when I am surrounded by believers, singing or listening to songs and hymns of Zion."

Songs of Zion Have Carried Me

Sue Grangroth, of Big Lake, Minn., says:

"Music has always brought joy in my life, especially songs of Zion. As a little girl, I'd ask my mom to play for me at

night so I could relax and fall asleep easier. As a teen, the singing especially at haps was uplifting and reassuring during times of doubt. Singing also brought out the thankfulness and rejoicing of my heart that I was a believer. Singing songs of Zion has carried me through my life as an adult in the very same manner.

“I remember clearly the day my parents were able to buy a stereo system with big speakers. I couldn’t believe our good fortune. Now beautiful music could always fill our home bringing peace and comfort.

“I particularly enjoy the congregation singing CDs that are published, especially those clear enough to hear and understand the words. I love singing along with them at home and while traveling.”

God Gives the Gift of Music

Doug Bratt, of Princeton, Minn, says:

“For the elders and shut-ins, the recordings of songs of Zion have been wonderful in offering hours of contentment. God has given the gift of music. He also has given gifts to many believers to write the words and music over time.

“Some years ago my wife Margaret attended a songwriters’ gathering at Hasscib Lake Camp. She told me how much she enjoyed her time there. On the way home a tune came to her mind, and words were also given. It is now a published song in our songbook, *The Lord Has Given Us His Word* (SHZ 446). God’s work continues in this way.

Fond memories over the years of Christianity in America include the growth of songs and hymns of Zion and the publishing of them. We participated in some of it and attended a few of the recording sessions. These are unforgettable experiences.”

Love Inspired the Song

We Gather All in Song Together (SHZ 433)

A Little Background

One of my nieces was getting married and moving to a new congregation. She and her sisters had been close with my daughter during their growing-up years, and it felt like our extended family was losing a member, although not in the “lost” sense, of course. We knew that she would be well taken care of and loved there also, but there was a little sadness in this auntie’s heart in seeing a niece grow up and move away. We were planning a wedding shower for her, and I told my daughter that I would like to attempt to write a song that would echo my thoughts. These girls could then sing it for her at the shower as a little gift.

It was originally written to a different tune, but the LLC hymnal committee suggested another tune that wasn’t already planned for the new hymnal. They worked with me on suggested changes in some of the wording, set it to the new tune, and it was ready for publishing. My hope was that other believers could find that the song’s sentiments would echo in their hearts, too, and find uses for the song. I have been pleasantly surprised with the frequency of its use locally. It seems that God blessed my efforts.

Barb Byman