

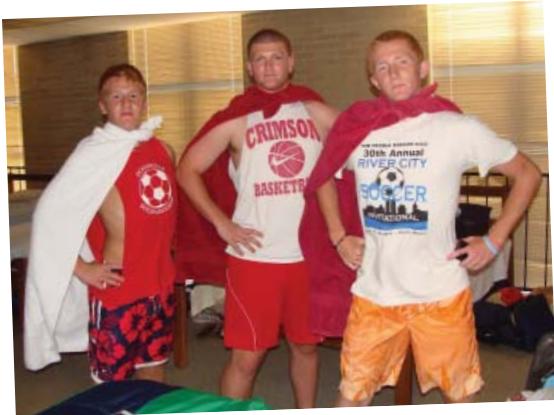


# Making “Miracles”

The story of the First Presbyterian Youth Group  
Joplin Song Project

**by: Allen Stare**

(Originally published in “the SOURCE” newspaper over six weekly installments during February and March of 2013)



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Published by: First Presbyterian Church, Jacksonville, IL. Contents originally published by “the SOURCE” newspaper, Jacksonville, IL.

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Photos provided by: Marcy Jones, Craig Albers and Donna Stare.  
Photo and design for the single “Album Cover” by Marcy Jones.

# **Making “Miracles” (Part 1):**

The story of the First Presbyterian Youth Group  
Joplin Song Project

by: Allen Stare

[As originally published Feb. & March of 2013. This story appeared over the course of six weekly installments in “the SOURCE” newspaper in Jacksonville, IL.]

*[In the first week of August of 2012, the youth group from the First Presbyterian Church in Jacksonville, IL. set off for a mission trip in Joplin, MO. While there, four of them were inspired to write a song. Now the group is trying to turn that song into a gift that will keep giving back to Joplin. This is the story of the trip, and the making of “Turn Us into Miracles (Song for Joplin)”]*

## **GETTING THERE**

I had a ring side seat...I was the Wheel Man.

On a Saturday morning last August, while most high schoolers were getting in a final few parties before the start of school...or putting the finishing touches on a summertime tan, 15 kids ranging in age from 15 to 18 got on a bus in the parking lot of the First Presbyterian Church in Jacksonville. Their destination...Joplin, Missouri. Their mission: lend a hand in the on-going clean-up effort following the devastation of the deadliest tornado in recorded history.

I happen to be the Youth Ministry Committee Chair as part of the First Presbyterian Church Session. I'll be the first to admit that I have no idea what I'm doing, but since my daughter, Jennie, was in the Youth Group, I decided to get involved with the Youth Group, too! I'm muddling along, helping out where I can. One of the places where I decided I could really contribute was with the driving. I got my CDL the summer before last specifically so I could drive the Youth Group in a church bus on their annual summer excursions. Craig Albers, whose daughter, Maddy, AND son,

David, are both in the youth group, also got his CDL so we could trade off driving duties.

But Maddy had a commitment on that Saturday, so she and Craig weren't going to be able to come down until Sunday.

That's how I wound up driving this crew of amazing kids to Joplin, MO.

Getting a CDL to drive a church bus isn't that unusual...until you realize that First Pres doesn't own a bus. We bum

our bus off of the Grace United Methodist Church (and a BIG shout out to Pastor Mike and everyone at Grace for loaning us the wheels!). It's a great bus...it held 15 kids, four adults and all of the necessary luggage, pillows, snacks and gear for a week of tornado cleanup...including a banjo. Tim's banjo.

Our Youth Coordinator and Leader Tim Chipman is a very musical guy. His instrument of choice is probably the piano. It's a great bus, but we just do not have room for a piano, no matter how creatively Craig does the packing. So, when he's out and about, Tim has an old, jangly 5-string banjo that, with a little coaxing, produces some very passable chords. The banjo came out several times during the six plus hours we spent on I-44 while crossing Missouri. The kids had a blast singing some of the Youth Group favorites. When they weren't singing, they were deejaying, plugging iPhones and mp3 players into the bus sound system. We heard a little bit of everything, from classic rock to contemporary



**Magic Bus:** A little goofiness while riding. Music helped to pass the time on the long rides. Maddy and Andi (two of our soloists) are in front, L-R, looking thrilled. That's Tim in the shades.

Christian to current pop hits to some eyebrow raising rap (edited versions only!)

Since “Grace United Methodist Church” is emblazoned on the side of the bus, and we were usually introduced as being from “Jacksonville”, we did spend our first 48 hours in Joplin explaining that we were the Presbyterians from Illinois... NOT the Methodists from Florida.

## **JOPLIN’S NIGHTMARE**

Joplin is a great midwestern town of about 50,000 people. It sits in the southwestern corner of Missouri just a few minutes from both the Kansas and Oklahoma borders. Joplin’s claim to fame, prior to May of 2011, was a name check in the Nat “King” Cole tune “Route 66”. Given the choice, I’m sure that Joplin would be happy if the only place you’d ever heard of them was sandwiched between “Saint Looey” and “Oklahoma City” in the second verse of Nat’s ode to the Mother Road. In the days following May 22nd, 2011 Joplin was on the minds and in the hearts of the entire country for another reason. Images and stories about Joplin were blasted around the world, with reports of the disaster showing up on news reports in places as distant as Germany and Japan.

At 5:41pm on that Saturday evening, Joplin was hit by one of the largest, most powerful tornadoes ever to be measured, recorded, videoed or photographed. It was an EF-5...which is at the top of the “EF” scale. What’s “EF”? That stands for “Enhanced Fujita” which is a scale, developed by a guy named Fujita, used to measure the power and destructive force of a tornado. An EF-5 means internal winds in excess of 200 miles per hour. EF-5 means maximum force and destruction. An EF-5 is the stuff of nightmares.

Out on the prairie, one of these behemoths will scour the landscape. Crops are pulled up by their roots, trees splintered, in some cases even ruts are dug into the ground. Since its energy is derived from the layer of storm clouds where it spawns, an EF-5 doesn’t normally spend much time on the ground. It will usually

hop and skip over the landscape, gaining power, touching down, lifting up to become a funnel, recharging in the cloud layer, touching down again. It takes a lot for an EF-5 to maintain that level of energy when it is on the ground. Some tornadoes will become an EF-5 only briefly in their existence and then the energy dissipates and the force is reduced. Many of the largest and most powerful tornadoes are also fast movers, often times travelling in excess of fifty miles per hour.

If any of those traits had characterized the Joplin EF-5, it might not have become the deadliest tornado in recorded history. The Joplin EF-5 was a rare and horrifying phenomenon. The Joplin storm touched down on the west side of town...and stayed. It was three quarters of a mile wide through most of its existence...in some places widening out to nearly a mile. It moved slowly, inexorably, at about 10-12 miles per hour...and it never left the ground. It churned through densely populated residential districts comprised of single family homes. Winds well in excess of 200 miles per hour blasted the local Wal-mart, the Home Depot, the Hospital...the High School.

For 32 minutes the Joplin EF-5 ripped a scar seven miles long and nearly a mile wide through the southern third of the city. The death toll of 162 lives lost made it the single deadliest tornado ever...but as tragic as that number is, it's only a part of the story. Nearly 1200 people were injured, many seriously and permanently. Nearly eight THOUSAND structures were destroyed or damaged. Hundreds of those, mostly homes, completely disappeared leaving nothing but a foundation filled with debris. More than 400 businesses were affected, instantly putting 4500 people out of work. An estimated 12,000 vehicles were destroyed. Virtually every tree in the path of the storm was gone.

We spent a week working in the affected area. We spoke to people who crawled out from under debris. I've read two books and dozens of news stories about the storm. I watched a riveting documentary shot by an accomplished storm chaser who was right there as it was happening. After all of that, I still can't wrap my

brain around what it would have been like to have survived in the path of that monstrosity.

## **BEING THERE**

We got to town on Saturday night, August 4th. After moving into a dormitory building hosted by a local Presbyterian Church, we had dinner at a great sports bar and grill that reminded me a lot of Mulligan's here on the square. We hadn't been in town for more than an hour before the first random citizen shook my hand and thanked us for being there. That became a hallmark of the trip. Walking through the local Wal-mart while wearing a "Presbyterian Disaster Assistance" t-shirt meant being stopped multiple times with questions like "where you from?" and handshakes or hugs accompanied by "thanks for helping out."

As soon as the storm had passed, Joplinites started helping each other. They didn't wait around for assistance, but they were certainly thankful when it arrived. Thousands of volunteers from across the U.S. and even around the globe have pitched in since May, 2011 (we aren't even the first church from Jacksonville to make the trek). By the time we arrived 15 months after the disaster, the massive scope of the rebuilding effort was just starting to come into focus. The large piles of debris were gone, a few homes have been rebuilt here and there and a few trees have been planted but rebuilding the hundreds of destroyed homes is just getting underway. Whole neighborhoods are still nothing but crumbling foundations.

Sunday, our first full day in town, was a day off. We didn't report for work until Monday morning. We attended services at our host church (again, claiming our Presbyterianness!) then used the downtime to tour the affected area. We wanted to prepare ourselves for what we might find on Monday. The storm path has an alien, desert-like quality to it. We started on 26th street coming from the west...the entry point. We stopped at Cumberland Park just across the street from the decimated and uninhabitable, but still standing, Mercy Hospital. The image of the hospital became

iconic in the weeks following the storm.

Continuing east, we moved a few blocks north to 20th street. At the corner of 20th and Indiana is...was...the Joplin High School. "JHS" (yes, many of our kids made that eerie connection immediately) was a huge complex. It is now an enormous debris field. The brick sign on the corner still stands, but all that is left of the word "JOPLIN" is the "OP". Some optimist added an "H" and an "E" with duct tape so that the sign now reads "HOPE High School". I don't think any one site hit home with our group more than this one. We took a picture at the sign and it is probably going to become our "Album Cover" for the song.

A spark had been lit, and our desire to help out was enormous. But, as Thomas Edison says, there can be no inspiration without perspiration. The perspiration, thanks to the 100+ degree August heat, would begin on Monday. The inspiration would take a couple of days to develop.

*[In Part 2...the debut performance of "Turn Us into Miracles".]*



**Out of Chaos Rises HOPE:** Our crew posing at what is left of the Joplin High School sign on Sunday afternoon. The sign still stands at the corner of 20th and Indiana. The field behind has been cleared of the debris from the former high school.

## **Making “Miracles” (Part 2):**

The story of the First Presbyterian Youth Group  
Joplin Song Project

### **GETTING TO WORK**

No more messing around...Monday morning, August 6th, our crew woke up ready to WORK.

We headed to the offices of “Rebuild Joplin” located in a strip mall on 7th Street...one of Joplin’s major east-west thoroughfares. Traffic was bustling and the city was working, even at 7:00am. We had been told to report for our work assignment early. Remember last August? By 2:00pm on most days the sun was scorching, with triple digit temperatures. We were told to start our day in the (relative) cool of 7am and shut things down by 2p...2:30 at the latest.

“Rebuild Joplin” is an organization that sprung into being in the aftermath of the storm. Local businesspeople saw the problem immediately: they had lots of help, but no organization. To best utilize volunteer resources, rebuild Joplin took the lead as a Disaster Assistance traffic cop. If you want to volunteer, you contact Rebuild Joplin. The folks at RJ then categorize you as an asset. We were identified as “unskilled”. That’s no slam at us, it’s just you don’t find many 17 year old plumbers or electricians. Once you have been categorized and assessed, the folks at RJ will direct you to one of the many relief organizations that have set up temporary offices in the city. “Habitat for Humanity” gets the carpenters, plumbers and electricians. We discovered that Americorps has lots of work for those of us in the “unskilled” category.

At the Rebuild Joplin offices we were treated to a quick donut and a welcome presentation that gave us an overview of the disaster and what had happened in the fifteen months prior to our arrival on the scene. Then we packed the gang back into the bus and

headed for the offices of Americorps about four blocks away.

The folks at Americorps were waiting for us with open arms...and buckets.

## **BUCKET BRIGADE**

The anticipation was killing us! What would our first assignment be? Our Americorps volunteer coordinator scanned a clipboard loaded with lists of volunteer groups and their assignments. Scanning...scanning...then, finally: "First Pres Youth Group? Yeah...you're watering trees."

Excuse me? No, you misunderstand...we're here to help with the tornado cleanup. You might notice that this is a strong and vibrant group of Christian youth ready to take on big jobs with lots of heavy lifting. We're really not suited to an activity that old people like to do after they retire.

There was no misunderstanding. We were watering trees.

They gave us about half a mile of garden hose, a handful of hose splitters and 40 of those plastic five gallon buckets. Okay, so maybe this wasn't going to be retirement level puttering.

Once we were packed up, we headed over to Murphy Boulevard Park just off of 20th Street with instructions to pour 25 gallons (five buckets) at the base of each sapling...slowly. The ground was as hard as a rock. Pouring too quickly would mean runoff and the water had to go down to the roots of the trees.

We attacked that park like it was a military maneuver. There were stand pipe spigots hidden in bushes about every quarter of a mile. We divided the group into two teams. Each team took some hose and headed for the spigots. Buckets were scattered near the ends of each hose. The mission was clear: fill two buckets, then head for the closest sapling carrying eighty pounds of water. Pour. Repeat.

There was some grumbling among the troops...what did this have

to do with the tornado?

As I was searching for a standpipe I came across a man in uniform. He was a forestry specialist for the Missouri Department of Conservation. He said, “oh, are you guys on tree watering duty

this week?” (This week? Could this really be all that we were going to do all week?)



**Bucket Head:** Working hard doesn't mean you can't have a little fun. A good laugh makes hard work that much easier to take. We used a lot of five gallon plastic buckets. They were water and rock buckets for us. And, it would appear...helmets.

well over a hundred years old. Trees are vital to an urban living space. Trees filter and clean the air around them, they provide shade and can generally lower the overall temperature of a residential area in summer. They also provide a natural habitat for birds and bugs which are vital to the ecosystem of the neighborhood. Trees support the growth of grass and “forest floor” vegetation like bushes and flowers. The leaves in the fall provide fertilizer and food for grass growth in the spring. Trees are incredibly vital, but so prevalent we take them for granted. The next time you drive down any street, imagine it without trees.

The storm area was a scoured out, mile wide crag of bare dirt. The only way that it could ever get back to supporting lawns, gardens and bushes was by re-growing the trees. Rebuild Joplin and the other agencies involved in the effort understood the importance of getting trees going again. They invested thousands of dollars in

1600 saplings that were planted by volunteers in the early spring in storm zone parks. Little did they know that last summer was going to be one of the worst drought years in a generation. Saplings need water to survive and get growing. That's why, each week since their planting, a volunteer group had done exactly what we were doing. Thanks to the watering effort, the trees were alive and growing in spite of the weather.

I invited the MoDOC man to motivate our troops with his story. He was happy to explain the importance of what we were doing. Then he said, "there are 500 trees that need water here in this park alone...some groups spend a whole week right here."

That was what they needed! The gauntlet had been thrown down! One of our catchphrases for the week became: "challenge extended....challenge accepted!".

They attacked that job. They attacked it like it had done something to their families. Marcy Jones, our only female adult chaperone, is a natural leader and the kids love her. She had her crew competing against Tim's crew and they were all watering like crazy.

Since Craig Albers and I both subscribe to the "work smarter, not harder" school of manual labor, we started to refine our systems. Show Craig any task and he will improve how you're doing it. Thanks to Craig's innovations, we stopped lugging full buckets. We started carrying empty buckets to the saplings then running hoses to fill them. One team member would pour slowly while the hose was taken to another bucket. It was a lot faster with less work. I ran to a hardware store for more hose splitters. The more hoses we had running, the more buckets we could fill at a time...and we could water even faster. We eventually had so many hoses going that water pressure became an issue.

By 11:30, we were done. The entire park, all 500 trees, watered... before noon.

We grabbed a sandwich on the bus and headed over to the "if you

get to it” park. It was only about 150 trees...that was like a cool down for these guys.

We pulled into Americorps at 2:30 to return the buckets and hoses. When asked how many we had gotten to, we tried not to look too smug...and the Americorps volunteer tried not to look too shocked ...when we said, “all of them”.

His response, “hmmmm...guess we’ll have to find you something a little more challenging for tomorrow.”

## **TEAM LOCUST**

“Unskilled” plus “challenging” equals sweaty, dirty and sore. Each day of the trip was a new adventure. We never knew what they were going to hand us, and each day it was something a little bigger and a little more...um, challenging. We cleared lots, moved rocks, filled an enormous dumpster with debris from a demolition site...and we didn’t back down from any of it. We worked hard, but we also had a lot of fun. This was a great group of kids with a great sense of humor. They say that working for the Lord and for your neighbor can create a joyful heart. These guys truly embodied that attitude of thankful, happy service. We developed so many “in” jokes and catchphrases during the week that we eventually decided to collect them all on a T-shirt.

At the top of the shirt was the unofficial nickname we’d gotten from a stop that we made at a warehouse on Wednesday afternoon. We walked into an enormous room filled with school books. Easily half an acre of books were in piles that covered the floor. The assignment: box them up and stack them on pallets for transfer to a semi.

The manager of the place explained that teachers from the system had outfitted their classrooms for a second year out of this cache of books. Right after the storm, hundreds of thousands of books had been donated from all over the U.S. Far more were donated than could possibly be used by the district. The decision was made that they weren’t doing anyone any good sitting

in a warehouse. The manager had found a place that would auction them to other school systems. The books would get some use, and the funds raised would go back into the relief effort...IF he could get them all on pallets and ready to go by Friday. The volunteer group that had been helping him since Monday had divided the books into general categories...history...social studies...math...but they were a group of older ladies from St. Louis. Boxing and stacking pallets was not their strong suit. When we walked in, only one pallet had been filled.



***Box, Pallet, Repeat:*** It wasn't just a lot of books...it was a LOT of books! Team Locust taming the warehouse.

We attacked that room the same way we had attacked every other job that week...with a vengeance. Some worked as boxers...jamming books into the cardboard boxes until they were filled to the brim. A tapper would come by and seal a filled box. Haulers (our football players) would move the boxes to the pallets for stacking. Haulers were actually running with boxes to keep up. We were FLYING through those books. Inside of two hours every single book was boxed and on a pallet. Nine pallets, each stacked six feet high, were sealed, wrapped and ready to be loaded onto the semi.

The warehouse manager was flabbergasted. Until we showed up, he really did not think that he was going to make the Friday deadline. As boxes were flying onto pallets he said, "wow, you guys

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work like a swarm of locusts!” Team Locust was born! From that point on it was our battle cry and it is now at the top of our shirts.

## **NO SONG YET...**

I know at the end of the last section I promised that this week’s installment would include the debut performance of “Turn Us into Miracles.” Sorry...I didn’t make it. I really thought it was important for you to understand what kind of a week this group put in. The togetherness, the intense work ethic, the challenges of the sites we visited...the experience took us to a higher place. The stresses of the trip and the way we handled them, both individually and as a group, are really what “turned us into miracles”. Understanding that gives the song more meaning.

In Part 3, I promise, we’ll get to the song!

*[Next time, the 30yd Dumpster. Then, honest, the creation and debut of “Turn Us Into Miracles”]*

## **Making “Miracles” (Part 3):**

The story of the First Presbyterian Youth Group  
Joplin Song Project

### **LAST DAY**

After a week of sweaty, intense, tiring work throughout the area of Joplin affected by the Tornado, Thursday, August 9th, solidified the legend of “Team Locust”. That was our last work day. On Friday we would be travelling.

Thursday was the day of the 30 yard dumpster.

Americorps gave us an address. It was on Murphy Ave just off of 25th. We would be about two blocks south and a block west of the “Seven Homes in Seven Days” project that was featured on “Extreme Makeover: Home Edition”. We made sure to drive by the seven homes that had been built in a single week the previous October. They were very cool, but they were an odd oasis in the middle of all of the bare, empty lots. The only way to find addresses in this area was to look for painted numbers on the curb. In this case, we were also told we would find a 30 yard dumpster sitting in the street. Our job...move the enormous pile of debris sitting on the lot, into the dumpster.

A 30 yard dumpster gets its name because it can hold 30 cubic yards of stuff. The dumpster itself is 22 feet long, 8 feet wide and 6 feet high. If you were to stand it up on end, it's the size of a very narrow two story building. The pile of debris was about eight feet high. It sat in the middle of a lot where you could just picture a three bedroom ranch home had stood prior to May 22nd of 2011. The pile was a mess of timbers, cinderblocks, bricks and chunks of concrete all buried in a baked crust of dirt.

Sure, a backhoe with operator could have transferred the pile into

the dumpster in under an hour. But backhoes cost money. Church youth groups may be slower...but we're a lot cheaper. We'd also been told the dumpster company was tired of having the bottoms ripped out of their dumpsters by backhoe loads getting dropped. The dumpster company preferred the "hand fill" as a way to save their dumpsters.



**Chunky:** Team Locust posing on the pile of dirt where the stuff in the dumpster used to be. We kinda had to hose down the bus seats after this assignment.

11:15am and said, "we're gonna need another dumpster."

Team Locust rules!!! Roight!! (sorry...you kinda had to be there for that one...shout it at the top of your lungs with an Aussie accent while throwing large chunks of concrete).

They didn't have another dumpster, so we were done. We took an early lunch and headed for the showers. Thursday is the only day I remember actually being dizzy when I got off the bus. We had transferred a HUGE amount of very heavy debris in a VERY short time in 100 degree heat. Everyone was moving slowly, even the 17 year old football players, so I didn't feel so bad.

The Americorps guy threw down another gauntlet. He said, "just fill the dumpster...that should keep you guys busy all day." Ha! Little did he know that he was dealing with "Team Locust".

We were all gathered around Tim as he called into the Americorps office at

## **“LET’S WRITE A SONG!”**

By Thursday, we had established some afternoon routines. Showers were the priority. After getting cleaned up, most hung around the air conditioned dorm building. There was a TV in the common room and watching the summer Olympics was an afternoon highlight. We also had a very convoluted, round-robin, triple elimination pool tournament going on. Some of our more sports minded had created the brackets at the beginning of the week. There were so many levels and rounds in this thing, I don’t think we’d have had a winner if we’d stayed for a month. It did make for some fun in the afternoon because you could always get in a game (match?) of pool that filled another slot in the brackets.

On Thursday I remember wanting to talk to Tim about something and he was nowhere to be found. I was told that “he and Holden and a couple of others went somewhere.” Okay, so maybe our buddy system wasn’t the most detailed. I later discovered they had gone across the street to the basement of our host church. We had a key, and Tim needed the piano.

I asked him recently how that all came about. He said it was a tradition when he was in youth. Members of the group would “write a song” during a trip like Joplin. He decided to revive that tradition. There was something special about our Joplin excursion. He was feeling the inspiration and wanted to catch it before it disappeared. Tim nabbed Maddy Albers to help out. She in turn grabbed Anna Ferguson and Andi McCombs. And, of course, they had to have Holden Jones..he’s creative and a storyteller. This really was a group with complementing talents. Tim is the musician, Maddy and Anna are strong singers, Andi is a singer but, more importantly, she is a very talented stage performer. She understands presentation and drama. Holden is a performer, but he also has that gift for telling a story.

Tim had them think about the experience of the week. He also pointed to a sermon our pastor, Dr. John Kay, had given the week before we left. It was entitled “Miraculous Living”. The basic theme

of the message said we can all become miracles for God if we are willing to put aside our own selfishness and let his Divine Grace and Love work through us. So we already had Miracles on our minds before we even set out. Within 24 hours of hitting town, we were faced with even more "miracles." We visited an 8 foot tall metal sculpture depicting a rubber wrist band. It stands in the Memorial Park in the tornado zone. On it is the inscription that became the rallying cry of the rebuilding effort: "The Miracle of the Human Spirit". On the back of our Presbyterian Disaster Assistance T-shirts was their phrase, "Out of Chaos, Hope." The images of devastation and rebuilding...the people we talked to...the work we did...the ingredients to the stew were in the pot. It took a week of work in the hot sun to bring it all to a boil.

Once they started, the "gang of five" say the whole thing just flew together (Team Locust!). The writing took maybe an hour, if that. Once they had it worked out, they put together lyric sheets and commandeered the church copier.

## THE DEBUT...

It is a First Pres Youth Group custom that, each evening during a trip like Joplin, we have a time of devotion. It's a chance to gather, discuss the day, share, pray, worship and get ready for the next day. We always start a time of devotion with a few songs. On



**"Miracles" all around us:** This sculpture of a wrist band stands in a Memorial Park in the storm zone. The inscription reads, "The Miracle of the Human Spirit"

Thursday evening, in addition to the usual Youth Group favorites, we all became a part of the debut performance of “Turn Us into Miracles”.

Our composer/lyricists were handing out sheets that contained the bridge and chorus. They told us to follow along...we should get it pretty easily. They handled the verses.

It was...amazing. It was cool, it was uplifting, it was deep...and it was a lot of fun to sing!

A group from Nebraska was staying with us in the dorm building. They became curious enough about our nightly devotions that we invited them to join us. I remember, as the final notes faded out,



one of the men from their group turned to me and said, “they WROTE this?”

I laughed and said, “they not only wrote it... they wrote it this AFTERNOON.”

***Devotions:** Each evening of a trip like Joplin we gather to sing, worship and share. It is a high point of the day for most. This was a night of Devotion during our Joplin week.*

was so good we had to do it again. That's when the smartphones and recording devices came out.

Sure, there is a “high” that comes from a trip like this. You’re emotionally vulnerable while you are “in the field”. Your senses are heightened, your filters aren’t in place. You become completely immersed in the experience and you aren’t as objective. I decided to let “real life” callous me over a bit. I waited until a few weeks after we got back before I listened to an iPhone recording from that night. It really was as good as I remembered. The verses were

great. The imagery was powerful and mature. The chorus had a hook that you hummed for days afterwards. I've been a deejay since I was 15. I've heard thousands of singles over the years and I'm fairly discriminating when it comes to what I consider a "good song". I'm also pretty good when it comes to picking a "hit". This Joplin song had a lot of potential.

The group performed it for the church the Sunday we got home. Then they did it again in October as a part of our "Youth Sunday" service. Sure, they might be biased, but our congregation loved it both times. It was after the October performance that I had a strong feeling...I didn't want this thing to fade away. I didn't want it to become, "oh, yeah...remember that song the kids wrote on that Joplin trip? What was the name of that again?"

We needed to mark this accomplishment in some way. After the Youth Sunday performance I blurted out some ideas that had been rolling around in my head. I got my thoughts together and made a more coherent presentation at the next Youth Ministry Committee meeting.

What if we tried to turn this thing into a single? And what if we sold the single to raise money for the Joplin relief effort?

Hmmm...what if?

*[NEXT TIME: parsing the lyrics of "Miracles" and...could we really record a single?]*

## **Making “Miracles” (Part 4):**

The story of the First Presbyterian Youth Group  
Joplin Song Project

### **GETTING LYRICAL**

I know, I know...if someone has to explain the painting, or the poem...or even the joke, for that matter...it can kill the visceral connection between the artist and the consumer of the art.

At the risk of killing the connection, I wanted to take a moment to look at what these four high school kids (and ancient, 30 year old, Tim) wrote when they came up with the lyrics for “Turn Us into Miracles”. The thing that has always struck me about the content of the lyrics is how mature they are. The imagery is great. It’s accessible but also deep without being hokey (that’s a fine line for anyone...but even trickier for a 16 or 17 year old). They never mention “Joplin” or “tornado” anywhere in the song, but every line is about Joplin, the tornado and the experience of the mission trip. I’ve worked with these kids...er, I mean young adults...for dozens of hours in the last couple of months recording (and re-recording) every word, yet I have never had the urge to say, “what did you mean by that?” I don’t have to ask. I know. Maybe it isn’t even what they meant, exactly, but the phrases and the images that they conjure speak to me.

“In our somber times of darkness,  
Where can we find your love?  
  
When the sky breaks all around us,  
We question you above.”

Death, destruction...May 22nd, 2011 held some very somber times of darkness for Joplin residents as the sky was breaking all around them. But these lines can speak to anyone who

has experienced a catastrophe. Katrina victims, Sandy victims... someone who has lost a loved one, or experienced serious illness, understands this kind of despair. It's when the bad things happen that we do question God, His existence, His plan. There were a lot of discussions in devotion, even on the bus ride down, about how God could let something like the Joplin Tornado happen. We found some answers for ourselves, but it was agreed that the world can be a tough place and a lot of what happens will test your faith. This verse represents some surprising insight from a group of high schoolers who have grown up in the relatively quiet security of a small Midwestern town.

After that verse, we are given a musical signature that foreshadows the chorus to come. No chorus here...just the hint of a chorus. We aren't off the hook yet. The darkness continues with the second verse.

“Dry ground, dirt is hardened,  
Rocks cry out in despair.  
  
No rain from your Holy Garden,  
How are we supposed to care?”

I love reading meaning into art. I love symbolism. This verse jumps out at me on levels that our lyricists may not have even intended. Literally, it's about the drought of last summer and much of our work in Joplin. Everything was dry, hard and ugly. The rocks were everywhere. Rocks, stones, blocks and bricks were the final, silent witnesses standing guard at the site of so many tragedies. How could they not cry out in despair?

Figuratively, I read this verse as being about us...our souls...our attitudes about life and each other. We can become hardened... but we aren't hardened like stone. We are like the hard packed dirt, baked in the sun, forced into a state where we just don't care. Our defenses are up until we get a little rain from God's "Holy Garden". That is what it takes to soften us and allow us to be molded, formed and used for God's good. When the Holy rain starts falling, that's when we are prepared to turn into Miracles.

And here comes the prayer...the request for some of that Holy rain:

“Turn us into Miracles...

Lord, turn us into Miracles.”

It's just a hint. But now we know that the transformation is coming. We are ready to deal with a little more darkness in the third verse.

“Left alone with no direction,  
Lost hearts and broken homes  
We've lost our best intentions,  
Don't know which way to go.”

Over and over while we were in Joplin we read news stories and talked to people who had been directly affected by the storm. They all echoed the same theme: “I'd lost everything and I didn't know what I was going to do.” Homes broken and gone, dejected, depressed...life seemingly ruined and feeling so very lonely. This is about as dark as it gets...come on, we need a Miracle!

“Turn us into Miracles...  
Lord, turn us into Miracles.  
The true Power of Faith  
comes when we are Miracles.  
Love, Joy and Peace  
Lead the Way!!  
Turn us into Miracles...  
Lord, turn us into Miracles.”

Oh, YEAH!! There it is...maximize your commitment, and you become a Miracle for God. I love that it is the true POWER of Faith. It's not the “measure” of Faith, or the “sign” of Faith...it's the POWER of Faith. Faith is not some frail ideal that exists in a vacuum. Faith, when put into action, can move mountains and work Miracles. Faith filled that 30 yard dumpster...Faith stacked pallet

after pallet of books in that warehouse. That is the POWER of Faith, put into action through the Miracles that we became when we turned it all over to God and let him work through us.

We can't always access that Power. We need to prepare ourselves both mentally and physically to really tap into that Power. We lead most of our lives as the dry ground, hard and unfeeling... even Team Locust. I know right now I could swing by the Church with that Methodist bus, pick up the same group of kids that were



***Holden (almost) Cries out in Despair:*** Soloist & Lyricist Holden Jones just avoids getting "nailed" at one of the job sites.

over Joplin we could see the evidence of God's Miracles at work. Volunteers from within the city who stepped up to help. Volunteers that came from far flung places. They gave their all for their neighbors and became Miracles. For a brief and blessed few days last August, Team Locust was firing on all cylinders acting as a group of sweaty, dirty and sore...but happy... Miracles for God.

Ready to take it home with some triumph? It's time for a little Victory!

“I’m done with devastation,  
Out of chaos rises Hope.

Miracles of Human Spirit,  
Inspire every soul!"

"Done with Devastation" is probably my favorite phrase in the whole song. It's not about abandoning the devastation. We aren't running away. We're just done with letting the devastation get us down. When you've become a Miracle, devastation doesn't get to win. You get to build on the devastation...wipe it out. Miracles bring order to the chaos and put a spotlight on hope.

Wow. A lot is going on there.

Okay, so now that you've read it...do you want to hear it? I hope so!!

### **"LET'S MAKE A SINGLE!"**

After the performance in October, I grabbed Tim...and Dr. Kay... maybe Craig...and said, "we need to record this. *Really* record it... produce it...make a single out of it. Individuals can self publish on iTunes. We could record it and then sell it and give all of the proceeds to Joplin!"

It seemed like the most natural thing in the world. Joplin inspired the song. This was how the song could give back to Joplin. I've never produced a single in my life. But I know how multi-track recording works. I've been doing that my whole professional career. Okay, so I've been doing it for things like radio commercials...not songs...but I had a general idea how the song process worked. Could it really be THAT much different? I have some nice recording equipment. I have some good microphones and a professional multi-track recording program. Sure...we could do this!

Not knowing that you can't do something can be a great motivator. I put "Record 'Miracles' song" on the Youth Ministry Committee agenda last November and explained to the committee what I wanted to do. I was about as qualified to actually do what I was

describing as I am to take out your gall bladder.

If you're enthusiastic enough, you can overcome the fact that you have no idea what you're doing. I was pretty enthusiastic (still, you don't want me to take out your gall bladder). Tim and the rest of the committee got behind the idea. We decided to set a recording date for early January. Holden, one of our lyricists and soloists, was away at college in Carbondale, IL. We wanted him in on the session so we planned it during Winter Break.

Guess what? We're making a single...a REAL single. I'm going to Nashville in mid-February to master it and you are going to be able to buy it from your favorite music service starting March 8th. How we got to this point is a fun story...and it's the one I'll tell you next time.

*[NEXT TIME: Recording a single!! And then, re-recording a single! The one man band...the producer...and, yep, we're going to Nashville!]*

## **Making “Miracles” (Part 5)**

The story of the First Presbyterian Youth Group  
Joplin Song Project

### **ON TRACK**

Modern music is made in “tracks”. The process is called multi-track recording. The Germans invented it, but guitarist and musical innovator Les Paul really pioneered the use of it for music production back in the 1950s. Buddy Holly advanced the technique and the Beatles used multi-track extensively.

It's a pretty basic concept and it's GREAT for making a song. Imagine that you have two tape recorders. Record yourself playing guitar on the first one. Stop, back-up, re-record as many times as you need in order to get your guitar playing just right. When it's the way you want it, have your drummer listen to the guitar on the first tape recorder while you punch ‘record’ on the second tape recorder. His drums get recorded to the second machine, but they are matched to the guitar. Back up and re-record as many times as you need to until he's happy with the drum part.

That's a two track recording. Now imagine that you added a third recorder. You would have to hit ‘play’ on the first two recorders at exactly the same time so that the drum and guitar would sync up. If there was a way to do that, a third “track” could be recorded with a singer that matched the drum and guitar...and a fourth track with a piano...and a fifth track with a tambourine...maybe a track with more singers.

That's multi-tracking. The Germans worked out the sync thing with wide tape. Instead of a bunch of different tape recorders, you only need one. Then, about 25 years ago they ditched tape entirely and created multi-track recorders for computers. Same

theory applies: listen to one track while recording to another track. Use a track for every instrument, every vocalist...everything! Even the tambourine gets its own track and everything can be recorded over and over until each track is perfect.

Easy, right? Sure...in theory.

I have a “professional quality” multi-track recording program. I use it all of the time...just not for making songs. I make radio commercials and TV commercial soundtracks with it. I know that my program can make music because it has filters for guitars and pianos. Some of the controls even mention “pitch” and “beats”...that’s music stuff, right?

Since pricey recording studios really weren’t in our budget, I decided to explore my software’s music making potential for the “Miracles” production. I did a couple of on-line tutorials. I discovered that it’s a very powerful program for producing music, but the process wasn’t that much different than what I was already doing for spots. One thing they mentioned was using the metronome “click track” to keep everything together and on the beat. Yeah, sure...no problem.

Like Custer planning the attack at the Little Big Horn, we declared Thursday, January 10th, 2013 to be “recording” day for the “Turn Us into Miracles” single. I set up my work station in the First Presbyterian Church sanctuary, connected up a sound board, brought in the big microphones...it looked cool!

Tim scheduled in the kids and they were GREAT! We had a huge turnout. Most of the kids from the mission trip were there, but we also welcomed youth group members who hadn’t been in Joplin. Team Locust is all inclusive. If you’re ready to work, we want you! Thankfully a couple of adults also showed up to help out (big thanks to my wife, Donna, for being there during the recording session, doing some directing, adding her incredible vocal talents and supporting me during the 80 plus hours that I’ve already devoted to this project.)

## **“MORE COWBELL!”**

First order of business was a music bed. Tim laid down a piano track. It wasn't intended to be a final...just something to sing to. We would record a better track later...and maybe add other instruments. Truthfully, I wasn't completely clear as to who would be playing those other instruments or what they would be. One hurdle at a time...we'd figure out the band later.



**Laying down a “Track”:** All of the vocals, even the choir parts, were recorded in small groups and then the tracks were mixed together. This is one of our choral groups cutting their part. It even kind of looks like we know what we're doing!!

Tim could not play with the click track. He's a very talented pianist, but he's used to directing and even following singers as he plays live. The click track proved to be too restrictive. It was causing him a lot of trouble as we tried to get a piano track “laid down”. What he was hearing in his head didn't quite conform with the beat of the metronome. There were twenty-five kids waiting to record their vocals. I knew we had hours of work ahead of us. We RE-ALLY needed that piano. I decided to shut off the click track and told him to just play.

With any failed endeavor, you can usually pinpoint the bad decisions. Put a pin in that one.

Headphones are the hallmark of multi-track recording. You HAVE to wear headphones when you sing on a track. You can't let the microphone "hear" what is on the other tracks or those sounds get recorded again. I have a breakout box that sends a signal to eight headphones. That meant we could handle six kids at a time singing, Tim or Donna directing and the audio engineer (me, the guy pushing the red button) all listening to playback as we were recording.

Each verse is a solo by one of our composers. They cut their parts first. Then we started work on the choruses and bridge. We worked with small groups of five or six at a time. Each group of singers only needed to do thirty or forty seconds at a take. Once they

did one, they could listen back to it, figure out what needed to be changed, then re-take the segment if necessary.

None of these kids had ever done any studio recording. Within five minutes, they all understood how it worked and they acted like vets. We would finish a segment and I'd see them adjust their headphones, look over at me and say, "wanna roll that back? I don't think we were together on that cue... about eight beats in." It was great (I was ready for one of them to tell me we needed more



***On Her Own:** Soloist and Lyricist Anna Ferguson cuts her solo track. Anna is the first voice that you hear in the song... no pressure or anything!*

cowbell)! In addition to having a blast working together, the vocals sounded really good!

We did notice that some of the counts were...sketchy. The beat was off slightly during transitions. It wasn't anything that a casual listener might notice, but it was there. A human being is not a metronome...even Tim. We made it work and continued.

From set up to turning out the lights that session took twelve hours. It's a four minute song. And that was just recording the raw tracks! Mixing is where the real work happens.

## **THE PRODUCER and THE BAND**

When she heard the details of the project, Marcy Patterson, my editor at "the SOURCE", suggested contacting SOURCE Music Editor Stuart Smith. Stuart, it turns out, worked for several years in Nashville as a Producer and Assistant Producer in a couple of different studios. His specialty?...that would be Contemporary Christian music.

Don't tell me God doesn't answer prayer. He wasn't even subtle about this one.

I outlined the project and Stuart LOVED it! Stuart ALSO happens to be a guitar playing pastor who enjoys promoting service work among Christian Youth. Yeah, Big Guy...not subtle at ALL!

Stuart volunteered to help with the mixing and production. He said he would also be glad to do some guitar tracks. When I told him that we needed a good keyboard for Tim to play a final piano track, he told me to call Robert. He said Robert could also do the drums.

"Robert" would be none other than Mr. Robert Sampson. If you've lived around Jacksonville at all, I'm sure you've seen Mr. Sampson perform. He is an amazing blues guitarist who is regularly a finalist at the annual International Blues Challenge in Memphis. He's also an outstanding keyboard player and a phenomenal live performer. Robert is talented to a point that it's almost scary...but

he's also one of the nicest guys you could ever hope to meet.

Robert, of course, was ALSO more than happy to help out. He'd even been to Joplin on a mission trip in the summer of 2011.

## DO OVER!

These guys first sat down in my little audio production studio on Jan. 18th to listen to what we had and add their magic. They liked the song and thought the vocals were great. Tim had given us a chord chart so Stuart laid down a rhythm track with his acoustic Martin guitar. He had to stutter the strumming a few times, but he wedged it in. Robert then tried to add a drum track (from his amazing Yamaha Motif keyboard...which he can get to do just about anything up to, and including, landing the Space Shuttle). Drums aren't as forgiving as the guitar. He took several runs at it, but he could not navigate the differences in timing while keeping a solid beat.

After a couple of hours of coaxing and prodding, Stuart gave me that "doctor with bad news" look. He said, "If this were just an 'okay' song...I'd say we throw a few more instrumental tracks on here...cover over the timing problems and call it a day. But this song is really, REALLY good. It has a lot of potential. I think we need to start over and build a music bed from the ground up."

We spent the rest of the day building a new music track. This one had drums, bass, guitar, tambourine, organ, strings, Tim stopped in to add piano...it was awesome...and very solidly on the beat.

A new music track, of course, meant we would have to re-record many of the vocals. Some tracks would get used, but for the most part January 10th turned into a very involved rehearsal. Although, just like in Joplin, we discovered that re-building has the potential to create something even better...and Team Locust is not one to back down from a challenge.

[*NEXT TIME: Recording...for REAL this time! Mixing, mastering, marketing...and announcing our Official Single Release Party! ]*

## **Making “Miracles” (Part 6):**

The story of the First Presbyterian Youth Group  
Joplin Song Project

### **RE-BUILDING**

If you hand a contractor a set of blueprints and show him an empty lot, he sees a house. Yes, it is possible that you also see a house, but the contractor not only sees the house...he knows how to BUILD the house.

I handed Stuart Smith a lyric sheet and a chord chart. He heard a song. We just had to go through the process of building the song. Like the contractor, there was no question about how to do the work. He knew where to start, how to proceed and how to put it all together. The process had a very workaday, “done this before” kind of feel to it. I’m guessing that would be because he’s done this before...a lot. He was very free with his knowledge. He taught me the right way to go about building a produced song. Better late than never...had I known some of these things ten days earlier, it might have saved us some re-recording.

Although, just like everything else on this project, having to do it again was a blessing. We had to re-cut the solos. The first time, at the church, the soloists were a bit tentative. Putting them in front of a microphone when they knew that 20 people were waiting on them to finish on top of having them do a multi-track recording for the first time ever in their lives may have contributed to the hesitant delivery. Yeah, okay...“a bit tentative” might be an understatement. They were scared to death...and you could hear it!

When we called them back in they were different people. They grabbed up a set of headphones and got behind the mic like vet-

erans. They were confident, at ease...and this time they were really focused on their performance instead of worrying about all the stuff that is necessary for the recording. The difference definitely comes through in the new solos. Since we just needed a few voices this time around, we decided to record at my little radio production studio. Same mics and sound board, less imposing surroundings. It was a tight fit, but we had fun. Team Locust always has fun, even when we're working hard.

Getting Holden's solo was a challenge. He had returned to Carbondale by the time we realized we needed him to do his lines again. He wouldn't be back in the area for weeks. We just couldn't wait until he was back in town. We wanted to get this thing done and ready to sell! I wound up booking time at a studio in Carbondale for him. I sent them our music track over the web and they recorded Holden singing with the backing music bed. They sent his parts back and I laid them into the mix. You would never know that he wasn't standing in the same room with the other soloists. Technology isn't just amazing...it's kinda mind boggling when you think about it.

## **FIX IT IN THE MIX**

Mixing a song can become an obsessive thing. The mixing process gives the producer control over every track and how all of those tracks are blended together to create the final product. If a song were a woodworking project, mixing would be like sanding down the rough edges and smoothing out the joints. In the mix it's possible to adjust overall volume, special effects (like echo and reverb), equalization, panning left or right and more. Stuart got me started on the mixing. He also did a few Obi-wan type tricks to enhance the drums and some of the other instruments. Then he bailed!! Not his fault...he got a gig. Everything he was doing for us was purely volunteer, and he put in a couple dozen hours. Shortly after the second vocal session he got a commission on a project that was going to tie him up to the point that he really could not continue on the song.

He had taken us a long way and we are all very grateful for his contribution. I grabbed the reins and decided to figure out how to finish it off. We had come too far to let this thing shut down! A lot of the mixing process is just clean-up. I spent hours taking out breath sounds where they were distracting. Throat clearing was a problem. It's what you do before you start singing...and there was at least one cleared throat on every vocal track about every 30 seconds. That's a lot of throat clearing! Those had to come out. I also played with some vocal doubling and reverb. Our twenty kid choir started to sound like forty-five (cool!).

With the vocals and instruments there were 37 tracks. Robert Sampson, who was amazingly free with both his time and talents throughout the entire process, came in to lay down a lead guitar part and some awesomely cool solos as a final cherry on top of the musical Sundae. Robert plays every instrument on the song except for Tim's piano and a little bit of the rhythm guitar. Adding in Robert's oh-so-cool solo guitar work brought the total to 39 tracks that were finally mixed down into what would become the single.

## **MASTERFUL**

Something that Stuart stressed from the beginning was the importance of mastering. If we were really serious about getting this thing on the radio, it would have to be mastered. Mastering is the final step in the production process. It makes the track fuller and louder. It also provides depth and widens the sound field. Mastering is what sets a "real single" apart from a "garage band" recording. There are major Mastering Houses in New York, Los Angeles and Nashville. Stuart knew some guys in Nashville so he gave me names and numbers.

I called, explained the project and was very up front about the fact that I was a total amateur. Eric at Independent Mastering was a total pro and a huge help. Independent Mastering has mastered for hundreds of name performers. They just re-mastered all of the songs on George Strait's "50 Number Ones" album. These guys

are the real deal! Originally I had planned to make the 6 hour drive to Nashville and hand deliver the mixed digital file. Eric said he wanted to help us out. He would cut me a deal if I sent the mix to him over the web and let him work on it when he had free time between sessions.

He had it back to me within three days. Fast turnaround, half the price...it WAS a great deal! Okay, I didn't get to hang out at a Mastering Studio, but I ALSO didn't have to spend 12 hours on the road. The difference between the original and the mastered track was stunning. You know how you think your car is clean and shiny but then you take it to a professional detail shop and you realize that your car wasn't shiny at all? That's what mastering does for a song.

## **PARTY!**

It's done. Finished. It was uploaded to the Aggregator and is in the process of being distributed. You will be able to buy it from any digital music service that you've ever heard of (including iTunes, Google Play, Amazon MP3 and Rhapsody) starting March 8th, 2013. Go buy it!! All proceeds go to Joplin. These services hang onto anywhere from 35-40% of the purchase price, so we need to sell a LOT of copies!

And join us for the big "Single Release Party!" taking place on Sunday, March 10th! EVERYONE IS INVITED!! The party starts at 6:30 at the First Presbyterian Church in Jacksonville. There will be all kinds of snacks and goodies. We'll play the song (of course), you'll be able to meet the composers and performers, we may have some special music from a couple of our soloists...it's going to be a blast!! This will be the official worldwide release. MOST importantly, even if you can't make it to the party, GO BUY THE SONG!! And get your friends to buy it!! And get THEIR FRIENDS to buy it!! It's 99 cents! You spend more than that on a soda at a gas station and if you spend it here, you'll GET A SONG! And it's a GOOD song! Plus you'll be helping to rebuild Joplin!

## **THE GOAL...**

Phase one, production: finished. Phase two, promotion and sales...just getting started. We need your help! Tell EVERYONE about the Joplin Song Project!! May 22nd, 2013 is the second anniversary of the storm. I have a goal...to have raised \$50,000 for Joplin from song proceeds by that date. Habitat for Humanity could use that money to build a HOUSE. Think about that...four kids, one afternoon of stellar inspiration and they could potentially have written a HOUSE. Help us make it happen! That would be SO very cool!

This is the end for the “Making Miracles” series...but the story continues. I will try to keep you posted. From Team Locust, thank you SO MUCH for your support!

### **“Turn Us Into Miracles (Song for Joplin)”**

is available starting March 8th, 2013 on iTunes, Google Play, Amazon MP3, Rdio, Xbox Music, Rhapsody, iHeartRadio, eMusic, Muve Music, Deezer, Nokia, Spotify, MediaNet, Vervelife, MySpace Music and other great digital music download destinations.

**ALL PROCEEDS FROM THE SALE OF THIS SINGLE GO DIRECTLY TO “REBUILD JOPLIN” AND THE ON-GOING JOPLIN, MO. TORNADO RELIEF EFFORT**

“I’m done with devastation...out of chaos Rises Hope.”

## **Appendices and Other Stuff...**

### **The CREW**

#### **The Group on the Joplin Mission Trip (“Team Locust”):**

*The Kids (in alphabetical order):* David Albers, Maddy Albers, Amanda Caldwell-Jacques, Emma Chelsvig, Haley Chelsvig, Adam Enz, Austin Enz, Anna Ferguson, Jordan Hester, Brandon Hill, Kathryn Holt, Austin Hunter, Holden Jones, Andi McCombs, Hannah Mansell, Jennie Stare

*The Adults:* Craig Albers, Tim Chipman, Marcy Jones, Allen Stare and Colin Duling (College Intern, had to leave Wed. night)

#### **Those Who Contributed to the Recording and Production of “Turn Us Into Miracles (Song for Joplin)”**

*Soloists (in order of appearance):* Anna Ferguson, Holden Jones, Andi McCombs, Maddy Albers

*Chorus Voices:* David Albers, Maddy Albers, Austin Davy, Melanie Davy, Adam Enz, Anna Ferguson, Jordan Hester, Celeste Hill, Austin Hunter, Cameron Jones, Madison Jones, Marcy Jones, Hannah Mansell, Martha Maruna, Andi McCombs, Donna Stare, Jennie Stare, Alyssa Sutheard

#### *Musicians:*

Robert Sampson: Percussion, Lead Guitar, Bass,  
Rhythm Guitar, Strings, Tambourine, Organ

Tim Chipman: Piano

Stuart Smith: Acoustic Rhythm Guitar, Shakers

*Musical Director:*

Tim Chipman

*Choral Directors:*

Tim Chipman, Donna Stare

*Recording/Mixing/Audio Engineer:*

Allen Stare

*Mastered at:*

Independent Mastering, Nashville, TN

(A big “thank you” to Eric Conn and the Staff at Independent Mastering)

*Produced By:*

Allen Stare

Stuart Smith

And a special THANK YOU to the First Presbyterian Church Session and Congregation for their support and understanding during the creation and production of  
“Turn Us Into Miracles (Song for Joplin)”

Wanna Help?  
**BUY THE SONG!!**

Find out more about the ongoing rebuilding effort and give even more at: <http://rebuildjoplin.org/>

## **Wanna Help even MORE?**

Making the song is a fundraiser, but not in the traditional sense of a fundraiser. We aren't asking for donations, and we aren't selling cookies. We want to SELL COPIES OF THE SONG! Selling the song is what will generate the revenue. The music industry has changed in the last 10 years to the point that it allows us to do something like this. The thing that hasn't changed is the process of getting the word out. Anybody can publish their song on iTunes. Even though iTunes and the other digital download sites are shopped by millions of people each day, a lot of songs that have been "self-published" don't sell more than a few dozen copies. That's because no one knows they are there.

If you really want to help us make this project a success, help us promote the song. Get the word out! Leveraging the power of digital distribution to handle our sales is what can turn this into a monster revenue generator.

Here are some easy, but incredibly powerful things that you can do to help us help Joplin...

**Send e-mails:** "Spam" your e-mail list. In a very brief message, tell your friends about the song and about what we are trying to do with the song (mention "written by the kids, performed by the kids, all proceeds go to Joplin relief" etc). Then tell them to GO BUY IT. Make sure they know the title ("Turn Us Into Miracles (Song for Joplin)") so they can find it on the digital download sites. You can buy it EVERYWHERE that music is sold, so it doesn't matter where they buy their songs.

If they are really into it, tell THEM to spread the word to THEIR friends. This booklet is also available as a PDF. If you would like a copy to attach to your e-mails, just drop me a note at: stare@intensemultimedia.com and I will send you a copy for forwarding. I can also provide you with a graphic of the "album cover" for posting and forwarding.

**Facebook:** Tell our story on your Facebook page and encourage

everyone in your “friends list” to buy the song. Then have them contact *their* friends list...and so on...and so on. Everything that’s available as an extra for e-mail can also be used on Facebook. Just drop me a note and I will send it to you.

**Radio Stations:** Even though everything has “gone digital”, radio is still a very powerful way to “break a single”. This only works if the radio stations think that their listeners want to hear the song. Call your favorite radio station and ask them to play the song. If they don’t know what you are talking about (and they probably won’t), tell them our story. Light Rock and Contemporary Christian stations are the most likely candidates for actually including our song in their playlist.

If they want to buy it, the copy that they buy is air quality. You could also have them get in touch with me. I can send them a promo copy of the song (yeah, we don’t get any revenue from those...but if they are willing to play it and promote it, I’ll give them a freebie!) and information about the project. We can also arrange interviews and other kinds of promotion if the station is interested.

**Church Bulletin:** Let your congregation know what’s happening! Many congregations have sent mission workers to Joplin so they are already aware of the need. Put an announcement in your bulletin and let them know that they can help out even more by spending 99 cents on the song.

**Thanks so much for your help and support!!  
Now go make  
“Turn Us Into Miracles (Song for Joplin)”  
a HIT!!**



**Truckin':** The author, behind the wheel, Craig in the co-pilot seat. Hey! Keep your eyes on the road! (Thanks again to Grace United Methodist of Jacksonville for use of their awesome bus!)



**Little White Boxes:** As of Winter 2012-13 more than 90 families still live in FEMA trailers like these (this neighborhood is on the north end of Joplin). Replacing the housing that was lost during the storm could take more than ten years.

# Making “Miracles”

*In the first week of August of 2012, the youth group from the First Presbyterian Church in Jacksonville, IL. set off on a mission trip to Joplin, MO. While working in Joplin, four members of the group were inspired to write a song. Now the entire youth group has recorded and produced that song. They are hoping that the finished single will become a gift that keeps giving back to Joplin. This is the story of the mission trip, and the making of the single “Turn Us into Miracles (Song for Joplin)”.*

## **“Turn Us Into Miracles (Song for Joplin)”**

is available starting March 8th, 2013 on iTunes, Google Play, Amazon MP3, Rdio, Xbox Music, Rhapsody, iHeartRadio, eMusic, Muve Music, Deezer, Nokia, Spotify, MediaNet, Vervelife, MySpace Music and other great digital music download destinations.

ALL PROCEEDS FROM THE SALE OF  
THIS SINGLE GO DIRECTLY TO “REBUILD  
JOPLIN” AND THE ON-GOING  
JOPLIN, MO. TORNADO RELIEF EFFORT

“I’m done with devastation...out of chaos Rises Hope.”