



Live Worship From Vertical Church

At Chicago-based Harvest Bible Chapel, the word “vertical” implies more than a direction, it represents a movement that encompasses book, film and music projects that are spurring people to forge a closer bond with God. Pulsing throughout Harvest Bible Chapel’s 70 plus locations across the nation is the Vertical Church concept, which is accented by the compelling music created by its worship team, **Vertical Church Band**. *Live Worship From Vertical Church*, its debut release, is a vibrant collection of worship anthems that capture the sound and message of the movement, led by some of today’s most gifted worship leaders in the Harvest Bible Chapel community.

“**Vertical Church Band** is framed around the idea that church isn’t about us. It is about God,” states Luke MacDonald, Creative Director of the **Vertical Church Band**, and son of senior pastor James MacDonald. “The best songs we can sing aren’t about our experience with God or our love for God or hopes for our relationship with God, but when we sing to God about God.”

That God-centered focus anchors each song on the 13-track CD that features **Vertical Church Band** worship leaders Andi Rozier, Meredith Andrews, Lindsay McCaul, Jacob Sooter, Seth McConkey, Kyle Fredricks and Heather Headley. Recorded at Harvest Bible Chapel’s historic downtown Chicago campus, the project was produced by Paul Mabury (one sonic society, Hillsong United) and Jason Ingram (Tenth Avenue North, one sonic society, Chris Tomlin). James MacDonald served as executive producer.

Pastor MacDonald’s new book “*Vertical Church: What Every Heart Longs For*” (David C. Cook, August 2012), will be issued the same day as *Live Worship From Vertical Church*. “Our church is been going for almost 25 years and has planted 80 churches or so around the world,” says Luke. “This book really is the encapsulation of everything that we’ve learned and everything that we’re trying to be about.”

Live Worship From Vertical Church captures the passion for worshipping God and for spreading the gospel that has made Harvest one of the fastest growing churches in the country. Luke has fond memories of the snowy night the album was recorded in the historic location. “It’s an old cathedral in downtown Chicago, two blocks off Michigan Avenue, and it’s one of only a few buildings that survived the great Chicago fire in 1871,” he shares. “We gathered all of our worship leaders and all of our bands from several campuses together, 700 or 800 of the most fired up worshippers in our church. We just blew the place out for four hours singing these songs and I just remember everybody coming away from that feeling like---even if the album never amounted to much---having this night together to worship God was enough. It was worth it, just for that.”

“It was a really, really powerful time,” says Andi Rozier, who was recruited from the U.K. 11 years ago to serve as Harvest’s senior worship leader. “We were in this building that withstood the Chicago fire and we filled it full of people and the sound was just huge. We were just lifting up the name of the Lord in worship and it was a really, really powerful moment. It really was less about an album recording and more about our church getting together to worship God in a building that God had given us for the advancement of his kingdom.”

The presence of the Holy Spirit can be felt throughout every song, including the powerful lead single “All Glory,” led by Tony Award winning vocalist Heather Headley. “I absolutely love it. Andi wrote such a great song,” says Headley, whose soaring vocals lead the congregation on the passionate worship anthem.

“My favorite lyric is in the end when it’s like ‘All glory, all honor/All wisdom, strength and power/All glory, all honor/Are yours alone forever.’ When the church sings it, it’s an amazing thing. It gets me all teary.”

Headley, an acclaimed gospel artist and Broadway star who won a Tony Award for her lead role in *Aida*, has been attending Harvest Bible Chapel with her husband for eight years. “She came in and actually auditioned to be a part of the worship team. I was like, ‘You probably could have just sent us a picture of you holding your Tony award and that would have been enough,’” Luke says with a laugh. “That’s the kind of person she is.”

The Vertical Church Band is filled with those kinds of people---extremely credentialed, talented individuals with servant hearts. The collection opens with the rousing new anthem “Open Up the Heavens,” led by Rozier and Andrews and written by Rozier, Andrews, Ingram, Stu G and James MacDonald. “I’m a worship leader myself and I can tell you that worship leaders are always at a loss trying to find new fresh up-tempo songs,” Luke says. “‘Open Up the Heavens’ is a really exciting, intense up-tempo song about asking God to bring his glory down. I’m getting tweets almost every single day now from people around the country that are starting to teach that song. I think it will find its way inside a lot of churches.”

“Word of God,” led by Rozier, is another soul-lifting up-tempo number that is fast becoming a favorite among worshippers. “That’s one of my favorites because I have an emotional attachment to the song,” says Rozier, who co-wrote the tune with Brenton Brown. “We started talking about things that we don’t have in our vocabulary of worship. One of things is we don’t sing about Jesus being the word of God because we don’t want to sing a song about the Bible. We don’t want to worship the Bible, but in scripture, Jesus tells us that He is the Word of God.”

“We started talking about things that we don’t have in our vocabulary of worship. One of the things is we don’t sing about Jesus being the word of God because we don’t want to sing a song about the Bible. We don’t want to worship the Bible, but in scripture Jesus tells us that He is the word of God. We wrote the verse to the song in about 45 minutes and then spent about 14 months working on the chorus and the bridge. We wrote six different choruses and it was a really fun experience because Brenton and I are both like to make sure our i’s are dotted and our t’s are crossed when it comes to songwriting.”

One of the most compelling moments on the album is “Not For a Moment,” led by Andrews and Sooter, who co-wrote the song with Mia Fieldes. “Her passion and her intensity for the Lord is just so evident,” Luke says of Andrews. “She’s not just a great leader and not just a great singer, but she’s also a really great writer. She had a hand in most of the songs on the album. Every song she writes comes out of her authentic intense relationship with the Lord.”

Live Worship From Vertical Church is filled with memorable worship songs. “The Greatness of Our God,” led by Kyle Fredericks and Lindsay McCaul is a soaring, emotional anthem that celebrates the majesty of God. “I Believe in You,” penned by Matt McCoy and Chris Moeller, is an infectious song driven by a catchy melody and penetrating lyric. Seth McConkey leads as the congregation jubilantly sings “Jesus, the One, the One who saved me You are the King, forever reigning.” Written by Ingram and McCaul, “Who Will Rise Up” is a poignant ballad underscored by McCaul’s beautiful lead vocals.

“This is about us wanting to open up a window to what God is doing in our church,” Rozier says of the album. “It’s not about Harvest Bible Chapel and it’s not about Vertical Church Band. It’s about Jesus Christ and it’s a huge honor for our worship ministry to be given this opportunity to do this. If you come to our church, you’ll hear on stage exactly what you hear on the record.”

Luke agrees. “These weren’t songs crafted for an album,” he says. “They are the songs we sing week to week. We are trying to talk authentically about what our church is really like. The book and music both support that. This is who we are. We are hoping it draws people toward their own vertical experience with God.”

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