

# CHUCK STEVENS:

## *A Heart Full of Song and Service*

BY LISA M. HENDEY

Imagine meeting a talented recording artist who's looking to give away most of the profits from his CD sales, whose greatest hope is that he can use his small talents to bring praise and worship to God, not himself. You've just met Chuck Stevens, police officer, husband, father of five and Catholic songwriter.

Having recorded his first CD, *In Your Presence*, Stevens now works with parishes, church projects and charities to raise needed funds through the sales of his music. Active in his home parish, Stevens is currently in the second of his four years of preparation for the permanent diaconate.

**Q: Please tell our readers about yourself, your family, and your own faith journey.**

A: God has blessed me with Kathi, my wonderful wife of 19 years and five great kids (three boys Sean, David, Chris; and two girls Jessica and Kelly) ranging in age from 8 to 16 years. I have finished the second of four years of study for the permanent diaconate, and am actively involved in music ministry, catechetics, and other activities within our home parish, in Petrolia, Ontario (Canada).

I have found that a more intense prayer life and setting more time aside for Scripture and quiet 'listening' have drawn me into a deeper relationship with God. This has translated itself into music. I [had been] playing in clubs and bars about 25 years ago and [then] I broke my left hand and figured, "there goes the music biz." About a year later, a small rural parish we belonged to wanted someone to accompany a group of children so they could sing at the Christmas Eve Children's Mass. I haven't played anywhere except churches and church functions in the 25 years since then. Now I'm not suggesting for a minute "God broke my hand," but it just shows me how the Holy Spirit takes our circumstances to lead us where God wants us to use our talents.

**Q: Please share the story of what inspired you to create your CD, *In Your Presence*.**

A: During our diaconal studies' year end retreat in Oxley, Ontario, we spent the Friday evening in a meditative exercise, then retired to our rooms for quiet time. During the course of that evening, I finished three songs that I had been working on over the years, and came up with three more. In fact, we used two of those at the Sunday liturgy that weekend. I came away with the conviction that Lord wanted me to use this gift, freely given to me, to help others come to praise, worship and serve God, and to help out churches and ministries wherever and however I could.

I was fortunate enough to meet up with Bob Hiltz, a Christian gentleman who operates EyreSpace Studios in Chatham, Ontario, who, after hearing my story, agreed to take on this challenge with me, and the first 10 songs were recorded for *In Your Presence*.

**Q: What inspires your music and how does your faith impact upon your creative process?**

A: God's Word is a continual source of inspiration to me. Usually, I either meditate on a particular passage, or quietly contemplate portions of the Liturgy of the Hours, or writings of some of the greats of Catholic literature, past and present (Henri Nouwen, Ronald Rolheiser, St. Therese of Lisieux, St. John of the Cross). Sometimes the melody is one that I've been working around as I go about my day, and I feel driven to match it to the theme that has resulted from my prayer or reading.

**Q: What are your hopes for your service as a Deacon?**

A: In a very visible and permanent way, deacons are called to bring Christ's presence to the poor, the marginalized, the disadvantaged, and to be of service both inside and outside the Church as ordained ministers in the world. I see this music as an extension of that service, in (hopefully) bringing others closer to God, while using it as a vehicle to help fund ministries to the poor inside and outside parishes.

I used to think I would really like to work with youth but did an outreach placement this past year

in a senior's residence/nursing home instead. I didn't think I could be effective or was cut out for this, but you know, it's amazing to me how God leads us somewhere and teaches us something - if we're willing to listen and learn.

**Q: What are your goals for *In His Presence*?**

A: I just want to use the CD to help God's people.

I've had the opportunity to play at a number of parishes around southwestern Ontario, with CD sales at the concerts to successfully raise funds for youth ministries in parishes, for assistance to food banks, and parish building funds.

In addition, I have a special place in my heart for St. Peter's Seminary, not only because it is where I am pursuing diaconal studies, but because of the training it provides for future priests from Canada and a number of other countries around the world. Profits from online and retail CD sales are going to the seminary on an ongoing basis.

For more information about Chuck Stevens and his CD *In His Presence* visit [www.smalltalentmusic.com](http://www.smalltalentmusic.com). †

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