

GARY RAND

I have been leading worship and the arts at LaSalle Street Church in Chicago for the last ten years, as well as directing worship, mentoring and teaching at McCormick Seminary, while composing music in a wide range of styles, from folk/pop songs to contemporary classical music. One of the key things I have tried to teach and model is that worship is something we do...not something we view. Giving people ways to actively participate, whether that's through singing, speaking words out loud, moving their bodies, writing on sticky notes, making art for the worship space...has always been a goal of mine, and something I've tried to bring to whatever worship experience I have helped create, whether at LaSalle Street Church, McCormick Seminary, or at the retreats and conferences I've been involved with.



I started making music at a young age, literally as a baby, as a member of my family's country-western group. After high school, I helped form and toured in one of the seminal Christian rock bands of the 70s, The Crimson Bridge, earned a B.Mus degree in composition from Wheaton College, then began a solo singer/songwriter career, writing and performing [songs](#) that reflected the truth of my life, my faith (and questions) and my growing concerns about peace and [justice](#) issues.

Co-written with my wife Lenora, I had two [CCM albums](#) in the 80s, until I lost my record deal, largely because of speaking out on issues like peacemaking and God's concern for the poor. (My record label felt I just needed to stick to "singing about Jesus." Especially if I wanted to get played on Christian radio. What I said to them was, "I thought I *was* singing about Jesus.") However, I continued to tour extensively, performing on college campuses and churches for a number of years.

About this time Lenora and I started a magazine, called *Motif*, to discuss new ways of thinking about what it might mean to be an artist who is also a Christian, and soon after that, a group called Chicago Artists (Chart), which was basically a live and in person version of the same discussion, while providing opportunities for artists to collaborate and create together. During this period, I also earned my Masters in Theological Studies, focused on worship and the arts, from Chicago's Garrett Theological Seminary, and a Doctorate in Music Composition from Northwestern University.

My deep passion has been on exploring and opening doors for multicultural worship as well as creating space for a plurality of voices, styles and ways to people to enter into worship. That has led me to study with John Bell at Iona in Scotland, spend time with the Taize community in France, learn African drumming, immerse myself in [Gospel](#) music under the tutelage of Gospel Legend Elsa Harris, and it's been the reason I've focused so much of my time and attention over the past 30 years on bringing together diverse groups of musicians, writers and artists, to discover how to create honest and provocative expressions of our spiritual longings.