

About...

## Bring the nations home (It's your face)

### ...how and why it was written

One of the things that most drew me to Mosaic Church (Leeds) is their emphasis on mission alongside the pursuit of intimacy with God which was succinctly voiced in a five love statement, 'Love: God, Love: each other, Love: Leeds, Love: the underprivileged, Love: the nations'.

This simple strapline really echoed my heart and of course the Sanctuary's heart to which longs to see a worshipping church that loves *both God and others* and is committed to both *intimacy and personal discipleship* and *intercession and reaching out with the gospel in word and in action*.

More than three years on, *Love: Nations*, Mosaic's annual conference is still one of the things I value most about the church because it demonstrates so clearly how alive and active this heart has been all year round with a special focus that is always surrounded in worship of the one who is the reason for all our acts of service.

This year one of the worship leaders, Craig Mullen, pulled together a few of the church's song-writers to come to a song-writing day at the Sanctuary. All of us responded to the brief to write songs for the 2014 conference that were grounded in scripture and based on the dual theme of Jesus' face and loving the nations. This song was my response.

Of course, the brief resonated deeply with much of what we sing, pray and create about daily here and so it was a joy to write this song because it came straight from the heart.

The scriptures that inspired it were:

- (verse 1) Matthew 17:2 where Jesus face at the transfiguration is described as shining like the sun, and the passages in Revelation which talk about the light of God and/or the lamb lighting heaven. (Interestingly these are the only scriptures that give any description of his appearance or expression besides the prophetic statements in Isaiah 53 that say there would be nothing of beauty in his appearance .)
- (verse 2) 1 Corinthians 13:12 which talks about seeing now in part but one day in full.
- (verse 3) Hebrews 12:1-2 and to some extent also Philipians 3:13-15 which talk about fixing our eyes on Jesus and running the race to the end.

I have a special affection for this song. Because creating it was one of those times when you knew you had written something you would want to sing again and again because it voiced so much truth and so much of the heart-cry to love him and others. For me, with such a global focus to my heart and ministry, there cannot be too many songs that help us apply this command to the nations.

### ...special thanks to

Craig Mullen. For initiating the day at the Sanctuary and for running it so gently and clearly in order to serve Mosaic and the wider church as well as the creative involved. And for coming up with the first tag when we worshipped through this song together with Laura Summers. God bless you and your adventures with him and all involved in the church plant in Dublin.

### **...how, where and when it could be used**

This is a simple song which works well in a congregational setting.

The three main verses function like a hymn, grounding the song's praise of Jesus and commitment to mission in truth. But the two tags – one more adoration and one more directly intercessional – enable the song to deepen and free up in a way which makes moving into more spontaneous worship and prayer natural and helpful. Even if they are used less freely and more like a bridge they are still helpful because after so much truth and so many words, they provide the space to reflect, absorb and prayerfully commit in response.

### **...its place on the journey to where world and worship meet**

Not much more needs to be said about this! But at the time of writing I have been struck by a couple of little phrases from the song *From the inside out* (Hillsongs). They say:

'Let justice and praise become my embrace, to love you from the inside out.'

This one image speaks volumes to me about what this song, the Sanctuary's overall message, and what I hope – my life – are trying to be all about...

To follow Christ is to wholeheartedly love God in an embrace made up of *both* adoration and intimacy given to him *and* merciful prayer, service and mission rooted in a love for others and him.

When we want to really hug someone we use both arms... just using one is not the same. It's a helpful picture.

Let's give a balanced, wholehearted embrace that is focused on Jesus' face alone in adoration but is running an active race of service in service of his purpose in the nations – to bring many more to him *and* to build his kingdom of justice and peace.