

Music has been a part of Bob Vandervliet's life from an early age

Photo by Marisa Hugonnett



# Answering the Call

## Cy-Fair Musician Spreads Faith Through Songs

Written by Michelle LeBlanc and Marlena Solomon

Two years ago, Cypress resident Bob Vandervliet embarked on a personal journey to express his spirituality and faith through music. After over 600 hours in the recording studio, thousands of dollars, and being fueled by inspired determination, his work culminated in *Near to the Heart of God*, an 11-track CD of original Christian contemporary songs. “My hopes for the CD are that people can connect to the songs and that other churches can find a song that they want to sing,” he says.

### Musical Beginnings

Music has been a part of Vandervliet’s life from an early age. “I’ve been doing music all of my life. I kind of grew up going to church and got into music,” he says. While a student at Midland Park High School in New Jersey, he was in choir and band, and also took voice lessons. Music was at the forefront of his life in college as he pursued a double major in voice and composition at Houghton College in New York, and later, a master’s degree in music composition from the University of South Carolina.

He now serves as the director of worship and arts at Windwood Presbyterian Church, a position he’s had since 2002. Along with singing and composing, his talents include playing anything with a keyboard on it, the trumpet, and the guitar, which he taught himself to play five years ago.

### Creative Inspiration

Vandervliet’s inspiration for writing original music is two-fold. “Originally, I just wrote music because I wanted to. Part of me just wanted to say, ‘I created something,’” he says. Creating his own music also allows him to write for a specific group. “It’s hard to find church music that suits the particular group that I’m working with or that I like,” he says. “It’s easier to write it or arrange it myself and it’s more rewarding.” Vandervliet’s music writing skills have been put to the test with Windwood’s annual kick-off Sunday, which introduces

the church’s theme for the year. “Bob has written an original song for our fall kick-offs for six years,” says Kevin Rudolph, Windwood’s senior pastor. “The first year after he came, I mentioned that it would be great to have a special song for kick-off, but I didn’t know any that fit the theme, and Bob said, ‘Well, I think I can write one.’ He did, and ever since, it has become something we all look forward to every year. In some years, the theme has presented a real challenge, but he has given us a great song each time.” Kick-off songs *Delight in the Lord* and *Loved by God* are included on Vandervliet’s CD, which the church helped fund and produce.

### Learning Through Experience

Vandervliet readily admits that producing a CD is more difficult than it sounds. “It was a two-year long project, because I started, then I had to start over,” he says. When he felt that the CD wasn’t coming together, he consulted with Pastor Rudolph and then sought the help of music producer Mark Townsend, who has worked with artists such as DC Talk, Shania Twain, and Israel Houghton. Townsend offered his advice, introducing him to some of the musicians and singers from Lakewood Church, who also perform on the CD and produced the track, *Let the Nations Shout*.

The experience also taught him that performing live and working in the recording studio can be completely different experiences. “Producers find that it can be challenging to work with musicians who are very good playing live, but haven’t spent a lot of time in the studio,” he says. “In a recording, the littlest imperfection is magnified 1,000 times. Getting the good performance out of the musicians for the recording is the magic of a good producer. If I would do it over again, I would hire a guy like Mark instead of producing it myself.”

### Connecting with Others

Vandervliet’s favorite song on the CD from a writing standpoint is, *Fallen and Forgiven*. Written when he was dealing with some “stuff” in his life, he feels it is the most inspired and personal song in the collection. “I think the lyrics on that one are the best of the entire CD,” he says.

In his free time, he plays jazz and R&B selections, as well as music from the 70s and 80s, with the band Sound Advice. Through his music, he hopes to continue reaching out to others. “I feel I’ve been called to write music, so that’s what I’m going to continue to do,” he says. *Near to the Heart of God* can be found on Vandervliet’s site, [desertrainmusic.com](http://desertrainmusic.com). If you know of a Cy-Fair resident with an extraordinary story, email [editor@cyfairmagazine.com](mailto:editor@cyfairmagazine.com). CFM

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## Meet Bob Vandervliet



- Director of worship and arts at Windwood Presbyterian Church.
- Sings, composes, and plays the piano, trumpet, and guitar.
- Recently released CD, *Near to the Heart of God*.
- Performs modern songs in band, Sound Advice.
- Former choir and band member at Midland Park High School in New Jersey.
- Bachelor’s in voice and composition from Houghton College in New York.
- Master’s in music composition from the University of South Carolina.