

'Oklahoma Love Journey' lyrics alive with love

MUSIC: CD PROJECT GATHERS CHURCH VOCALISTS TO PERFORM HEARTFELT SONGS

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[Sarah Sasnett](#) of [Norman](#) knew her fiance was a good singer, because he sang at church every Sunday.

When Brady [Neal](#) adamantly insisted he wasn't going to sing at their 2006 wedding, she wasn't so sure that she believed him.

She was right to be suspicious.

Neal, the worship leader at [Northeast Baptist Church](#) in Norman, surprised her by crooning a love ballad — a song he wrote himself — at the couple's nuptials.

"It just seemed to sum up all my feelings for her," Brady Neal said of his song, "Hand in Hand."

The Neals' love story is captured in words and melody in "Oklahoma Love Journey," a compilation of love songs performed by church vocalists across the state. The compact disc was produced by [Kent Jones Productions](#) of [Edmond](#) under the direction of [Kent Jones](#) and [Fred Imel](#).

On two compact discs, 14 singers who regularly share their vocal gifts with their church congregations sing their favorite songs of love and share why the songs mean so much to them. Many of the vocalists hail from the [Oklahoma City](#) metro area, while others live in cities including [Tahlequah](#), Sallisaw, [Tulsa](#) and Woodward.

Imel said he was in his own church, [Cedar Lake Chapel](#), near Hinton, when the idea for "Love Journey" came to him.

"I'm probably like a lot of people who attend church, and you hear singers who are not just singing; they are blowing their hearts out," Imel said.

He said the songs focus on romantic love, love of children and family and love of God, and the singers' stories are sweet and inspirational.

They express the variety of ways love plays a special role in their lives.

"As we were working on it, we realized that this was going to be more than the music we were after," Imel said.

Brady Neal's wife, Sarah, said her husband worried a bit that he had put too many personal things in his song, such as the couple's "pinkie promise." However, she said

she told him those personal remembrances are what make the song so special.

Besides Neal, other singers featured in "Love Journey" include the [Rev. Greg Bunton](#) of Edmond and [Brenda Cowell](#) of Mustang.

Bunton, 37, is associate minister of student ministries at First Christian Church of Edmond (Disciples of Christ). He sang [Josh Groban](#)'s song "You Bring Me Up" for the "Love Journey" project. He told about his efforts to woo his love, a preacher's kid, past her initial reservations about marrying a pastor. The singer-songwriter's romantic pursuit was eventually successful, and he ended up singing to his bride, Julie, when they married 13 years ago.

Bunton, who sings at his church's contemporary service each Sunday, said he was excited about the CD project. He said he knew immediately who would be the focus of his song dedication.

"I knew if it was going to be on a CD of love songs, I was going to sing a song about my wife. She's always been there to support me in ministry," he said.

Cowell, 51, lives in Mustang and is a choir member and soloist at [United Methodist Church](#) of the Good Shepherd in Yukon.

"I thought the fact that everyone is involved in church music makes this unique. There are incredible talents that are singing in church," she said of the project.

Cowell said she sang "The Woman in Me," dedicating the song to her husband of 31 years, Randy.

"The everyday trials that you go through, you can go to that one person, and they can make everything all right," she said.

Bunton said the project offered an unusual opportunity for church soloists.

"There are a lot of singers that give their talent on Sunday morning that don't get opportunities to be heard outside the church," he said.

"Sometimes we tend to overlook people right here in our own churches who give that gift every Sunday."

Today we stand together hand in hand. United for this moment, God's perfect plan.

"Family and friends gathered in this place, Worship together by His amazing grace.

"Time cannot hold this love I have for you. Emotions cannot separate our joy."

"Hand in Hand" by Brady Neal I knew if it was going to be on a CD of love songs, I was

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Rev. Greg Bunton,
associate minister of student ministries at First Christian Church of Edmond (Disciples
of Christ), talking about his wife, Julie.

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