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News Event

Final Draft

Word Count: 454

The Heart of Worship

Worship in Benson is a Sunday ritual on Bethel University's campus.

Alex Gonzalez, senior Vespers leader and electric guitarist sits alone in the back of Benson Great Hall on Sunday evening. Eyes closed, head bowed, he whispers a prayer to God. Carrying his exhausted body to the group of seven other musicians on his team, they huddle together with Pray First.

Amen.

The musicians take a deep breath as they walk on stage into the blinding lights and take their place, each on their own rug and set down their water bottles.

3... 2... 1.

The music starts, the lights go down, and Gonzalez feels a new rush of energy as he strums the first few chords of "The Heart of Worship" on his grey PRS Core Custom 24 guitar.

Between four different Vespers teams, each service creates a unique atmosphere that allows both those on stage and in the audience to experience God's presence in their own way. The team emphasizes the importance of worshipping as a community, but they understand that each individual who walks through the doors has their own relationship with the Lord.

“Music is the best way I connect with the Lord and when I feel closest to Him... it’s so special and universal and so individual and personal at the same time,” said bass player Isaac Verdoorn.

Gonzalez explained why he chooses to lead Vespers. “We’re not there to play for you guys, like, we’re there to play for God” he said. The Vespers leader hopes to create a space for people to worship, no matter their backgrounds, worries, or beliefs.

The Vespers team isn’t alone in their pursuit to serve the Kingdom through different forms of worship, such as prayer. Pray First is a group of students who commit themselves to prayer during this time of worship. These campus prayer warriors make themselves available for anyone in need.

“You never know who God is going to move,” said Josh Hinrichs, a Pray First leader. “Two weeks ago, [a student] came up to me and Carter Nelson right after the 7:00 service, which nobody ever comes up to get prayer then. We were just like ‘oh sweet, this is awesome!’... I’ve never had somebody come up to get prayer and then want to pray over me. And [he] wanted to pray over me and Carter. And it was, like, one of the most beautiful prayers ever.”

Vespers is “an escape, set aside time to put the worries of the upcoming week aside and just worship” said community member, Jake Stein as he walked into Benson for the next service. The music starts, the lights go down, and the audience feels a new rush of energy as the band plays the first few notes of “The Heart of Worship”.