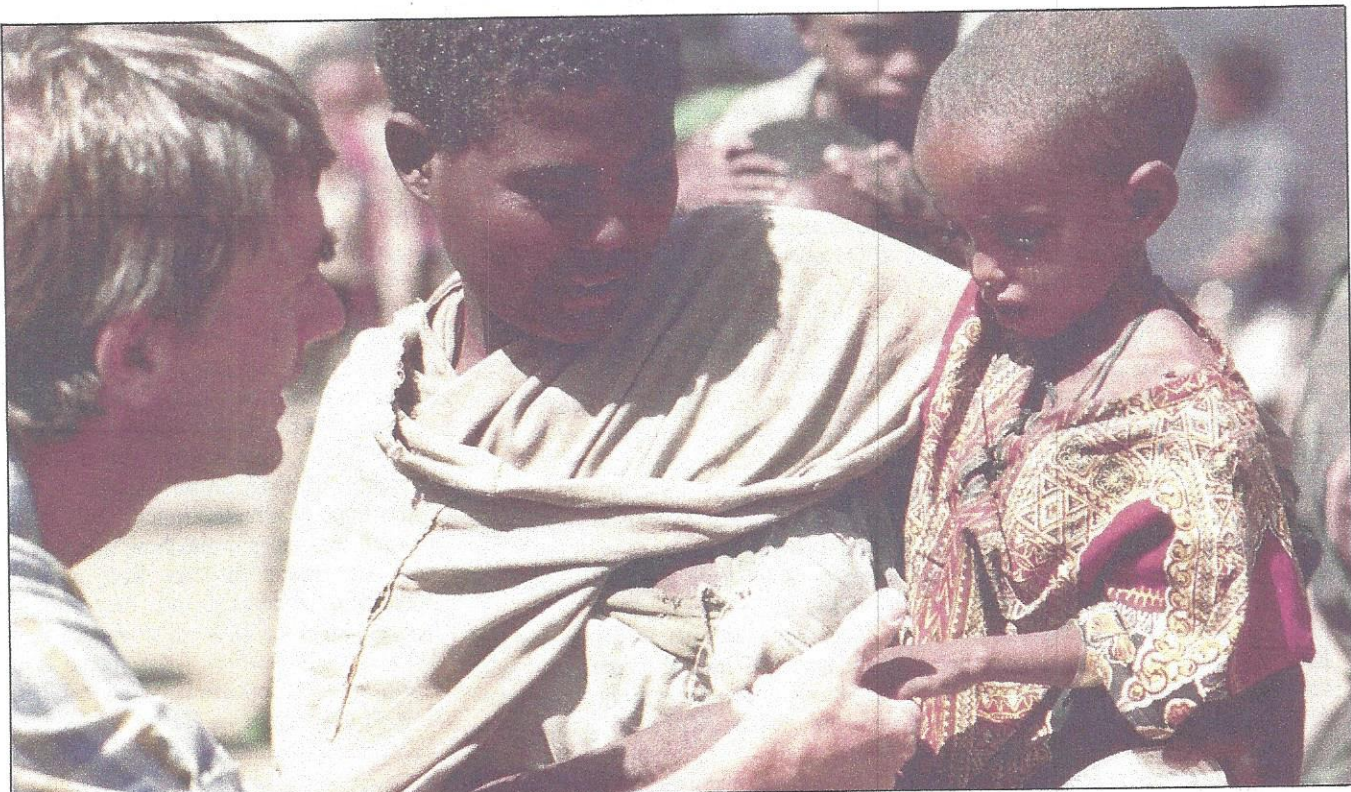


# *They Will Know We Are Christians By Our Love*

*Prominent Christian entertainers are responding to the needs of famine victims in Ethiopia and in other nations. Some have written songs, others have donated large sums of money and still others have actually visited the poor.*

**By MICHELE BUCKINGHAM**



**Ready to help,** Cam Floria (left) went to Ethiopia with his musical group, the Continental singers.

PHOTO COURTESY OF WORLD VISION INTERNATIONAL



**B**and Aid. Live Aid. "We Are the World." You probably recognize these names and easily associate them with efforts by secular musicians to help famine victims in Ethiopia.

But did you know that long before the media picked up on the humanitarian efforts of these secular musicians that Christian entertainers were fulfilling Jesus' commandment to take care of the needy? One well-known entertainer went so far as to donate all of the proceeds of his concerts last year—an astounding \$1 million—to a Christian charitable organization.

And do you recognize these names: The CAUSE; *Together: A Gift of Love to a Hurting World*; or Have a Heart?

Just as the Live Aid extravaganza raised funds for the famine victims in Ethiopia, these less publicized events and projects by Christian artists have also raised funds to help combat world hunger.

While some events coincided with Live Aid and the worldwide empathy for Ethiopians, Christian entertainers and musicians were donating their time, talent and finances to this type of cause long before those first haunting newsreels of severe hardship in Ethiopia were beamed into our living rooms via the nightly TV news.

"While 'We Are the World' and all the other secular events have been wonderful, the fact is that Christians have been

aware of this crisis and other areas of great need in the world and have been involved on a massive scale for quite some time," says Pat Boone, well-known Christian singer and entertainer who has been instrumental in coordinating humanitarian relief efforts in the Christian community.

Boone is the cofounder and chairman of Mercy Corps International, a Christian relief and development agency which helps to provide food, medicine and clothing to needy people in Africa, Central America and other problem areas around the world.

Another relief agency, Compassion International, estimates that there are one billion people in the world who are starving and another 500 million who are chronically hungry. The group claims that 42,000 children die every day in Third World nations because of poverty and neglect.

And the famine problem seems to be increasing. Compassion International says one out of every three children born in Third World nations is not expected to live past his or her fifth birthday.

"Christian performers are even quicker than regular show biz folk to jump to the cause," says Boone. "Christians are very sensitive to need and will rush to meet it when anyone gives them the opportunity."

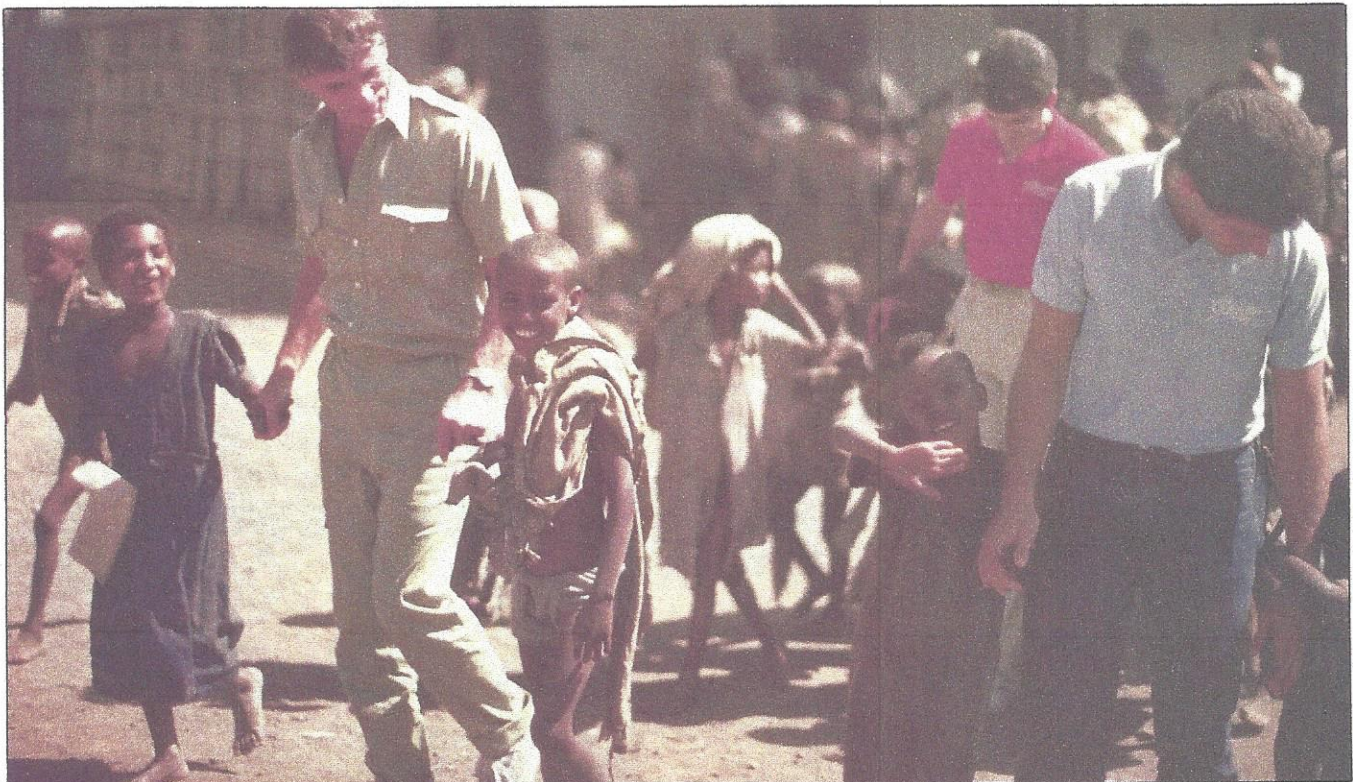
"We were doing concerts with Andrae

Crouch and Leon Patillo and others long before the big concerts that were done for world hunger on the secular level," concurs Dan O'Neill, Mercy Corps' chairman of the board and Boone's son-in-law. "I'm not trying to play one-upsmen; I'm just saying that Christian entertainers have been expressing their concern for the poor professionally for years."

In fact, it was four years ago that World Vision, another international Christian relief agency which aids the sick, homeless, hungry and spiritually needy in more than 80 countries around the world, assembled a group of Christian music executives to show them fresh footage of the agency's efforts in Africa and discussed how the talents of successful Christian music artists could be brought together and tied into World Vision's hunger projects.

"Since these entertainers reach a lot of people, we thought it would be appropriate and beneficial to both World Vision and the artists to get them involved," says Brian Bird, director of public relations for the agency. "Long before any dreams—or nightmares—of 'We Are the World,' we were talking to Christian artists about the same kind of thing."

Initially, the result of that meeting was a benefit record titled "Together: A Gift of Love to a Hurting World"—a sort of "greatest hits" of contemporary Christian music. Ten well-known recording



**Ethiopian children** responded with enthusiasm when Cam Floria (left) and Mike Mahoney (right) visited a camp for famine victims.

PHOTO COURTESY OF WORLD VISION INTERNATIONAL



stars, including B.J. Thomas, Andrae Crouch, the Imperials, Amy Grant and Russ Taff, each donated one of their own songs (plus its royalties) to the album, with the proceeds going to World Vision's relief efforts. The record was produced by Light Lexicon and offered by World Vision as an "appreciation gift" for a donation of \$20. The project brought in more than \$2 million to help people, including some of the estimated five million refugees in Africa.

Other major Christian "ensemble" events have followed. On February 14, 1985—Valentine's Day—Mercy Corps sponsored a benefit concert in Anaheim, California, specifically for Ethiopian famine victims. Called the "Have a Heart" concert, it featured such noted Christian entertainers as Glen Campbell, Debby Boone, Pat Boone, John Michael Talbot, Russ Taff, and Koinonia. The artists sang "Song for the Poor," their version of "We Are the World." Talbot wrote the song just for the concert. A recorded 45 RPM version of "Song for the Poor," distributed on the Sparrow label, is still available in Christian music stores. More than \$34,000 in proceeds from the concert and the sale of the single

have gone directly to Mercy Corps' African relief efforts.

On April 4, Christian singer/songwriter Steve Camp organized another major Christian event—an ensemble recording of a song written by Camp and Phil Madeira called "Do Something Now." More than 50 top Christian music artists, including Amy Grant, Sandi Patti, Russ Taff, Silverwind, Phil Keaggy, Evie, the Bill Gaither Trio and the Imperials joined in the effort, which was taped in an all-night session following the Gospel Music Association's Dove Awards ceremony in Nashville, Tennessee. The record has been distributed by Sparrow in a 12-inch version as well as in a seven-inch single that has been near the top of the Christian charts for the last year.

"Do Something Now" was the first project of Christian Artists United to Save the Earth (CAUSE), an organization founded by Camp in response to his concern that Christian artists were not as visible as secular artists in the famine relief effort. All proceeds from the recording—which had reached \$100,000 by September—have gone to the African relief work of Compassion International,

a worldwide missions agency which sponsors children from poor and underdeveloped regions of the world, providing food, clothing, health care and Christian training. Funds for the agency's efforts have also been raised through the sale of a 17-minute video featuring clips from the recording session which has been played on several secular cable outlets across the country, as well as on major Christian cable networks such as PTL and CBN.

A third major project in the last year to benefit famine victims, not only in Africa but around the world, has been a joint effort by World Vision and the Continental Singers and Orchestra, a touring group of college-age singers and musicians. The group was founded and is directed by Cam Florida, the noted Christian composer and arranger. Throughout the year, the Continentals traveled to World Vision relief projects in Africa and South America, seeing the needs of starving people firsthand. They returned to the United States freshly inspired to use their music to motivate Americans to respond to the crises they witnessed. The group shared their experiences throughout a 50-city tour which featured a multimedia

# Amy Grant

"We've shared my music. Now let's share Heart to Heart"

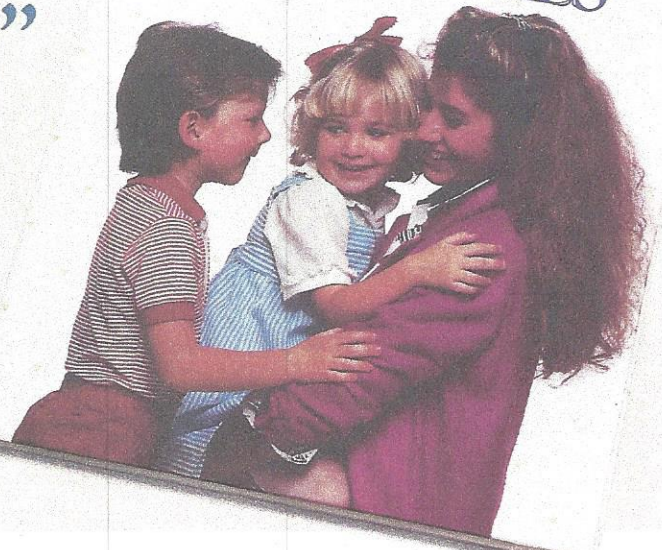
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presentation and a performance of "Together We Will Stand," a musical comprised of contemporary Christian music hits. The production was arranged by Floria to encourage Christians to become involved in helping the world's needy, including an estimated 150 million people who face severe food shortages in Africa alone.

The idea for the project was sparked by discussions between Floria and Ted Engstrom, president of World Vision.

"Dr. Engstrom shared with me the shocking reality of the drought and famine conditions he saw in Africa, and I knew we had to act," Floria says. "We hope to rescue more than 60,000 children and adults who would otherwise face death by starvation."

The Continentals and World Vision also arranged for 10 top Christian music artists, including Sandi Patti, Scott Wesley Brown, Jamie Owens-Collins and Michael W. Smith, to record "Together We Will Stand," with the Continentals performing as back-up artists. Pressed by Sparrow and distributed by Christian Artists, the benefit record can be found in Christian music stores and at Continentals concerts, and is also being given to World Vision donators as a gift of appreciation.

The original goal of the year-long project was to bring in \$1 million for World Vision's hunger programs. By September, however, it had already raised \$1.5 million.

Obviously, these major collaborative events by Christian artists have proven very successful in raising money and awareness in the Christian community. Yet, even more is being done by Christian singers and musicians at the individual level.

For example, all the proceeds from singer/songwriter John Michael Talbot's concerts—an astounding total of more than \$1 million last year, according to Sparrow, Talbot's recording label—are donated to Mercy Corps International. Talbot has been "the biggest producer of funds of all the artists who work with us," says Mercy Corps' chairman, Dan O'Neill. "For one man to make that kind of commitment and to share that substantially is quite a statement."

"My involvement came purely out of my prayers," explains Talbot, a Franciscan friar. "Every time I would go to pray, the reality of the world's poor would come into my prayers and I literally couldn't escape it. Finally, I asked the Lord, 'What do You want me to do? Do You want me to go to East Africa to work

with the friars there? Do You want me to give up my music? I'll do whatever you want.'

"Basically, the answer I got was to stay in the United States to raise, first of all, consciousness, and second, physical assistance in the form of finances which would go toward food, clothing and medical supplies."

Talbot's efforts have sparked the recent formation of a "Franciscan Mercy Corps" under the auspices of Mercy

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Corps International. Rather than being an organization to which one can donate funds, the Franciscan Mercy Corps is an actual corps of people which one can join.

"People give their money—even large sums of money—as a one-time shot that does short-term good, but it really doesn't solve the problem of the world's poor. We're urging people to simplify their lifestyles and to take the needs of the poor, particularly our brothers and sisters around the earth, into their daily prayer time," Talbot says.

Other examples of generosity abound. Dino Kartsonakis, the well-known Christian pianist who played in Kathryn Kuhlman's miracle services, has raised \$2 million for African relief efforts with an album recorded and released about two years ago on the Light Lexicon label. Titled "Great Is the Lord," the album featured Kartsonakis on the piano, accompanied by the National Symphony of England. All proceeds have gone to World Vision.

The Christian rock group Petra includes a presentation on behalf of Compassion International at virtually every live concert. Programs printed by the agency are passed out to the concertgoers upon arrival. At a specific point in the concert, the members of the band pause to talk about their experiences overseas with Compassion and share their personal responses to the great need that they

witnessed. Those in the audience who are moved by the presentation are then encouraged to fill out a response card included in the program.

Other Christian artists have made a clear statement placing information right inside their album jackets. When you pull out your new Randy Stonehill, Leslie Phillips, Phil Keaggy, Russ Taff or Allies record, you will also find a flier encouraging you to donate funds to a relief organization.

While done on a smaller scale than some of the other projects, these album stufferers have proven very effective. A stuffer prepared by World Vision and included in Sandi Patti's hit album, *Songs from the Heart*, for example, raised more than \$35,000 last year.

Miss Patti is unwavering in her support of such efforts. "Jesus always met physical needs first," she says. "He didn't preach to the people on the hill until He fed them. It is our responsibility, and more than that, it is a commandment from our Lord that we take care of the needs of others, whether they be spiritual or physical."

A more personal approach is taken by the Hemphills—Joel and LeBreeska, daughter Candy, and sons, Trent and Joey. Three or four times a year, the singing family uses its own funds to personally deliver food, clothing and Bibles to needy families in poor regions of Mexico.

It is this kind of commitment that has made Christian music's contribution to the international relief effort so significant.

"As wonderful as Band Aid and Live Aid were, their efforts were one-shot deals. But between all the major Christian relief organizations and the artists involved with them, millions of dollars have been channeled to the great needs of the world and will continue to be," says Pat Boone.

"Christians who know the Word know that they're one day going to face the question: 'When I was sick, or poor, or naked, or hungry, did you help Me?' These artists want to be able to say, 'Yes, Lord.' " ■

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*Editor's note: To see how you can help, read Stephen Strang's column on page 13 of this issue.*

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