

# TEEN SPIRIT

## A CELEBRATION OF TEEN TALENT & CHRISTIAN FAITH

### A GUIDE FOR PASTORAL COUNCILS

Dear Pastoral Council Member,

The complete resource pack contains a Teen Spirit I DVD, Teen Spirit II CD, Teen Spirit III Part 1 DVD, Teen Spirit Caherciveen DVD, sample poster, sample programme, and guidelines on how to do a local Teen Spirit show. This is available to you should you so wish.

## TEEN SPIRiT IN PASTORAL AREAS

We hope in the coming year or so to start working with pastoral areas in the Kerry diocese on engaging teenagers in their pastoral area to do a Teen Spirit show in a church central to that pastoral area.

We have done large shows in the INEC and Cork Opera House combining teenage choirs and singers from all over Kerry and this has been very successful and enriching for those involved and for those who attended such shows. These shows were performed by a very large combined



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choir and the shows were about two hours long.

## IVERAGH TEEN SPIRiT

Recently we did a 'mini' Teen Spirit show with the singers of the Iveragh pastoral area who on the 31st of July in the Daniel O' Connell Memorial Church as part of the Caherciveen Music Festival. The choir consisted of local singers, the majority of whom were pupils of Coláiste na Sceillige. There were about 25 in the choir and they did a show that lasted about 75 minutes to a full Church. It was a great success and Fr. William Crean parish priest of Caherciveen had this to say about it:

*"The experience of Teen Spirit in The O'Connell Memorial Church, Caherciveen was pure delight. The performance of the young people, all from the Iveragh Pastoral Area, exuded joy and optimism. It was wonderful to witness their expression of faith, conveyed with such joyful celebration and exuberance. Many thanks for such a special evening."*



# TEEN SPIRiT AS A RESOURCE

We don't see Teen SpiriT as a show a specific group have done and have ownership of. We see the Teen SpiriT shows, songs, and reflections as a resource for the Church, a resource for parishes, pastoral areas, and schools.

## TEEN SPIRiT TEAM

The Team of Teen SpiriT are ready and willing to help work with volunteers from the pastoral areas to support them and help them make it possible to organise a Teen SpiriT show performed by local singers in their local Church.

The Teen SpiriT team consists of various volunteers (mainly teachers in local primary and secondary schools) with different areas of skill and experience.

In the Caherciveen project we had Rhonda Daly rehearsing the choir moves, Mish O' Donoghue on vocals and performance, Kevin Courtney looked after the choir staging, lighting and large screen framing, Catherine Mangan looked after wardrobe, logistics and continuity, Paul O' Raw helped with sound and lighting, Nodlaig Lillis did the powerpoint presentations on a large screen, and I did the music, harmonies and vocals. We all found it easy enough to do this mini show and working with the teenagers of the Iveragh pastoral area was a pleasure. In fact every group of teenagers we have worked with since 2008 have been fantastic.

## MINISTRY OF TEEN SPIRiT

It is important to explain the purposes of the project in a ministry sense in that it is not just an entertainment show that involves teenagers performing.

### SONG CHOICE:

A lot of thinking goes into the song choice and it has a purpose ministry-wise. By explaining the thinking behind our song choice I hope you can see what we hope to achieve with the shows in a ministry sense. The songs we choose are a mix of contemporary Christian, sacred, praise / gospel, traditional hymns, inspirational chart and fun songs. Also the teenagers have been involved in picking appropriate songs, which is very special and is a big reason why we pick a set of songs the teenagers love to sing.

- **FUN SONGS:** The fun songs are there to give the audience a spell of light entertainment and fun as a full show of reflective Christian or spiritual music can be heavy for your everyday audience member. So these songs are a very well received and entertaining break from the reflective element of the show. The choir love doing these funs songs also so it helps attract singers to the project. These would be well known classic hits like

“Waterloo” (ABBA), “The Hucklebuck”, “Let’s twist again”, “Amarillo” etc. But even though this element of the show is not directly Christian, it does witness to the fact that it doesn’t have to be all Christian in a show – that we live in the world of chart hits, lively songs and that joy and fun are a gift from God too. We hope this sends a message to people that we are meeting people where they are at and that you can be a believer and still be part of today’s world of lively fun music. This is an important message to young people (and not so young) who may attach Christian faith to the stereotype of a serious, restricted life without fun. We want to witness that believing in God gives us ‘life to the full’ so these fun songs help break down such stereotypes.

- **CONTEMPORARY CHRISTIAN SONGS:** The contemporary Christian songs we pick deal with real faith issues from a very personal perspective – you’d know it was written from the heart by the songwriter about a specific aspect of their relationship with God – in this way a teenager will know it’s the real thing and will have a better chance to take the song’s message in. These songs show aspects of young people’s living relationship with God in the context of life in today’s world. We take care to pick songs that are at a basic enough spiritual level for young people to understand, as some of this contemporary Christian music can be too advanced and devotional for teenagers. These songs are written by Christian artists mainly in the USA and Britain and have that sound like they are new out in the charts. Teenagers need to know what they sing has a very up to date sound – the ‘cool’ factor and we are simply meeting them where they’re at with this music, which has proven very popular with the teenagers.
- **SACRED:** We have a candlelit moment in every show and we usually do a Latin/Gaeilge/English sacred choral number or chant – this is a very effective sacred moment, we use it sparingly to have maximum effect when it does happen.
- **PRAISE / GOSPEL:** We include a couple of lively traditional/modern gospel or contemporary Christian praise and worship songs towards the end just to celebrate God and finish on a high note. Both audience and choir love this crescendo and build up to the end.
- **TRADITIONAL / MODERN HYMNS:** We use this category of song sparingly also in that in local Masses, in school Masses etc these hymns make up the vast majority of current liturgical music. Teenagers want new material and fresh sounding music as uniquely theirs. However we are mindful of the wide age group of the audience so we make sure that we include a couple of well known hymns as well and they are beautiful moments in the show.
- **INSPIRATIONAL / SPIRITUAL CHART HITS:** The inspirational and spiritual chart numbers that we use are hits from the last two decades. If any older they have to be reasonably edgy (like “Something inside so strong”) and not old fashioned – the teenagers are very quick to tell us what they’ll sing and if it’s old fashioned they’ll tell us!! The chart hits



element is very important as the teenagers are quite insecure and need the 'cool' factor very much in order to be happy to do the show.

## **MINISTRY TO TEENAGERS INVOLVED**

Teenagers learn so much about the Christian faith in a very practical sense through the process of doing a Teen Spirit show.

1. **GROUP PRAYER** - We pray before performances and if we know the group long enough we pray before and after rehearsals. The prayers are usually short enough, prayers of thanksgiving and asking



- God to help us make the best use we can out of our talents as a show of gratitude for the gift of music. We ask God to look after our families and friends and help us to be the best we can be. It's brief but very God-centred and positive. It is probably the most powerful thing I've experienced praying with a large group of teenagers who all have heads bowed respectfully, eyes closed and in these moments I have seen the real potential our teenagers have for letting God into their lives. This is also a powerful time where the teenagers are safe from peer pressure and bravado, free to be themselves.
2. **TESTIMONY** - We talk briefly to the teenagers about the content of some of the Christian songs or the inspirational songs with a Christian theme. The team have picked the Christian / inspirational songs also because we relate to them so we talk about our personal perspectives of the songs. In this way we show that our work is coming out of our personal journey with God and how God is relevant in our lives. In this we hope teenagers get a sense that God can be relevant in their lives too.
  3. **WE VOLUNTEER** – so the teenagers see the Christian value of service in action. That has been an important foundation to the success of this project. The teenagers know we care enough about them to give of our spare time, to do this work for them and they respond in kind. So volunteers from each pastoral area can have that same effect on their local teens.
  4. **HEALTHY OUTLOOK AND APPROACH TO LIFE** - We promote a healthy outlook on life with our approach. We have great fun with the choir during rehearsals, the team are joyful, don't argue (much), there is a real sense of we – i.e. the team and teens working together, we aim for high standards but without perfectionism – we

challenge the teenagers to do their very best but we also reassure them that we are not looking for perfection and that mistakes are ok!!

5. **TRUST IN GOD** - It is unavoidable that there are nerves in the build up to an event but we witness peace and calm and repeat the fact that we trust in God that He will look after us and our work and that everything will turn out just fine. And so far it has!!
6. **SONG CONTENT** – the modern nature and content of the songs witness that God is relevant, current and that people are experiencing a relationship with Him in their everyday lives in today's world. The following are just an example of the songs and what they address re the writers relationship with God:



- **'Perfect people'** – is about how we try to cover up our imperfections and flaws in case we come across as 'imperfect' but that God loves us and is working in us all the time, and most importantly that He just wants us to go easy on ourselves as there's no such thing as a perfect person. God just wants us to try our best and leave the rest to Him.



- **'About You'** – is about how the songwriter has learned not to be too hard on themselves and but to take the focus and pressure off themselves and look to God. That God is bigger than any challenge we face and by entrusting our challenges to God we feel less pressure, even peace and that God will look after us and the challenges in life.



- **'Forgiven'** – is about how if our mistakes and sins are a burden and source of guilt, we can trust in God to be totally merciful, compassionate and will forgive our sins every time we say sorry and confess or sins. The song captures the sense of relief and liberation after God's forgiveness and freedom to go on in life without the burden of past sins.



- **'Walk on the water'** is about not being afraid to step out and take a risk in trying to do something good or something courageous. The writer uses the passage where Jesus invited the apostles to step out of their boat in faith as the foundation of this song and the writer asks us to step out in little ways in our own life, believing God will look after us and that we don't have to be afraid.

The above songs are very relevant to a teenager's life in that they may help with poor self-image, being afraid, peer pressure, guilt and loneliness / helplessness in the face of adversity. Other general themes covered in Teen Spirit songs are that we are created and loved by God, we can do good things great and small with God's help, that we don't have to be afraid to say we are Christian, that our lives are a gift and not something to be taken for granted, and many more themes. So the very act of listening to, learning and singing these songs is a process that will allow the teenagers take in these ideas and values.

## **ADVANTAGES FOR THE COMMUNITY**

The big Teen Spirit shows are great in what they have achieved but there is a special atmosphere generated when a local community take on the challenge. The night in Caherciveen was electric and local singers taking ownership of the show was very special. The majority of the audience was local people, relatives, neighbours, fellow parishioners and this created a very supportive atmosphere for the teenagers to respond to. Also the young people and teenagers of a community who don't sing, get this space to reflect on the faith issues addressed in the show in a very modern way. Also you get to see young people step out and try a bit of a solo or instrumental and it's great to see them do this to their 'home' crowd. You can sense the crowd willing on the choir and each soloist that steps out.



We have found there is enough talent in every area to make this show a reality, it's just a matter of giving them a context to show their impressive talents together as a group.

## **ADVANTAGES FOR CHURCH**



The Teen Spirit shows have been such a positive aspect of the Church in the Kerry Diocese over the past three years. Through Teen Spirit there has been a continued flow of good news about our teenagers in a Church context. This good news has been very mainstream and very public with a consistent flow of advertising, reports, pictures and internet feedback bringing this good news about the Church into the consciousness of the general population. The seeds are being sown for teen choirs to develop around the diocese and this is because the news has been so positive and the pictures so inspiring of seeing so many bright young people happy to sing songs of God with such enthusiasm and courage.

## **CHILD PROTECTION**

There is a Child Protection policy for Teen Spirit that is based on the Kerry Diocese Child Protection policy. We take this aspect of the work very seriously and apply best practices where possible. The team of Teen Spirit are in the vetting process and are informed of best practices and procedures. Our policy is to ensure the safety and protection of both the children in our care and the adult volunteers involved. The policy is available on request – contact me on (087) 6961851

# SO HOW DO YOU GO ABOUT GETTING A TEEN SPIRIT CONCERT DONE IN YOUR PASTORAL AREA?

## ***Initial Contact:***

1. Contact me on 087 6961851 or email [info@teenspirit.ie](mailto:info@teenspirit.ie) for initial chat about your pastoral areas' starting point

## ***Getting a choir together:***

2. The next challenge is getting singers together to make a choir – or get an existing choir to look at DVDs of Teen Spirit so points 3 to 8 are all how to go about getting singers.
3. We can send you as many copies of Teen Spirit DVDs that you need to give out to potential singers/choirs – the DVDs are a great tool to give a teenager an idea of what Teen Spirit is. Teenagers are much less likely to take a chance and get involved if they think it would in any way be 'uncool'. So the DVD will be useful showing them how modern and enjoyable the Teen Spirit show can be.
4. Talk about it at your pastoral council meeting or pastoral area meeting and with your clergy.
5. Designate people to meet with secondary school principal for initial contact
6. Designate a person or people to meet with secondary school choir director / music teacher – the music teacher or choir director may be very busy but they don't have to take this project on in a leadership capacity. Just to get the singers / choir access to the DVDs is a great start. In fact that was how the singers of Colaiste na Sceilige got involved in Teen Spirit III. Their music teacher had too much on to lead them in the Teen Spirit project but she gave the singers CDs, the words etc which I had sent out to her. So even though the choir director hadn't have time to do the project, she played a vital role getting the teenagers interested and involved.
7. Designate a person or people to talk with the Religious Education Head teacher in your local secondary school if there isn't a choir or music teacher available
8. Designate a person or people to meet with local youth choir leaders
9. Contact people who'd know of teenage singers and musicians e.g. Scór singers, local stage school directors, local school of music
10. If you need young adults to get involved ask around about people in your locality in their twenties, thirties and forties who might be interested in helping out. The pastoral council don't have to organise a show but they can organise interested adults to help. Longer term we'd love to do a show in an area where the volunteers

would learn more about the process so that they could take ownership for future ventures.

***Once the teenagers are ready...***

11. Once you have enough singers to put a choir in place (around 25 singers would be enough) contact me and we will meet and decide on a set of music with the choir and adults from the area. Once the songs / music is decided we can arrange rehearsals and get cracking!!

***Everything else!***

12. Once things are in motion we will look after rehearsals if necessary (if a choir leader would like to do all or some of the rehearsals with the singers that is great!)
  - ***Rehearsal CDs:*** I can provide rehearsal CDs so that the choir can practice themselves with a backing CD if needed
  - ***Backing tracks:*** I can provide the live music backing and backing tracks for the live show itself – we can create a very full and modern sound with a mixture of backing tracks and live keyboard, guitar, flutes, violin etc
  - ***Choreography:*** We have choir moves on DVD for each choir member so they can practice at home
  - ***Sound / Lighting / Powerpoints:*** We can look after sound and lighting as well as a large screen with powerpoints and reflections to go with songs and between songs.
  - ***Wardrobe:*** We provide scarves and ties for choir and they just wear appropriate black attire.
  - ***Local PR:*** We have sample posters on computer that we can get customised for your area, which can be used for a poster run or ads in papers / local publications as well.
  - ***Other PR / Advertising:*** We have good PR experience so that combined with the local PR we should be able to generate a lot of excitement about a local show, improving the chances of a good crowd turning up. PR would include Kerry Diocesan website, Facebook networking, poster runs, newsletter articles, newspaper articles, schools promotion so things can get very exciting after all that PR work!
  - ***Child Protection:*** We will need to get any local volunteers who will have direct dealings with the teenagers referenced and vetted but it's a simple process of filling out a couple of forms and it's worth it! If an area just want for the Teen

SpiriT team to do the direct work that's perfect too and that will avoid the vetting process. However we do want local areas to take as much ownership as possible so please don't let the vetting process put you off!

## **FINAL POINTS**

As it says in the Good Book 'Do not be afraid!' The teenagers will respond with 110% if you invest in them. We have the resources, skills, experience, interest and availability to make a Teen SpiriT show happen in your area. The Teen SpiriT project has been such a blessing in areas where young people and the community have gotten involved. One of the main problems pastoral councils had before was finding resources for engaging young people in a parish context. While this is only one idea, Teen SpiriT can be a significant starting point in any area. In Killarney it started with Teen SpiriT and now we are stepping out in other areas, like a pastoral youth council and faith based events / activities that include the participation of young people who don't sing or play an instrument. But Teen SpiriT was a significant start locally. We encourage you to step out with us in faith and give it a go. We firmly believe God will look after the rest.

Thank you for taking the time to read through this

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