

# Free Agents for God

*Three New Thought Musicians  
Make a Global Impact through Music  
and Humanitarian Efforts*

Kent Rautenstraus

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ree agents for God—this phrase describes New Thought musicians Faith Rivera, Rev. Dr. Michael Gott, and Jana Stanfield. These award-winning singer-songwriters log thousands of miles each year traveling the world, sharing the profound gift of music, not only in Religious Science communities but wherever Spirit leads them. They are making a difference for good by sharing their divine gifts of creativity expressed through music, coupled with a passion to serve in the world. In doing so, they set an example of what anthropologist and social scientist Dr. Jean Houston calls “the possible human.”

*FAITH RIVERA*  
(photo by Brian Geraths)

## Faith Rivera

Hawaii-born Faith Rivera grew up as a Catholic attending Sacred Hearts' Academy on the island of Oahu. Early on, she demonstrated remarkable creativity and talent in music by playing piano and singing for mass. She later became the president of her school and even wrote a song for her graduating class. She was grateful for her Catholic upbringing, but along the way, she questioned the teachings of her faith. How could a kid in a remote jungle somewhere not be saved because he or she had not heard of Jesus? She longed for a better understanding of this topic.

In college in California, she began delving more into her spirituality when someone shared with

anchored in the intention to use her music to make an impact for good in the world.

The ensuing years after college brought Faith many experiences, including a lack of faith in her gift of music. After countless music auditions and facing constant rejection, she took a job as a file clerk at Michelson Laboratories and, within six months, became the assistant to the vice-president. But music and spirituality wouldn't let go of her. She persevered with her music and landed a job with an all-girl singing group. Soon after, they began touring with a major label artist, Xavier, from Interscope Records. This led to her work in the industry with legendary singers Luther Vandross and Neil Young, recording credits in films including *Forgetting Sarah Marshall*, and her own songs featured on the television shows *ER*, *Scrubs*, and more.

Along the way, she was introduced to the teachings of Religious Science. She was invited to sing at the Redondo Beach Church of Religious Science where she experienced meditation during the service and readings shared from the Bible, the Koran, and even poet Maya Angelou. Her heart sang with joy to find an all-embracing, inclusive, and loving spiritual teaching and community. This propelled her on the path to making her first spiritually based

CD, *Faithgroove*. In 2003, she attended her first conference ever, *Humanity's Team Gathering*, and met and sang for *Conversations with God* author Neale Donald Walsch. As a relatively unknown artist, she was asked by author Mary Morrissey to sing again at Sunday services held during the conference. She sold more music CDs in one day than she had sold in over a year. "I found my tribe!" she exclaimed, adding that she also found her calling. She determined that, "If my music can be of service, then I'll be there." That same year, she won an Emmy award for Outstanding Original Song for NBC's *Passions*. The world began taking note of her talent.

Since that time, Faith has used her energy and creativity to write and share a prodigious amount of spiritually based music, blending world music rhythms and harmonies with her lyrical understanding of New Thought teaching. Her songs deepen her own understanding of spiritual principles. One of her most impactful compositions speaks to the indwelling and Infinite Intelligence:

*Where I am GOD IS*

*Where I stand GOD IS standing strong*

*Where I breathe GOD IS breathing life*

*In and out and through me...as me.*

—lyrics from *God Is*

Faith sang *God Is* at the 2009 Parliament of the World Religions in Melbourne, Australia. New Thought music and the New Thought message were acknowledged on a par with other major religions of the world. This fact deeply humbled her.

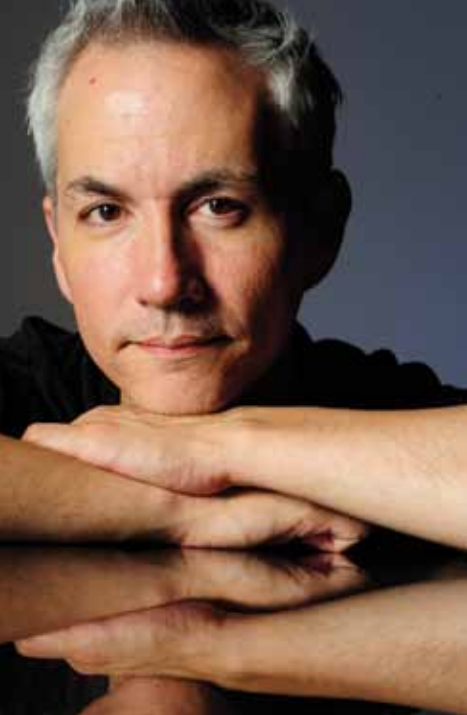
Today, Faith is involved in many global peace efforts, including an upcoming peace festival in Japan, sharing music in spiritual settings throughout the United States, and facilitating weekly *SingDanceShine* classes, which empower the "everyday superstar in everyone." From headlining a peace concert in St. Croix, U.S. Virgin Islands, to sharing music at interfaith events, to being voted "2008 Biggest Giver" for *Humanity Unites Brilliance*, an organization that provides ongoing food, water, education, and microloans to women and children around the globe, Faith is on a mission to support transformation through music and her talents. Her husband of twelve years, Nolan Hee, partners with her in her humanitarian efforts. Her life, she says gratefully, is blessed, and she in turn blesses thousands of people.

## Rev. Dr. Michael Gott

"This is what I'm built to do with my history, my talents, and my flaws," Michael Gott shared, reflecting on the recent expansion of his music ministry by becom-

## Where I am GOD IS.

her the metaphysical book by Neale Donald Walsch, *Conversations with God*. She was very intrigued and inspired by what she read. In her sophomore year, she wrote and performed an original composition, *Don't Let the Music Die*, for the school talent show. The song was about the moment your dream is realized. "There was total silence at the end; then everyone stood up and cheered." In that empowering moment, Faith



MICHAEL GOTT  
(photo by Carl Studna)

ing licensed as a Religious Science minister in 2009. “The shape of my soul is to nurture and grow people. Ministry is a natural path.”

Michael, like Faith, was a child musical prodigy, becoming the pianist at his church at age twelve. Music—playing the piano, singing, and songwriting—was his life. Years later, he spent a record fifteen years ensconced as a popular cabaret artist at the five-star luxury Mansion at Turtle Creek, located in a fashionable area of Dallas, Texas. But Spirit had more in store for Michael.

“I found New Thought and the Twelve-Step teachings at about

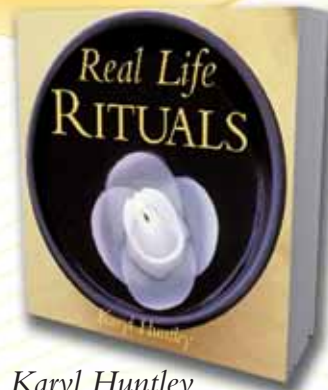
the same time,” he said, remembering how Rev. Marty Bacher, a Religious Science minister in Dallas, heard him headline at a club and invited him to sing at his church. Michael stayed on at the Center for Spiritual Living Dallas for seventeen years, becoming the music director, collaborating most recently with Senior Minister Rev. Dr. Petra Weldes. Early on, he was struck by the “positive, practical spirituality” of New Thought. At first, he says, he absorbed the teachings “by osmosis,” but soon was led to serious study through Science of Mind classes.

“Science of Mind teaches us who we really are. The principles work.” After just a short time experiencing the affirming teachings of Dr. Ernest Holmes, founder of Religious Science, Michael wrote one of the most compelling and beloved New Thought songs now sung throughout the world and translated into Russian and Spanish, *There Is Only Love*:

*In this moment, in this place  
I remember who I am  
Letting fear and worry fall away  
from me  
I open my eyes and see  
There is only love  
There is only love  
It's a love that heals  
Love that sets us free  
There is only love.*

—from *There Is Only Love*

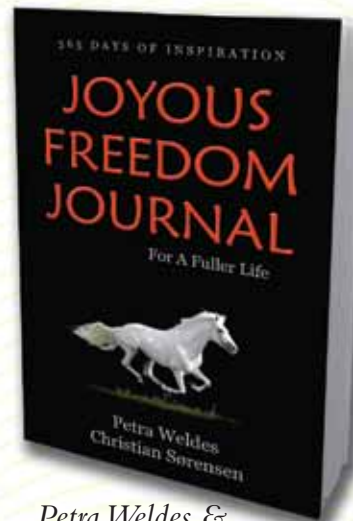
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Michael's talent for heart-centered singing and songwriting, numbering into the hundreds of songs, coupled with his prominence within the New Thought music movement, brought him the job of music director at several international conferences for United Centers for Spiritual Living. He received an Honorary Doctorate of Sacred Music and his music took him around the world, including the Science of Mind Conference in the Ukraine in 2008 and the Science of Mind United Kingdom Abundant Living Conference in 2009. Later this year, he will share music at the opening of a new spiritual center in Geneva, Switzerland. His generous personal example of sharing music globally could be summarized by the title of another of his songs: *Love Can Move the World*.

Technology has also expanded his music ministry, as well as that of his colleagues. His music is easily accessible on *YouTube* and at Internet download sites. He receives correspondence from people around the world who experience healing openings through his music.

Michael's current passion is sharing music and ministry in tandem. "There's a place where the intellect only goes so far. The music drops people deeper." As Assistant Minister and Music Director at the Center for Spiritual Living in Reno, Nevada, working in part-

nership with Senior Minister Rev. Liesa Leggett-Garcia, and also as a traveling minister, he leads *Living On Purpose* classes that he created to help people connect who they are to what they do in the world. "My focus is on inspiring people to live their best lives every day." Music is an essential part of his curriculum for transformation.

"I want to be a place of service and allow Spirit to express." His lyrics to *I Will Be* say it simply:

*Whatever Spirit needs of me  
I will be  
I will be  
I will be*

—lyrics from *I Will Be*

### Jana Stanfield

Driving down the street anywhere in the United States, one is likely to see a bumper sticker on the car ahead that boldly proclaims, *I'm Not Lost, I'm Exploring!* This is the title of a popular song penned by Jana Stanfield, humorist/singer-songwriter/keynote speaker and world-explorer.

Interviewed from Hanoi, Vietnam, Jana excitedly shared that she was not lost, but exploring a beautiful and compelling region of the world, and taking her guitar along for the ride. Along the way, she stops and sings for charitable organizations benefiting children and makes friends around the world. Her music is her passport.

"Global travel is my favorite

path to enlightenment. My definition of enlightenment is 'lightening our load of self-imposed limitations.' As we become enlightened, we want to lighten the load for others," she said. Her lyrics express this thought clearly:

*I cannot do all the good  
that the world needs,  
But the world needs all  
the good that I can do.*

—lyrics from *All*

*The Good*

Jana started out in the 1980s as a news reporter, but after four years of "chasing ambulances and delivering bad news," she embodied the lyrics of her own song *If I Were Brave* and moved to Nashville, Tennessee, to begin her career in music. She placed herself out on the "skinny branches" by her own admission, where it was more than a little scary beginning a new career; but she maintained her faith in herself and faith in her partnership with Spirit. She worked diligently and wrote many songs, including a "bestseller" recorded by Grammy Award winning country superstar Reba McEntire, *If I Had Only Known*. She began sharing her music in New Thought communities, giving keynote speeches, and founded her own company now named Relatively



JANA STANFIELD  
(Photo by M. Camacho)

Famous Records. She became affectionately known as "The Queen of Heavy Mental," and *Chicken Soup for the Soul* bestselling author Jack Canfield scooped her up to punctuate his workshops with her compelling music.

Jana felt a deep calling to give back "all the good" in a tangible way. She began volunteering at a Muscular Dystrophy Association summer camp for youth near Dallas. Her already big heart opened wider. "I think it says it best from *A Course in Miracles*, 'What you most admire, you most become.'" Then, a bombing in Bali shortly after 9/11 caught her attention, and in a flash, she knew she would travel there to be of service. In the ensuing years, she has taken six tour groups to Bali, trips she refers to as "volun-tourism" for the pur-

pose of experiencing a wonderfully rich culture and to be of service in an area of great need. Her Caterpillar Society sponsors work projects at a Balinese orphanage. She has also done service work in Kenya, Tanzania, South Africa, Malaysia, Indonesia, Singapore, Thailand, India, Mexico, Lebanon,

To learn more about music by these Free Agents for God, visit their Web sites:  
www.faithrivera.com  
www.michaelgott.com  
www.janastanfield.com

Cambodia, and Vietnam.

“People might think, ‘Oh sure, we’d all do that if we could, but you’re a musician. You’re different, special—more selfless.’ It’s not true! Most people do much more selfless, unpaid volunteer work than I do, and it costs much more than global travel. It’s called parenthood!” Jana shared that her home loan had an option of going “interest only” so she’s paying that, along with renting rooms in her house to three musicians, who help with those payments. “The motivation to see the world and make a difference in it isn’t an ‘either-or’ proposition. It can be ‘both-and.’”

She has found her true call-

ing in service to others through music, and her song by the same title, co-written by Jimmy Scott, expresses the depth of her feeling:

*When your heart's wide open,  
'Cause your mind's been changed,  
And the dreams you dream,  
Are not the same,  
There's a gate that's open,  
You can walk right through,  
That's your true calling, calling  
you.*

—lyrics from *True Calling*

The “possible human”—Faith Rivera, Michael Gott, and Jana Stanfield live this descriptor from Jean Houston, who in her book *The Possible Human* states, “I have found that most people, given the vision of the possible, along with the opportunity to learn new ways of being, can discover and enjoy the fuller awareness of mind and body that grants them entry into a world larger than their aspirations, more complex than all their dreams.”

Through “out-of-the box” creativity and thinking, a deep and vibrant inner spiritual life lifted up by the teachings of Religious Science and the sharing of unique talents through music, the universal language, these three remarkable musicians are making a global impact for good. Along the way, their lives and worlds are transformed. Dr. Holmes would be smiling, if not singing! •

WHERE does creativity happen in the brain? This has been one of the great neuroscientific debates for decades, and here’s where the evidence leads: As far as the animal kingdom is concerned, creativity is an abnormality, and not necessarily a survival-oriented skill. Yes, many creatures demonstrate remarkable inventiveness, but humans excel, in both positive and negative ways.

Where do these creative ideas come from? Your neocortex. Imagine four sheets of paper, one-tenth of an inch thick, plastered on top of your fist—representing the large limbic emotional core of your primitive brain. The paper contains visual, auditory, self/other, and motivational circuits that create abstract maps to navigate life. These circuits constantly change their shape and connections to other neurons, and this *neuroplasticity* is the biological mechanism of creativity. It’s imaginative, vulnerable to disease, and far removed from outside reality.

Your frontal lobe (directly behind your forehead) is constantly generating fantasies—good and bad—about the future and comparing them to random memories—good and bad—selected from your past. It rarely lives in the present moment (something meditation teaches us how to do), and the rest of our brain reacts to this noisy chaos as if it were real. Why? Because human frontal-lobe neurons, where consciousness emerges, extend their axons into our limbic survival-oriented structures. Thus, if you imagine a possible disaster, your emotional centers respond with fear. Dream up a rewarding, positive future, and your amygdala takes a nap. “The world is safe,” it says. “My job’s done.” No distinction is ever made between inner and outer reality. Your creative consciousness must accomplish that task.

Neural creativity is a two-edged sword. Too much neuroplasticity, and you’ll feel overwhelmed. Too little, and you won’t react well to a new problem. The dilemma: Our imagination creates most of our messes. Our advice: Dismiss the neurally generated negativities that have no worldly validity, then train your brain to imagine positive scenarios as you calmly create a better world.



Mark Waldman



Andrew Newberg, M.D.

Waldman and Newberg (*University of Pennsylvania's Center for Spirituality and the Mind*) are world-renowned for their neuroscientific research on meditation and prayer and authors of *How God Changes Your Brain*.