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CONTACT: Mark D. Weinstein
Executive Director of Public Relations
[937-766-8800](tel:937-766-8800) (o)
[937-532-6885](tel:937-532-6885) (m)
Mweinstein@cedarville.edu
@cedarvillenews

One Hymn, Half a Million Views

CEDARVILLE, OHIO -- Cedarville University's HeartSong Ministries has created song arrangements and recorded albums since its formation in 2003. However, in the midst of all that great music, one song stands above the rest — "A Mighty Fortress."

During the first week of February, the song surpassed half a million views on YouTube, making it HeartSong's best performing video on the online video service. The reach of HeartSong's arrangement of the hymn continues to grow as musicians play the arrangement in local and international churches. Two years ago, a megachurch in Porto Alegre, Brazil, celebrated the 500th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation by performing this modern rendition of "A Mighty Fortress" in Portuguese.

The song was arranged for HeartSong's 2013 album "Cathedral" by Grant McCurdy, a 2014 Cedarville graduate. McCurdy participated with HeartSong during his four years as a worship major.

"A Mighty Fortress" was a collaborative effort between McCurdy, his HeartSong team and Zack Atchley, the former worship pastor for The Church at Osage Hills in Osage Beach, Missouri. "I brought the structure of it, but all those different musicians on the bands brought together the pieces that made it what it is now," he said.

"I love hymns and the history that's there and the depth of the theology that's there," McCurdy said. "I think there's something really healthy about keeping songs in front of believers that tie us to our history of Christianity — in this case, the Reformation."

Jim Cato, associate vice president of Christian ministries, envisioned the recording taking place in a cathedral and found a unique setting to film the recording — St. Joseph's Cathedral in Columbus, Ohio.

"From the very beginning, we knew this arrangement was very special, but we had no idea how wide and deep it was going to go," said Cato. "The message is timeless, but I think it is particularly relevant for this generation of young people. I think they're desperate for this. This message, put in a musical form that is approachable by this generation, is really powerful."

McCurdy still plays the HeartSong arrangement of "A Mighty Fortress" at The Village Church in Flower Mound, Texas, where he works as a full-time worship leader. He writes and arranges songs for The Village, including the church's recent recording of a contemporary version of "I Surrender All."

Located in southwest Ohio, Cedarville University is an accredited, Christ-centered, Baptist institution with an enrollment of 4,193 undergraduate, graduate, and online students in more than 150 areas of study. Founded in 1887, Cedarville is recognized nationally for its authentic Christian community,

rigorous academic programs, strong graduation and retention rates, accredited professional and health science offerings, and leading student satisfaction ratings. For more information about the University, visit www.cedarville.edu.