

Religious leaders are there to **inspire** us, to remind us that trials are only temporary and to persuade us to hold on and not give up. Pastor Charles Jenkins has been called to do just that. Catapulted into the mainstream with his mega-hit, “Awesome”, Jenkins has long been an inspirational symbol to those in his hometown of Chicago and beyond. With an innovative approach to ministry, it’s always been his goal to create hope where there was none. Launching community initiatives, helping business owners and developing the church and its people, Jenkins is a man of declaration.

That’s one of the reasons why listeners have been gravitating to the latest song by the popular pastor called “I Will Live”. Penned by Carlton Jenkins, the brother of Pastor Jenkins and Vice President of Inspired People Music, the song is a chant of survival. A catchy tune with a hook that’s unforgettable, “I Will Live” is a song to sing in the face of insurmountable odds. Serving as worship leader on the track, he revs up the song with the repetitive proclamation of “I Will Live”. The driving beat and simple lyric is the perfect formula for the new praise and worship anthem.

Through “I Will Live”, Jenkins desires to change the mindset of the listener, taking them from despair to hope. He wants the song to become an anthem for youth rebelling against senseless street violence. So far in 2013 in Chicago alone, the rate of murder due to gun violence is almost one per day. More than 500 people lost their lives in the Windy City in 2012, with many of those crimes committed by black youth against black youth. It’s these types of staggering statistics that Jenkins is working to reverse. He prays that “I Will Live” is an impetus for change in Chicago and nationally.

In addition to curbing violence, the release of “I Will Live” will encourage people to maintain a healthy mind, body and spirit. He is launching the “I Will Live” Campaign which encourages people to make healthy choices. Being more active, drinking more water and making better food choices are part of the wisdom he wants to spread. In addition, the “I Will Live” Tour will be hitting the country soon.

The song’s message is not a strange one for Jenkins. He’s been encouraging people for years now. Known as the Senior Pastor of Fellowship Missionary Baptist Church in Chicago, Illinois, his mission is to uplift believers as well as non-believers. His approach to ministry has always been innovative and broad-reaching. Leading a flock of 8,000, he follows in the footsteps of Gospel legend and former pastor, Rev. Clay Evans. With 25 CDs under their belt prior to Jenkins’ arrival, he wanted to continue the church’s long-standing calling to music ministry.

“As the senior pastor, I knew what Fellowship needed and it was my responsibility to figure out how to deliver that,” he said. “I wanted to protect the brand and the legacy of Fellowship.” He was at the helm for the church’s new and now legendary project, *The Best Of Both Worlds*. He set up a record label and was quite hands-on in the process. The CD’s breakout single was “Awesome”. The As a regular resident on the Billboard Hot Gospel Songs Chart and ultimately one of the biggest songs of 2012, the track ushered in worship in choir stands all over the country. The song and the CD netted the artist five 2013 Stellar Awards (Song of the Year, CD of the Year, Choir of the Year, Traditional Choir of the Year and Recorded Music Packaging of the Year) in January.

The mega-hit recently received a makeover. An urban remix debuted during a performance at BET's Celebration of Gospel in March 2013. The "Awesome" Remix features Canton Jones, Isaac Carree, Jessica Reedy and Da' TRUTH. Also, an "Awesome" EP is soon to come; it includes the original classic version of "Awesome", an instrumental version, two house mixes (produced by the legendary remix king, Vince Lawrence) and The Celebration of Gospel "Awesome" Remix.

Few know that Jenkins received a GRAMMY Award in 2005 for penning "You've Been A Friend" on Israel & New Breed's project, *Alive In South Africa*. It's also not well known that the songwriter hails from a musical legacy. His grandmother was a pianist who played for many churches in St. Petersburg, FL, where Jenkins hails from. His uncle was a member of Earth, Wind & Fire's band. Bitten by the music bug as well, Charles Jenkins began playing the piano at five years old. Growing up in church, eventually the youth began directing one of his church's choirs ultimately taking on the position of minister of music at Bethel AME Church. Although songwriting started when he was teenager, it wasn't until he formed Gospel group, Joshua's Troop, now under the leadership of Gospel music giant, Percy Gray, that his talents were evident to the industry. Jenkins' contemporary version of the song, "Deep Love", was featured on the ensemble's first release.

Ordained as a minister at the age of 18, he attended Moody Bible Institute in Chicago, where he earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Christian Education. He later received a Master of Arts in Religion from Trinity Evangelical Divinity School. Clearly called to the ministries of preaching and music, Pastor Charles Jenkins seeks to change the world.

"There are opportunities to create amazing music and to create a meaningful movement around that music," he said. "For us, this is not just a CD, it a movement for God and good that begins with this project."