

Prairie set to launch Worship Arts School

Director invites next generation of worship leaders to “the wide-open prairie”

Aaron Epp
Senior Correspondent

THREE HILLS, AB—Exploring the Scriptures, thinking, learning, creating and worship are the focus of a brand new college program at Prairie.

This past September, Prairie announced that acclaimed songwriter and worship leader Brian Doerksen would be the director of its Worship Arts School, which launches in the fall.

The program is aimed at students who are moved by great music, and who want to grow in their ability to express their worship and share their story through the creative art form of music and songwriting. Classes will also explore Scripture, and how the Bible has inspired and informed our modern world.

“The Worship Arts School is the kind of place to come and explore those things, and explore them in a setting that’s not huge,” Doerksen says. “It’s not a huge school and not a huge program in number, so it’s going to be quite relational and quite interactive.”

Doerksen believes the program is important because the songs people sing are more important than the sermons they hear—they remember them in ways that are enduring and formative.



After 25 years as a full-time worship arts practitioner, Brian Doerksen is taking on a new role as the director of Prairie's new Worship Arts School. *Courtesy Brian Doerksen*

“We need to grow in our abilities to select songs that will foster emotional and spiritual health, and grow in our creative abilities to express our worship and our stories,” he says.

Doerksen, 48, has written songs that are known and sung in churches around the world, including “Come, Now is the Time to Worship,” “Faithful One,” “Refiner’s Fire,” and “Hallelujah (Your Love is Amazing).” He has won more than 15 awards, including a 2008 Juno Award for Contemporary Christian/Gospel Album of the Year. His latest release is 2010’s *Level Ground*.

Doerksen says that after spending the past 25 years focusing his life on being a full-time worship arts practitioner as a songwriter,

worship leader, pastor, recording artist and touring musician, he is making the move to Prairie because he wants to help the next generation of people who are hungry to do the same.

“I’ve been sensing for the last several years ... a desire to get involved in the world of education, mentoring [and] training,” he says.

Doerksen, his wife and the four youngest of their six children currently reside in Abbotsford, B.C., but he says part of why he’s excited about directing the Worship Arts School is Prairie’s geographical location.

“There’s something about the physical nature of the Canadian Prairies,” he says, adding that each time he’s visited the Prairies over the last few years, he has

experienced in his head and his heart what he was experiencing on the land. The wide-open space of the Prairies is “a place to create, a place of opportunity.”

“I want to say to people, if you feel you need space to think, to create, to interact about worship, come out to the wide-open prairie and we’ll do it together.”

He adds that the program isn’t fully formed yet, and that students will help dictate what direction the Worship Arts School takes.

“I don’t think I’m going to show up with it perfectly honed,” Doerksen says. “It’s really going to depend in part on who shows up and what their talents and gift mix are.

“It’s going to be an adventure.”

About Prairie

Prairie’s college programs prepare graduates to address some of the greatest needs of the world. Through its one, two and four-year programs, students grow in their understanding of Scripture and are prepared for ministries and careers. Prairie offers programs in Aviation, Biblical Studies, Digital Media, Emergency Medical, Intercultural Studies, Nursing, Pastoral, Worship and Youth Ministry. For more information, visit www.prairie.edu.

