

# JAM puts meaning in its music



JAM members rehearse together at St. John Vianney in Saginaw.

**I**t is a cold Monday evening in an especially harsh winter, but the sounds filling St. John Vianney Church in Saginaw are warm and bright as members of the musical group JAM prepare for a rehearsal. Piano keys ping. Guitars strings hum. Even a tambourine claps a cadence as the musicians warm up.

Then the voices rise, gradually joining into harmonies that leave little doubt of the joy underlying the music JAM performs.

“We feel the presence of God when we’re performing. The music we choose speaks to all of us. And if it touches us, then we hope it will touch our audience,” explained Roberta Conley, St. John Vianney’s director of music ministry and the founder of JAM, an acronym that stands for the Jesus and Music Praise Band.

The nine-member band performs music ranging from contemporary Christian to traditional Catholic compositions.

JAM formed in 2010, and has performed dozens of praise and worship concerts in and around the Saginaw County area, raising more than \$8,000 for the Toni and Trish House, which provides care to terminally ill patients, and \$2,000 for Special Olympics.

“We didn’t start JAM as a form of entertainment. We began because we loved the style of music and its message, and to give people another way to pray and speak to God through our style of musical prayer,” said Roberta. “When we play for a Mass or church service, we are not there to entertain. We are there to



lead in prayer musically, just as if you had a choir or brass quintet or a string quartet join your choir for a special service. We are trying to bring people closer to Jesus Christ through music.”

That purpose is reflected in the group’s repertoire.

“With certain songs, the band says to each other, ‘We need to do this,’” said Alicia Mercier, one of JAM’s vocalists. “When we all love the lyrics and it resonates with us, then we try to perform that song.”

JAM drummer Randy lamurri rehearses with the band at St. John Vianney in Saginaw.



*A look at the nine members of JAM*

**RANDY IAMURRI | DRUMS**

A Saginaw native and General Motors retiree, he began playing drums professionally at age 13 on recording sessions with the group Merseyside Sound.

**DAVID BICIGO | GUITAR**

Raised in the Upper Peninsula, he played trumpet during Mass as an altar boy. He holds a degree in biochemistry from Northern Michigan University.

**ERIC PREBAY | GUITAR, VOCALS**

A self-taught musician who has been active in theater since the age of 14, he is a former member of the Saginaw-area classic rock band Riptide.

**ALICIA MERCIER | VOCALS**

Encouraged to sing as a young girl by her mother, she also sings for the Saginaw-area classic rock band Riptide.

**ROBERTA CONLEY | VOCALS**

The eighth in a family of nine children, she learned harmonization from her

mother. She is a Saginaw Catholic Schools music teacher who has also given many private lessons.

**LORRIE DIOLA | PIANO, KEYBOARD, VOCALS**

Raised in Quezon City, Philippines, before she immigrated to the U.S. in 1991. She is a volunteer in thematic ministries of the Catholic Charismatic Youth group.

**KATIE HAUSBECK | VOCALS**

She is a teacher at Sacred Heart Academy in Mt. Pleasant. She has attended the National Catholic Youth Conference three times, and frequently volunteers with the Music Department at MYE Faith.

**RON HAESKE | PIANO, KEYBOARDS, VOCALS, SONGWRITING**

He is a gifted composer who has written hundreds of songs, including setting all 150 psalms and the entire New Testament to music. He has played in the Saginaw Eddy Band and the Saginaw Symphony.

**AL EVANGELISTA | BASS**

Past president of the Old Town Saginaw Music Association and a volunteer event organizer for the Michigan Adventurers Club. Former mentor for the Saginaw Career Complex FIRST Robotics Team.

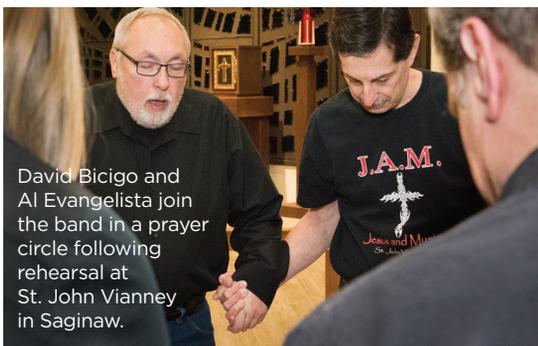
**SEE JAM IN ACTION**

**JUNE 5 | 6 P.M.**

JAM is scheduled to perform an outdoor concert across from St. Mary's Cathedral, 615 Hoyt Ave. in Saginaw.

To see other JAM performances online, look up the group on YouTube or its Facebook page: JAM Jesus and Music Praise Band.

To book the band for a performance, contact Roberta Conley at [roberta@sjsvsaginaw.org](mailto:roberta@sjsvsaginaw.org) or call 989.790.5086.



David Bicigo and Al Evangelista join the band in a prayer circle following rehearsal at St. John Vianney in Saginaw.

One example is the song "If We've Ever Needed You" by Casting Crowns.

"This song talks about how people have turned away from Jesus and their faith, have lost hope, yet it says there is hope," Roberta pointed out. "People everywhere are stressed, whether it's from trauma in their own personal lives or because of

what's happening in the world at large."

The song's lyrics, she said, beautifully sum up the message that JAM wants to share.

"Let your Church arise. If we've ever needed you Lord, it's now. ... Revive us now. We need you now."

The members of JAM hope they can be a channel for meeting that need. †