

From Bibles to ballads, Mitch Townley pursues his passion

Lee Zimmerman Correspondent for The Daily Times
Dec 4, 2024



Mitch Townley will perform at 6 p.m. Friday, Dec. 6, at The Abbey, 7765 River Road, Townsend.
Courtesy of Mitch Townley

Mitch Townley retired in May as director of children's ministries at West Hills Presbyterian Church after 28 years. He now directs the Greater Knoxville Chapter of Child Evangelism Fellowship, helping churches start after-school Bible clubs. For over 25 years, he's written children's Bible and memory-verse songs.

As a Knoxville-based singer-songwriter, Townley performs country, Christian, folk and inspirational songs. He's recorded more than 70 songs independently. His work was featured in a Vietnam Memorial documentary narrated by Jimmy Buffett and on the TV show "Nashville." His song "This Side of Sunday" topped the Christian Country Countdown for eight weeks in May 2018 and won Inspirational Country Song of the Year in 2019 from the Inspirational Country Music Association.

"I've placed 14 cuts since December 2020, mostly in the Christian country genre," Townley said. "During the pandemic, I wrote and produced six parody videos about the pandemic and six parody-type videos for UT football games that aired on WBIR's 'Live at Five.'"

Townley coordinates the Knoxville chapter of the Nashville Songwriters Association International and owns "At The Jukebox," a live music program for assisted living communities that he performs about 40 times yearly. He regularly performs at the Abbey in Townsend during "First Friday Songwriter Night."

"I started there in January 2020," Townley said. "I usually play about 13 songs each night within a 2½-hour songwriters-in-the-round sequence, nine originals and four covers. These shows need to be about the audience, not the songwriters. We are there mostly to entertain, so there needs to be a balance between up-tempo and mid-tempo songs and ballads."

He praised Abbey owners Steve and Janice Fillmore for taking care of performers and creating a welcoming atmosphere.

His upcoming Abbey performance features songwriters Russ Stallons from Kentucky and Anna Scott from Nashville. "We met in 2023 at an online meetup and have written three songs together via Zoom," he said. "It will be our first round-robin together and first time meeting in person. They are two very talented country writers. Anna is only in her 20s, so she balances out Russ and me, 'the Medicare musicians.'"

For songwriters, Townley said the main challenge is getting songs heard by decision-makers and recorded by artists. "Once a song is 'out there,' you never know when something might happen. The major rewards are the relationships formed with other songwriters, especially having five to eight folks I've been consistently writing with for over 10 years."