

# Michael, Row the Boat Ashore

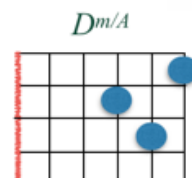
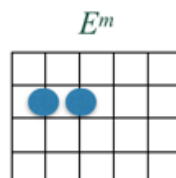
American Spiritual

Sing along with Kat Larson & As You Go @ [https://static.wixstatic.com/mp3/055bba\\_1baeb70de1a44371a6e1b590f4b966d9.m4a](https://static.wixstatic.com/mp3/055bba_1baeb70de1a44371a6e1b590f4b966d9.m4a)



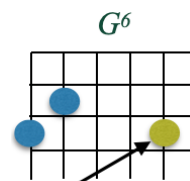
*C* *F C*  
Michael row the boat ashore, hallelu - jah.

*E<sup>m</sup>* *D<sup>m/A</sup>* *G<sup>6</sup> C*  
Michael row the boat ashore, hallelu - jah.



*C* *F C*  
Sister help to trim the sail, hallelu - jah.

*E<sup>m</sup>* *D<sup>m/A</sup>* *G<sup>6</sup> C*  
Sister help to trim the sail, hallelu - jah.



Played when it supports the melody.

*C* *F C*  
My brothers and sisters are all aboard, hallelu - jah.

*E<sup>m</sup>* *D<sup>m/A</sup>* *G<sup>6</sup> C*  
My brothers and sisters are all aboard, hallelu - jah.

Jordan's river is chilly and cold, hallelujah.  
Chills the body but not the soul, hallelujah.

Michael's boat is a gospel boat, hallelujah.  
The Word of God that gives us hope, hallelujah.

The river's deep and the river's wide, hallelujah.  
Milk and honey on the other side, hallelujah.

Gabriel blows the trumpet horn, hallelujah.  
Trumpet's heard the world around, hallelujah.

If you get there before I do, hallelujah.  
Tell the people I'm coming too.

REPEAT VERSE 1

# History

“**Michael, Row the Boat Ashore**” was sung by former slaves whose owners had abandoned them on St. Helena, a Sea Islands of South Carolina, before the Union navy arrived to enforce a blockade. Historians have classified the song as a spiritual, a work song, and some argue that it is more properly a sea chanty. It became a popular anthem during the Civil Rights Movements of the 1800s and 1900s.



Working a corn field on St Helena Island, home of "Michael Row the Boat Ashore."

The spiritual originated in oral traditions. Thus, there are many versions. But it always begins with the refrain, "Michael, row the boat ashore, Hallelujah."

Charles Pickard Ware was an abolitionist and Harvard graduate who had come to supervise the plantations on St. Helena Island from 1862 to 1865. He wrote down the song in music notation as he heard the freedmen sing it. Ware's cousin William Francis Allen reported in 1863 that the former slaves sang the song as they rowed Ware in a boat across Station Creek. The song was first published in 1867 in *Slave Songs of the United States* by Allen, Ware, and Lucy McKim Garrison.

There are two theories as to who Michael may be, and why he is rowing. Perhaps Michael was the name of the oarsman from a particular plantation who's job it was to row people between the Sea Islands. Pete Seeger, in *The Incomplete Folksinger*, mentions that some slaves spent their whole lives on these small islands, out of touch with mainland life. "The only transportation was small boats and strong arms to row them," he writes. The more generally accepted theory is that it's the Archangel Michael being called on to be the psychopomp, or the conductor of the souls of the dead across the River Jordan, a metaphor for crossing from death to Heaven.

*civilwartalk.com, forum.songfacts.com, Kim Ruehl on August 23, 2017 in www.thoughtco.com, and Wikipedia*



Map from, [www.worldatlas.com](http://www.worldatlas.com)



Charles Pickard Ware  
Photograph from [www.writeopinions.com/](http://www.writeopinions.com/)