

A worship service for a year of generosity and abundance

This service shines light on the many gifts that God has blessed us with as individuals, and the ways in which sharing them enhances our community. During Christmas in Puerto Rico, this is evident in a rice-filled soup called asopao that is shared with friends and family during times of celebration. We are a culture of abundance: we live into our belief that God has given us enough to go around if we just share!



This worship experience can be used in a variety of contexts: congregational worship, small home-groups, youth groups, ecumenical groups, retreats and many other settings.

Worship leaders should gather note paper and writing implements for participants to use.

A number of different worship experiences follow the reading of Scripture. Materials are detailed before each experience.

Song suggestions

Alabanza (As the Rain is Falling) The New Century Hymnal #34

De Colores (Sing of Colors) The New Century Hymnal #402

Glory to God (Gloria a Dios) The Faith We Sing #2033

God is Here Today (Dios Está Aquí) The Faith We Sing #2049

Sent Out in Jesus' Name (Enviado Soy de Dios) The Faith We Sing #2184

Open My Eyes (Abre Mis Ojos) Sing! Prayer and Praise #161

Leader: As we prepare for worship today, I invite you to take a moment to reflect on the unique gifts that you bring to this community of worship. Maybe you bring your best singing voice, or perhaps your unabashed love for God. Maybe you bring a generous financial donation, or perhaps the gift of time spent tidying up the pews after service. Maybe you share the gifts of institutional memory, or perhaps the gift of first steps and spontaneous giggles.

What do you have to share?

Take a moment to write this down on the note paper provided for you. You will have several opportunities to share these thoughts during our time of worship.

Call to Worship (each line of the One voice should be read by a different person if possible):

One: We all have gifts.

One: We all have something to share.

All: The world needs what we have to give.

One: We share what we have.

One: We share who we are.

All: And we do it all for the glory of God.

One: All gifts come from God.

One: Let us worship God with our abundant gifts!

All: (Call out the gift you wrote on your paper either aloud or in the silence of your heart.)

One: Amen.

Prayer

Holy One,

We welcome your holy disruption today!

We long for your presence in our midst.

We dream of a world of justice and peace.

We work to build your kin-dom.

Make us reflections of your generosity and goodness in the world.

We open our hearts to you in worship today.

Lead us and bless us, we pray.

Amen.

Prayer of Confession

Merciful God,

Forgive us, we pray --

For all the times we have turned away from an opportunity to be generous;

For all the times we have believed in hopelessness, in isolation or in despair more than we have believed in you;

For all the times we have chosen timidity over bold witness;

For all the times we have failed to live into the awesomeness of the gifts you have given us.

Forgive us, O God. Teach us how to forgive each other, and help us to forgive ourselves.

(Silent prayer)

Amen.

Assurance of Pardon

Lamentations 3:22-23

"Holy God, your steadfast love never ceases. We thank you that your mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning. Great is your faithfulness."

We are forgiven and free.

Scripture Reading

2 Corinthians 9:6-15

"The point is this: the one who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and the one who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each of you must give as you have made up your mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to provide you with every blessing in abundance, so that by always having enough of everything, you may share abundantly in every good work. As it is written, "He scatters abroad, he gives to the poor; his righteousness endures forever." He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness. You will be enriched in every way for your great generosity, which will produce thanksgiving to God through us; for the rendering of this ministry not only supplies the needs of the saints but also overflows with many thanksgivings to God. Through the testing of this ministry you glorify God by your obedience to the confession of the gospel of Christ and by the generosity of your sharing with them and with all others, while they long for you and pray for you because of the surpassing grace of God that he has given you. Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift!"

Response to Scripture

You may choose from the following activities and adapt them to your context in addition to a reflection on the word or in its place.

Generous living

This worship activity requires some extra paper for notes. The group can be configured as your space and numbers allow.

Share the story of Christmas traditions in Puerto Rico and the role of asopao. Invite community members to consider, either individually or in small groups, how they can practice radical hospitality in their own contexts. What would it look like in this culture, this time and this place to live generously?

You may use extra paper to jot down ideas. After some time in contemplation and/or discussion, allow time for sharing of ideas and see how God is calling this community into generosity.

Church recipe

This worship activity requires your favorite version of “Stone Soup,” note paper and optional visuals, such as a large pot and ladle.

Share the story “Stone Soup.”

Leader: Church is like that pot of stone soup: We all add our gifts into the pot and together we become something new and delicious! What goes in to making us the community we are? Are there any ingredients we’d like less of? Are there any ingredients that aren’t currently in the pot that we’d like to try?

Youth or an intergenerational group can spend time creating "recipes" for Christian community.

Tasting generosity

This worship activity requires the recipe for asopao and a comfortable setup for a meal. Puerto Rican Christmas music, such as the songs suggested above, can be

streamed from your favorite online music service. Depending on the size of your group, you might want to include discussion questions at each table to help focus on generosity. Prompts can include: What does generosity mean to you? Tell a story of a time someone shared generously with you. Have you ever struggled with generosity in your own life? How is God's generosity lived out in community?

Church cooks can gather and make asopao together in celebration of abundance and the season of Christmas. Worship can become an agape feast where God's love is shared through bowls of hot, steaming soup, accompanied by Puerto Rican music.

Children's solutions

This worship activity requires some sort of food: you may use play food, stickers of food, pictures of food or real food. Give participants fewer items than would be needed to feed the number of people present.

Teach the young people the popular Puerto Rican expression "donde comen dos, comen tres," translated as "where two can eat, three can eat." Challenge the children or an intergenerational gathering to feed the group with the resources they've been given. Surprise them by bringing in more people after they've found a solution. How can they extend their generosity?

Call to Offering

2 Corinthians 9:6

"The point is this: the one who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and the one who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully."

As you share your gifts of treasure, we invite you also to put in the offering plate the paper on which you have written some of your gifts.

Let us give generously this morning.

Prayer of Dedication (you may begin by naming some of the gifts in the offering plate):

Merciful God,

There is need in the world.

There is discord and there is strife.

There is generosity and goodness.

There is community.

Guide us as we use our gifts to build your realm of peace and justice.

May we grow in generosity.

May we grow ever closer to you.

Amen.

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