

Thanksgiving Brainstorms

Below you will find a Greg Scheer brain dump on the theme of Thanksgiving. It won't be pretty or particularly organized, but it's more or less what I work from each year when I plan a Thanksgiving service. I hope you'll find something useful that you can implement in this year's Thanksgiving service at your church!

Psalm 65, Sung and Spoken

This is a litany on Psalm 65—the quintessential Psalm of harvest—and “We Praise You, O God”—the quintessential hymn of thanksgiving. One of the trickiest things about a scripture and music mash up like this is creating smooth transitions between the speaking and singing. I would likely use the first and last line of the hymn for an intro the first time and then just the last line thereafter. If your pianist or organist can sensitively play underneath the readings and then jump in with the intro at the right moment, the litany will sound even more like a cohesive whole.

Leader:

Praise is due to you, O God, in Zion,
and to you shall vows be performed.
Happy are those whom you choose and bring near to live in your courts.
We shall be satisfied with the goodness of your house, your holy temple.

People sing:

**We praise you, O God, our Redeemer, Creator;
in grateful devotion our tribute we bring.
We lay it before you, we kneel and adore you;
we bless your holy name, glad praises we sing.**

By awesome deeds you answer us with deliverance,
O God of our salvation;
you are the hope of all the ends of the earth and of the farthest seas.
You silence the roaring of the seas, the roaring of their waves,
the tumult of the peoples.
Those who live at earth's farthest bounds are awed by your signs.

**We worship you, God of our fathers and mothers;
through life's storm and tempest our guide you have been.
When perils o'ertake us, you never forsake us.
And with your help, O Lord, our battles we win.**

You visit the earth and water it, you greatly enrich it;
the river of God is full of water.
You provide the people with grain, for so you have prepared it.
You crown the year with your bounty;
your wagon tracks overflow with riches.

**With voices united our praises we offer;
our songs of thanksgiving to you we now raise.
Your strong arm will guide us, our God is beside us.
To you, our great Redeemer, fore'er be praise!**

Thanksgiving Day Worship

This is a whole Thanksgiving service I led a few years ago. Steal away, my friends!

Opening Hymn: “Come, You Thankful People, Come” (527)

Psalm 65, Sung and Spoken *(as above)*

Confession and Assurance: *(Not every church includes confession in their services, especially a Thanksgiving service, but this “child friendly” confession from the Worship Sourcebook is a good one for a service that is likely to have lots of kids present.)*

Leader

Holy God, you have given us many good gifts.
Today we thank you for all of them,
but we also confess that sometimes
we love those gifts more than we love you.

People

**We confess wanting more and more things:
food, clothes, toys, and money.
Forgive us for not being content and thankful.
Forgive our selfishness.
Help us to love you more than everything else.
We pray in Jesus’ name. Amen.**

Leader:

Hear God’s word of forgiveness from Psalm 65, verse 3: “When we were overwhelmed by sins, you forgave our transgressions.” We thank you, Lord, for the mercy you have shown us. *(See what I did there? I returned to Psalm 65 for the assurance of pardon.)*

Now Thank We All Our God (454)

Sermon: “Give Thanks” Philippians 4:10-23

How Great Thou Art (483)

Testimonies of Thanksgiving *(This was a time of “open mic” thanksgiving. Yes, it can be scary to hand the microphone to some church members! But it’s generally a meaningful time of sharing that strengthens the sense of community. Some of the unease can be mitigated by an “MC” who can keep things moving along or ask a long-winded thanks-giver to wrap it up.)*

Congregational Prayer *(End the time of thanksgiving by gathering up all the thanksgiving into a congregational prayer, adding intercession as needed.)*

Presentation of Offerings

Praise to the Lord, the Almighty (253)

Benediction

God of All Ages (599)

Big Bucket O’ Thanksgiving Songs:

This is by no means exhaustive; just something to get the creative juices flowing.

Come, You Thankful People Come (LUYH 473)

Doxology (PsH 638)

Every Heart Its Tribute Pays (L 388; Psalm 65)

Fairest Lord Jesus (children and adult choirs with congregation)

For the Beauty (LUYH 19; Greg’s arr?)

For the Fruit of All Creation (L 396)
God of the Ages
God, Who Touches Earth with Beauty (JN 107)
How Great Thou Art (LUYH 553)
Let All Things Now Living (L 5)
Now Thank We All Our God (LUYH 543)
O Bless the Lord, My Soul (Greg's fancy pants string orch arr)
Praise, My Soul, the King of Heaven (L 571)
Praise to the Lord the Almighty (L 575)
Sing Praise to God Who Reigns Above (PsH 465)
Sing to the Lord of Harvest (L398)
We Praise You, O God (L 560; with Psalm 65 litany?)

Big Bucket O' Thanksgiving Services:

It's time to get real, people. Below is almost a decade of actual Thanksgiving services from Church of the Servant. I know it's messy, but you'll find a few songs that aren't listed above. You'll also see some of my tricks:

- *I steal from myself liberally. (Thanksgiving only happens once a year and memories are short.)*
- *I often list song keys because I'm always thinking about transitions. (Work the edges, people!)*
- *Especially in later years, I list the hymn source. I find that writing down the hymnal and hymn number is way easier when you're in the hymn collection phase than when you're in the creative phase or the frantically trying to finish the service phase.*

11/27/14 Thanksgiving

OPENING HYMNS:

Praise to the Lord the Almighty (L 575)

Now Thank We All Our God (LUYH 543)

PSALM 65/HYMN OF PREPARATION: Em – Praise Is Your Right, O God, in Zion (L 545)

HYMN OF RESPONSE: Praise, My Soul, the King of Heaven (L 571)

OFFERTORY HYMN: F – Every Heart Its Tribute Brings (L 388; or with offering)

CLOSING HYMN: For the Fruit of All Creation (L 396)

11/28/13 10am Thanksgiving

OPENING HYMNS:

F – Come, You Thankful People Come (LUYH 473)

G - For the Beauty (LUYH 19)

HYMN OF DEDICATION: Eb – God, How Touches Earth with Beauty (JN 107)

HYMN OF RESPONSE: Bb – How Great Thou Art (LUYH 553)

OFFERTORY HYMN: Declare God's Glory or In the Morning (Youth choir)

CLOSING HYMN: F – Now Thank We All Our God (LUYH 543)

11/22/12 Thanksgiving 10am

OPENING HYMNS:

F – Come, You Thankful People Come (PsH 527)

G - For the Beauty (PsH 432)

GLORIA/HYMN OF PREPARATION: F/G – O Bless the Lord, My Soul (Greg's fancy pants string orch arr)

HYMN OF RESPONSE: PsH #454 Now Thank We All Our God

OFFERTORY HYMN: "With Music I Will Praise Thee" (Sleeth) youth choir

CLOSING HYMN: Let All Things Now Living (PsH 453)

11/24/11 Thanksgiving Service 10am Musicians: Scott and JNO Same liturgy as 2009 EXCEPT:

Youth choir will sing at offertory, but not do a call to worship

Psalm 134: Introduce my new Come, You People of the Lord (Psalm 134)

11/25/10 10am Thanksgiving Service "Stewards of Joy"

PRELUDE/CALL TO WORSHIP: youth choir or JNO

OPENING HYMNS:

F – Come, You Thankful People Come (PsH 527)

F/G - For the Beauty (PsH 432; Greg arranges?)

HYMN OF PREPARATION [Gloria]: Sing Praise to God Who Reigns Above (PsH 465)

HYMN OF RESPONSE: PsH #454 Now Thank We All Our God

OFFERTORY HYMN: Doxology (PsH 638) or youth choir

CLOSING HYMN: Let All Things Now Living (PsH 453)

11/26/09 10am Thanksgiving

Call to worship: And I will Praise Him (youth choir)

PsH#527 Come, You Thankful People Come

PsH #237 We Praise You, O God [with litany]

PsH #454 Now Thank We All Our God

PsH #483 How Great Thou Art

Offering Hymn: How can I give you thanks? (youth choir)

PsH #599 God of All Ages

11/27/08 10am Thanksgiving Joyful Noise Orchestra, Scott

Call to worship: Come, Sing a Song of Thanksgiving (children's choir)

PsH#527 Come, You Thankful People Come

PsH #237 We Praise You, O God [with litany]

PsH #454 Now Thank We All Our God

PsH #483 How Great Thou Art

Offering Hymn: Fairest Lord Jesus (children and adult choirs with congregation)

PsH #599 God of All Ages

11/22/07 Thanksgiving Service

PsH#527 Come, You Thankful People Come

PsH #237 We Praise You, O God [with litany]

PsH #454 Now Thank We All Our God

PsH #483 How Great Thou Art

PsH#253 Praise to the Lord the Almighty

PsH #599 God of All Ages

The End

You have real perseverance to have made it through the whole document. Kudos to you! You either have the get-up-and-go to achieve anything you want in life or way too much time on your hands. Either way, thanking for taking a look.