



## Elements for a Service about Generosity

*This may be a preaching service, led by a pastor, but the elements may also be used by a lay-led service. While planned for worship, they may be adapted for use in other settings. In planning, involve a wide range of people, especially musicians! Take and adapt!*

### **\*CALL TO WORSHIP**

Leader: Come, let us celebrate  
the wondrous gifts that God has given us.

People: Throughout all our lives,  
God has blessed us with love and hope.

Leader: Praise be to God who provides for us.

People: May our hearts be truly grateful,  
and may we show our gratitude  
by the ways in which we live and care for others.

Leader: Let us worship our good God:

People: With praise and thanksgiving!

Leader: Alleluia

People: and Amen.

### **\*PRAYER OF CONFESSION**

*by Mari Castellanos*

Leader: God of Grace,  
you have gifted us with a world of abundance;  
a land of plenty;  
a country where all can have enough.

People: We come before you this day  
to thank you for this prosperity  
and to repent from our apparent inability to share this wealth.

Leader: God, we declare our own complicity

in systems that sustain some of us,  
while forsaking many others.  
People: we come before you to seek your forgiveness,  
even as we pray for your justice.

Leader: Righteous God, you hear the cry of the poor.  
You listen to those who do without,  
while so many spend recklessly  
and our leaders invest the wealth of the nation  
in instruments of destruction.

People: Be with us this day Lord.  
Hear our prayers.  
Touch our hearts that we may be faithful witnesses  
and effective voices for justice.  
God of mercy, hear our prayer.  
Alleluia and Amen.

#### \*ASSURANCE OF PARDON

\*GLORIA Hallelujah, We Sing Your Praises  
[https://hymnary.org/text/christ\\_the\\_lord\\_to\\_us\\_said](https://hymnary.org/text/christ_the_lord_to_us_said)

### HEARING GOD'S WORD

SCRIPTURE READINGS *Choose from among some classic texts on generosity:*  
[https://www.ucc.org/stewardship\\_stewardship-resources\\_the-bible-on-stewardship-key](https://www.ucc.org/stewardship_stewardship-resources_the-bible-on-stewardship-key)

#### RESPONSIVE PSALM

Psalm 126

Refrain: May those who sow in tears reap with shouts of joy  
*(musical refrain for this refrain is on page 707 in TNCH)*

Leader: When God restored the fortunes of Zion,  
we were like those who dream.

People: Then our mouth was filled with laughter,  
and our tongue with shouts of joy;  
then it was said among the nations,  
"God has done great things for them."

Leader: God has done great things for us,  
and we rejoiced.

Refrain: May those who sow in tears reap with shouts of joy

Leader: Restore our fortunes, O God,  
like the watercourses in the Negeb.  
May those who sow in tears  
reap with shouts of joy.

People: Those who go out weeping,  
bearing the seed for sowing,  
shall come home with shouts of joy,  
carrying their sheaves.

Refrain: May those who sow in tears reap with shouts of joy

## REFLECTING ON GENEROSITY IN OUR COMMUNITY

### *Tell Stories:*

\*Invite testimonials from the congregation as the sermon: "This is why I give to our church...."

\*Or invite people to tell two stories: about a gift they received and one about a gift they gave (sometimes people find the experience of having given something more emotionally powerful: more blessed to give than to receive).

\*Or invite stories about giving, or "Here's how I learned about being generous."

### *Throw a Party:*

\*Throw a party: invite and celebrate with the many groups, organizations, ministries, etc., that congregational members give to and serve in their lives – seeing the expansive generosity that happens both through the church and through its parishioners.

### *Create a "Reverse Offering" Challenge: (You may need to set this up the week before)*

\*Pass the Offering plates, but filled with money! Offer people the opportunity to take a certain amount of money (probably \$10 or \$20), do something with it, and bring back either the financial returns or the stories of what happened when they "invested" that money. Expect a diversity of responses! Some people won't want to take the money. Others may be intrigued enough to create things to sell and donate the profits. Still others may give the money away to help someone in need.

## MODEL CALLS TO GENEROSITY IN OFFERING

*by Kate Huey*

The first words of the Bible are about **God's own generosity**. God gave us the gifts of a beautiful creation, our home, the good green earth and the animals that live here with us. On this morning, we come together to thank God and to offer our gifts so that the ministry of this

church will continue to grow and be a blessing to the world. Let us gather our gifts together and offer them to God in gratitude and praise.

“Consider the lilies...look at the birds of the air”: Jesus’ challenging words pull our attention away from our worries about scarcity, and turns our gaze toward the beautiful gifts of God’s creation, signs of abundance and generosity surrounding us always. **Trust** may be difficult for us, as it was for those early disciples, yet we bring our gifts this morning with the assurance of God’s care for us every morning of our lives. Let us gather our gifts together and offer them to God in gratitude and praise.

Jesus felt tender compassion for the suffering people he met. He realized that many workers would be needed for a great harvest of mercy and love. This day you and I are called to this work for the reign of God. This very day you and I are called **to a sweet labor of generosity, healing, and peace**. Let us bring our gifts, then, so that the ministry of this church will be a growing, vibrant witness to God’s love. Let us gather our gifts together and offer them to God in gratitude and praise.

There is hardly a more beautiful way to speak about the hidden promise of even the smallest than the image of the mustard seed, so tiny yet holding so much possibility. We are gifts of God: perhaps we feel small, but we hold **the promise of God’s awesome power at work within us**. The future may surprise us as much as it will surprise those who are watching us. We share our gifts, now, generously, so we can build a home for those who come here seeking refuge, acceptance, and love. Let us gather our gifts together and offer them to God in gratitude and praise.

God is always with us, not just when everything seems clear and times are good, but also when we struggle with questions and doubt. When we cry out to God, our prayers are heard. When the world cries out to God, **we are part of God’s answer**, offering water in the desert, offering nourishment to a world that is spiritually, and often materially, hungry. Our generous gifts this morning are our answer to God’s own goodness. Let us gather our gifts together and offer them to God in gratitude and praise.

We are living, breathing messages of God’s love for the world. This is our work of faith and our labor of love and our steadfastness of hope in Jesus Christ. Like the earliest Christians, we are here in this place because of the commitment and faith and generosity of others who shared the good news of the gospel in their time. So we turn now, in our time, and **share our faith and our commitment through generous giving to support the ministry of this church in Christ’s name**. Let us gather our gifts together and offer them to God in gratitude and praise.

## **CELEBRATE AS YOU COLLECT THE OFFERING!**

Invite the congregation to really celebrate the offering by dancing it forward, bringing both money or touching the offering plate/basket/etc. as a sign of other ways you are giving to the church & community. Many Samoan, African, and Native American

cultures practice giving in this way. Joyful, foot tapping dance music, and a few volunteers to help model, may make this a a delightful new tradition!

## LITANY OF GRATITUDE

*by Rev. Kathy Jo Blaske*

Leader: Generous God,  
for the abundance of your blessings to us  
day by day and year by year,

People: **We give you our thanks.**

Leader: For the simple pleasures of life: for garden harvests,  
coffee conversation, and familiar surroundings,  
For health and strength to appreciate the wonder of life,  
For needs met and desires fulfilled,

People: **We give you our thanks.**

Leader: For foods distributed to nourish body and spirit,  
For homes which supply shelter, which nurture  
order and beauty, and offer hospitality,

People: **We give you our thanks.**

Leader: hearts that forgive as freely as you have forgiven,  
With enthusiasm of spirit for the gift of life,  
With music which declares your everlasting goodness,  
With prayers for mutual understanding and peace,

People: **We worship you with joy.**

Leader: With creative pursuits which contribute our God-given talents,  
With words which honor you as Creator, Redeemer, and Holy Spirit,  
With time volunteered and dedicated to service in church and community,  
With years committed to extending the love of Jesus Christ,

People: **We worship you with joy.**

Leader: With gifts of money which reach farther than we can manage ourselves,  
With deeds done in service of neighbor and stranger,  
With holy days set apart to celebrate your goodness and grace,  
With family and friends distant and nearby,

People: **We worship you, God, with grateful hearts and joyful spirit.  
Alleluia. Amen.**

**\*BENEDICTION**      Philippians 1: 3-7

<sup>3</sup> We thank God every time we remember you,

<sup>4</sup>praying with appreciation for all of you,

<sup>5</sup>because of your sharing in the gospel  
from the first day until now.  
<sup>6</sup>We are confident of this,  
that the one who began a good work among you  
will bring it to completion by the day of Jesus Christ.  
Go forth and share abundantly  
Showing forth to the world the generosity of Christ.

## HYMN SUGGESTIONS

Take My Life, God Let It Be  
God, Whose Giving Knows No Ending

TNCH 448  
TNCH 565

Elements for a Service about Generosity were gathered by Andrew Warner, Generosity Outreach Officer, Andrew DeBraber, Generosity Officer, OPTIC Team, and Susan Blain, Minister for Worship and Gospel Arts, Faith INFO Team.



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