

**Let Justice Flow: Thirsting for Justice
World Development Appeal 2011**

Resources for Public Worship

The following ideas for public worship can be adapted for use in a single service in a congregation of any size, for use in a series of services over a period of weeks, or for use with a group of children.

1. Water jug prayers

A very large bowl, such as a mixing bowl, is placed on a table, in view of as many of the congregation as possible. A number of older children, or other members of the congregation, perhaps five or six people in all, stand in a circle around the table, each holding a jug which is filled or partly filled with water. A reader stands to the side, in front of a reading desk or microphone, if needed.

The worship leader calls the congregation to prayer:

Hear the word of the Lord as it comes to us in the prophet Amos:

**Let justice roll down like waters,
and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.**

Let us pray that we might hear, and do as the Lord has spoken.

After a moment, the first jug-holder steps forward and stands next to the bowl. The reader reads the first prayer/petition (samples are given below). When the prayer has been spoken, the jug-holder lifts the jug high, and pours the water slowly into the bowl, as audibly as possible. The effect is that the sound of the spoken voice of prayer is followed by the sound of water falling, which serves as a kind of visual and aural accompaniment to the prayer.

When her jug is empty, the first jug-holder returns to her place, and after a moment's pause, the reader reads the second prayer/petition, and the process is repeated.

When all the prayers have been spoken, and all the water jugs have been emptied into the bowl, the congregation are invited to join in a unison prayer, such as the following:

The bowl filled with water should be left on the table for the remainder of the service, as it will continue to provide a visual reminder of the prayers which have "filled it to the brim".

Note: The sound of pouring water can have a certain "giggle factor" with children of a certain age and temperament, but the sense of prayerful space provided can also silence the most giggly, along with their restive parents!

Sample prayers:

God our maker, out of the darkness and mystery of deep waters, you created sunlight, and fertile soil, and living things in all their fragile beauty. And so we pray for this created earth, and give thanks for the fresh water that sustains all who live upon it.

God our liberator, you led your people through the wilderness and into a promised place of freedom. Seeing our anxiety, you made water gush from the rock, teaching us to live our lives before you with open hands. And so we pray: show us how to live simple, sustainable lives, desiring nothing more than that all living things might flourish.

God of the prophets, you call us to let justice flow down like a rushing stream, restoring dignity to the lives of the poor and transforming the lives of the powerful. And so we pray for our partners in the Kigezi Diocese in Uganda, and in the Living With Dignity project in Cambodia, to whose flourishing we commit ourselves this year.

God of our Lord Jesus Christ, Jesus said: “The water that I will give will become in those who drink it a spring of living water.” And so we pray that you might give this water to us also, that we might drink deeply of its freshness, and be strengthened for discipleship, and never thirst again.

God of the Trinity, in whose name we were baptised with water, make us mindful of all the gifts of life-giving water which are ours. May we tirelessly seek justice for all in the form of clean and available water. And may we ourselves use the good waters of your creation with care, that there may be enough for all, throughout the earth. We ask this in Jesus’ name.

2. How much water?

If you are going to be telling some of the stories from the Kigezi Diocese Water and Sanitation Programme in Uganda, this is a good way to engage members of the congregation, and especially children, in thinking about the importance of having a local and reliable source of clean water.

You will need quite a few large buckets, perhaps as many as ten, half-filled with water and placed off to the side or in the back of the church. They should be far enough away to require some significant “hauling” as they are brought to the front of the church.

This exercise can be made into a children’s talk, or it can be done piecemeal throughout the service, if people of all ages are present.

You might begin by asking some of the children how much drinking water was used in their home at the breakfast table that morning. It will probably be a small amount, enough for a few cups of tea or coffee. One of the children can then be invited to carry a small bucket, holding enough water for breakfast, to the front. She will be able to do this quickly and efficiently.

You might ask next about the amount of water used by all the members of a family for brushing their teeth or washing their faces that morning. This will still be a relatively small

amount, in bucket terms, but more than was used at breakfast. Again, one or two older children can be asked to carry several buckets to the front. This will take a bit more time.

Then, however, you might ask how much water would be needed to run a load of dishes in the dishwasher or a load of laundry in the washing machine. This will vary, of course, but the former might be 12–15 litres and the latter as much as 35 litres. At this point, you might ask several members of a family to “haul” the water needed to the front. As this may take some time, you might announce in the meantime that the congregation will proceed to the next hymn/song/Scripture reading while the water is still being carried.

You can spread this out for as long as is appropriate, keeping an eye on the enthusiasm of the participants! By this time, however, you will have a large number of water buckets at the front of the church, and a handful of tired carriers who have “missed” part of the service because they were hauling water for the basic needs of a family.

At this point, then, you can invite the congregation to hear one of the success stories from the KDWSP, giving a first-hand and vivid illustration of how people’s lives are changed for the better when they have a reliable and local water supply. You may also wish to emphasise that once a local supply is in place, not only are women and children freed from the back-breaking labour of hauling water. They are also given more time for other things as a result: for going to school, for playing, for growing vegetables, for going to church, for visiting their neighbours, and so on. So what is being provided by the KDWSP is not just water, but time to do all the other things that help a community to grow and flourish.

3. Integrated Development: Here and There

At the heart of the Living With Dignity project in Cambodia is the commitment to a process of holistic village development, in which local communities are able to identify and address the ways in which areas such as sanitation, access to clean water, literacy and food security are all inter-related. This involves a process, by which LWD identifies the poorest households in each community, and then, over an average of five years, LWD works with these households to help them acquire the knowledge, the access and the skills needed to lift them out of poverty.

Each year, the partner households are able to assess their progress using an A – D grading system devised by LWD. This system enables the communities and households themselves, as well as LWD, to set clear and measurable goals to which they can work each year. When these goals are clear and manageable, participants remain motivated, and begin to recognise their power to create lasting change.

This gives PCI households the chance to adopt a similar system to help us examine the way we live in our own households, and in particular, to reassess our use of water. If you are able to highlight the World Development Appeal over several weeks, you might invite your congregation to take part in its own experience of graded “integrated development”, with sustainable lifestyle goals to be carried out each week. The following are only suggestions, and should be tailored to your local context.

During Week One, for example, the goal might be to ensure that no one in the household allows the tap to run while they are brushing their teeth. This goal helps us not to take a limitless supply of clean water for granted.

The goal for Week Two might be to pick out two household meals during the week, at which you will try to name all the ways in which clean water was needed in the preparation of the food (for washing vegetables, for making soup or tea, and so on) before you begin eating. When you have done this, someone at the table can say a short prayer of thanks to God for water. This goal helps to remind us that clean water also helps us to maintain good health and nutrition.

During Week Three, the aim might be to think more closely about what we eat, and how far it has travelled to our tables. The goal for this week is to plan two meals that use only locally grown produce. This is also a way for children to learn and adults to remember what is actually in season.

Finally, in Week Four, the goal will be to walk or cycle or take public transport or carpool to church, or on some other journey that you would usually make by car. This goal helps us to think about our own carbon footprint and how we might reduce our own contribution to global warming.

When members of a household have completed their goals, they will be able to “graduate”, and celebrate what they have done in conjunction with their offerings to the World Development Appeal.