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Introduction

Christian communities around the world are learning to worship God in ways that reflect an understanding of where their people have come from, the worship traditions their members bring with them, and the styles and sensibilities of these traditions.

When many kinds of worship music are mixed together, individual worshipers are experiencing the holy and seeing the world through the eyes of people unlike themselves. They are living out Luke's description of the birth of the Christian church, when people of every language under heaven told of God's wonders and heard and welcomed the words as if in their own tongue.

It is in this spirit that we offer this collection of worship songs from around the world. The origins of these songs are diverse: Korea, Brazil, Zimbabwe, Newfoundland. Some of them have appeared in print in this present format; most are new translations and arrangements of songs that have found a place in the worship of many congregations. It is our hope that the arrangements and translations will help English-speaking congregations worship with many voices.

The Arrangements

The arrangements range from simple melody and response to four-part choral settings. Chord symbols are provided where appropriate and there are ample suggestions for the use of percussion.

The Translations

Worshipping God and praying with another person's words is a way of praying with them, of seeing the world and the God who loves it through their eyes. However, singing in English at least some of the time aids understanding, and is an invaluable teaching tool. Some translators strive to keep the original sense of the words. Others try to retain the spirit, the rhythm of the originals. Some of the translations provided in this volume are close in their sense and sound to the original (e.g., "Santo, Santo" by Guillermo Joaquín Cuéllar). Other English texts freely interpret the originals in order to convey the spirit, rhythm and flow.

How to use the songs

1. Start with a song that will make its own friends. A congregation might readily welcome "Abba, Abba, hear us," which uses the pentatonic (5-note) scale familiar from the hymn "Amazing Grace". "Santo, santo" (Argentina) has the direct appeal of a pop ballad or a folk song.

2. Simplify. Teach one part to the congregation – a chorus, an echo, a repeating phrase – at a time. In the case of Spanish language songs, start with slow pieces. Many African songs use a few words which are easy to repeat. Don't be afraid to "mix" the original language with English, so that the English words "interpret" the original language phrases. For example, you might start by singing the chorus of Cuéllar's "Santo, santo, santo" like this: "Santo, santo, santo, santo, /holy holy is our God. Santo, santo, santo, santo, /holy holy is our God." It's good to begin by imagining how a child might best learn the song.
3. Teach why. There are many theological, pastoral, liturgical reasons to sing songs from other cultures. Some of them have been touched on in this introduction. Here are some others: in learning the sounds of another person, another culture, we start from the beginning, like children do. We have to listen and learn, like children – one of the requirements for living in God's Realm.

Many of the songs are very rhythmical, and demand a physical (as well as a vocal) response. This can serve to remind us that the Word became flesh.

Since many of these songs are drawn from folk music and from an oral culture, children find them easy to learn. These songs can help welcome children into the worshiping community.

Perhaps the strongest reason for singing songs from around the world is that they are a rich resource and a gift of God's Spirit from each community to the whole church. If it is more blessed to give than to receive, it is still blessed to receive generously and joyously.

4. Learn the styles. Listen to recordings of music similar to the song you are going to introduce into your congregation. If you know people from that culture, ask them for advice. It is not necessary to be ethnomusicologically correct, although situating yourself in the culture may lead to recognition of how some songs work best. Your practice should inform your theory as much as the reverse. What's important is to listen, learn and sing with love and respect for another person's song.
5. Learn each song, let it speak to you and make it your own before teaching it to others.
6. Respect the pulse. If the song is based on a dance rhythm, don't drop beats or stop the tempo at the end of each verse but keep it moving into the start of the next verse.
7. Teach syncopations one figure at a time. Teach them concretely (with a physical movement, a hand gesture) rather than by having people look at the notes. Syncopation has long been a part of our culture; we don't need to treat it like a stranger in church. Use a familiar rhythm from a popular song.

8. Where appropriate to the song, movement should not be considered an ornament, but should be learned as a non-optional part of the experience. If your congregation is shy or hesitant about dancing in church, start with learning to “sign”. Moving to the music will become a natural next step. Invite children or young people in your congregation to model the movement for the rest.
9. Keep accompaniment simple; choose the accompaniment to suit the song. For the most part, African songs should not be accompanied by keyboard; they should be accompanied with percussion such as clapping, or stepping or swaying with the pulse.
10. Encourage the gifts of enliveners. Enliveners are music leaders who are able to teach and encourage congregational singing. They are able to shape the song as it is being sung, by signalling some verses to be sung more softly, others more strongly, and still others to be sung without accompaniment.

Luke’s account of the birth of the Christian church in The Acts of the Apostles begins with faithful Jews gathering from all parts of the ancient world, from “every nation under heaven.” When the Holy Spirit descended with tongues of fire and praises in many voices, everyone heard and understood each other’s language as they spoke. May we remain faithful to Luke’s vision as we keep journeying with Jesus, praising God with many voices.

Acknowledgements

Composers and authors of material in this collection are acknowledged at the foot of the first page of music. Every reasonable effort has been made to contact and obtain their permission. If we have inadvertently omitted an acknowledgement, please contact us so that correction can be made in a subsequent printing.

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Other musicians, scholars and worship leaders whose lives and work have informed us and helped to determine the nature of this collection (and some of whose work appears in it) are Pablo Sosa, Patrick Matsikenyiri, I-to Loh and C. Michael Hawn.

Who Is Like You

SATB

Who is like you, O Lord, a - mong the gods?

The first system of music is written for SATB voices. It begins with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The melody starts on a half note G4, followed by a quarter note A4, and then a half note B4. The lyrics "Who is like you," are aligned with these notes. The music continues with a quarter note C5, a quarter note D5, and a half note E5. The lyrics "O Lord, a - mong the gods?" are aligned with these notes. The system ends with a double bar line.

5
Who is like you, ma - jes - tic in ho - li-ness?

The second system of music continues from the first. It starts with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp. The melody begins with a half note G4, followed by a quarter note A4, and then a half note B4. The lyrics "Who is like you," are aligned with these notes. The music continues with a quarter note C5, a quarter note D5, and a half note E5. The lyrics "ma - jes - tic in ho - li-ness?" are aligned with these notes. The system ends with a double bar line.

9
Awe - some in splen - dour, do - ing wond - ders;

The third system of music continues from the second. It starts with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp. The melody begins with a half note G4, followed by a quarter note A4, and then a half note B4. The lyrics "Awe - some in splen - dour," are aligned with these notes. The music continues with a quarter note C5, a quarter note D5, and a half note E5. The lyrics "do - ing wond - ders;" are aligned with these notes. The system ends with a double bar line.

13
who is like you, O Lord, a - mong the gods?

The fourth system of music continues from the third. It starts with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp. The melody begins with a half note G4, followed by a quarter note A4, and then a half note B4. The lyrics "who is like you," are aligned with these notes. The music continues with a quarter note C5, a quarter note D5, and a half note E5. The lyrics "O Lord, a - mong the gods?" are aligned with these notes. The system ends with a double bar line.

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MUSIC: Kevin Smith; arrangement, Andrew Donaldson.

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