



Presbyterian Mission
Theology & Worship



DISCUSSION GUIDE

Just Worship is a project of Theology and Worship, the Presbyterian Association of Musicians, Johnson C. Smith Theological Seminary and Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary.

What is Just Worship?

A conviction. People often assume that what the church does in worship and what it does in the world are two separate, unconnected things. The truth is, worshiping God and working for justice are two parts of the same whole. When we worship God in spirit and in truth, we

- proclaim the coming reign of God’s justice and peace
- enact the coming reign of God in our praying, singing, baptizing and communing
- anticipate with confidence that God intends to heal Creation and make us whole when Christ comes again.

In doing so, we are taking part in God’s work in the world.

An event. A conference called “Just Worship” took place at Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary in September 2019. The three-day event focused on:

- *Just Worship: God’s call to us to work for justice*
- *Just Worship: How our worship participates in God’s justice-making*
- *Just Worship! Doing what we’ve been talking about — worshipping justly*

A core leadership team, made up of people from various cultures, backgrounds, races and identities, served as a significant part of the event. The team’s collaborative way of working before and during the event modeled just ways of preparing for and participating in worship.

A documentary. Scott Galloway, president of Susie Films of Charlotte, North Carolina, came to Just Worship, along with a film crew. They documented the three-day event and put together a 33-minute video of some of the extraordinary things that happened at the gathering. You will see highlights from each day and hear from an array of compelling voices.

An invitation. This film is an invitation to dig deeper into what Just Worship might mean in your community. You may not agree with everything that is said. You may want to question some of what you see. You may want to stand up and cheer! In any case, we hope you will engage with others around what you see and hear in this film, honoring one another in holy conversation — even when you disagree — as we all seek to answer the call to take part in what God is doing in the world.

How to use the film and guide

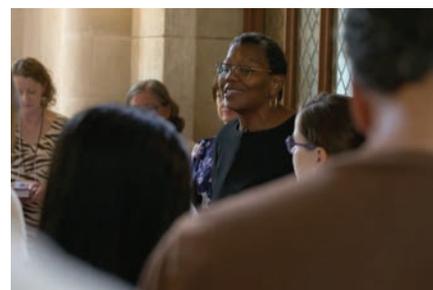
The documentary and discussion guide are designed to give you flexibility. You may plan one event where you view the film and discuss it, or you may use it in multiple sessions. We’ve laid out the guide in three sessions that can be adapted as you see fit. Each session includes background information, questions to consider as you’re watching, and suggestions for discussion after you’ve viewed a segment of the film. Each segment reflects the happenings of one day of the Austin Just Worship conference —

Day One: *Just Worship*

Day Two: *Just Worship*

Day Three: *Just Worship!*

We have provided the names of the songs and hymns you will hear. You may want to sing one or more as part of your session. Also included are suggestions for further study.



Day One: *Just Worship*

0:00–9:43

Background

Participants arrive at Austin Seminary on a Monday afternoon. The conference begins with a plenary session that includes worship and an address by the Rev. Paul Timothy Roberts Sr., president of Johnson C. Smith Theological Seminary in Atlanta. Later that evening, participants travel to the Texas State Capitol to join Josh Blaine, founder of Finding Our Voice, and others who gather on the second and fourth Monday of each month. There, they sing songs designed to build community and to protest against injustice. The acoustics of the rotunda make it an exquisite place to sing.



Guiding questions

As you watch the segment, pay attention to your reactions to what you see and hear.

- With what do you resonate most?
- What do you find most confounding?
- What surprised or delighted you?

Discussion questions

- What is the role of silence in worship? What is the role of silence in justice work?
- How can (or does) language shape one's view of the world? Of God? Of justice?
- How does worship fuel justice work? How does justice work fuel worship?
- What stood out to you about the group's singing in the state capitol? What might this suggest about worship? What might this suggest about politics?
- How have you seen God's justice and peace go out "in circles and circles" from worship?

Suggested hymn for this session

"Light Dawns on a Weary World," *Glory to God* 79

Hymns and songs heard in this segment

"Mayenziwe," South African traditional song; John L. Bell and the Wild Goose Worship Group

"Jesus, Remember Me," *Glory to God* 227

"Light Dawns on a Weary World," *Glory to God* 79

"A Song Can Hold You Up,"
by Josh Blaine and Melanie DeMore

"Gevurah," by Molly Bajgot

For further exploration

Josh Blaine's work as a community song leader began as an inquiry into the state of protest songs after the 2016 presidential election, which sent him out on the road to interview dozens of musicians and song leaders for a project called "Finding Our Voice." Since his return in the fall of 2017, he's been leading regular community sings in the Texas State Capitol rotunda and other public spaces around Austin to build community and resilience through song. He's also a regular song leader and organizer at rallies, meetings and marches for various organizations and social justice movements, including IfNotNow and the Poor People's Campaign. Learn more at patreon.com/findourvoice and facebook.com/findingourvoiceproject.

Day Two: Just Worship

9:44–24:05

Note: Day Two can be held in two sessions, 9:44–16:15 and 16:16–24:05.

Background

This second day of the conference is a full one. Morning worship includes a sermon by the Rev. Dr. Margaret Aymer, the First Presbyterian Church, Shreveport, D. Thomason Professor of New Testament Studies at Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary. She preaches from James 2:1–9, 14–16 and 26. Plan to read the text aloud before viewing today’s segment.

Participants also hear a plenary address by the Rev. Dr. Jennifer L. Lord, the Dorothy B. Vickery Professor of Homiletics and Liturgical Studies at Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary. She explains that worship is not only about our personal prayer, but “God’s entire just mission for the whole world.” Other workshops and exhibits take place throughout the day, and you’ll hear Dr. Tony McNeill speak about choosing music for worship. In the evening, members of the conference perform a cantata, *Manos Indocumentadas*, which tells the stories of undocumented workers, their challenges and their prayers. This performance is conducted by Jorge Lockward, one of the composers of the work.

Guiding questions

As you watch the segment, pay attention to your reactions to what you see and hear.

- With what do you resonate most?
- What do you find most confounding?
- What surprised or delighted you?

Discussion questions

- Aymer says that the church should not look like the world. In what ways does your church or faith community resemble the world? And how does that cause the church to “gasp for breath”?
- In what ways have you experienced worship as an escape from the world? How has it led to further engagement with the world?
- How do you think the cantata, *Manos Indocumentadas*, relates to the conference themes of worship and justice?
- How might you integrate the stories of marginalized people into your acts of worship?

Suggested hymn for this session

“Come, O Spirit, Dwell Among Us,” *Glory to God* 280

Hymns and songs heard in this segment

“Veni Sancte Spiritus/Holy Spirit, Come to Us,” *Glory to God* 281

From *Manos Indocumentadas*, by Edith Alomar and Jorge Lockward:

- “I Am Not Just a Stranger”
- “Remember Well”
- “For Love”

Liturgy heard in this segment

Morning worship begins with the following prayer:

God of abundance, we come to you knowing we are not whole. **Lord, have mercy.**

We have taken too much, leaving nothing to spare. We have kept for ourselves what is meant for others. **Lord, have mercy.**

We profit off those who are hurting. **Lord, have mercy.**

We hold grudges creating stumbling blocks to love our neighbors. **Lord, have mercy.**

Forgive us, for you are the Lord our God.

For further exploration

Manos Indocumentadas is a cantata by Edith Alomar and Jorge Lockward. Sung in both Spanish and English, it engages biblical texts that shed light on the topic of immigration. Interwoven are immigrant stories, including those of Beatriz Morelos of Ohio and Carlos Hernandez Pacheco of Illinois, who built lives in the U.S. but were eventually deported. The cantata raises theological questions about immigration law and Christian ethics. Read more about the cantata at presbyterianmission.org/story/manos-indocumentadas-undocumented-hands-to-be-performed-at-just-worship.



Day Three: *Just Worship!*

24:06–33:39

Background

After talking about justice and worship, the thing to do is to just worship! This sounds easy enough, but sometimes it's hard to worship in a world of suffering and injustice. This third and final plenary ties together the themes of the previous two days and helps listeners understand that it is by worshipping that we hold on to hope. The Rev. Dr. Kimberly Bracken Long of the Office of Theology & Worship of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) explains that we worship for God's sake, for our own sakes and for the sake of the world. Worship is not preparation for, but participation in, the coming reign of God. Phillip Morgan is the soloist for "How Long, O Lord."



Guiding questions

As you watch the segment, pay attention to your reactions to what you see and hear.

- With what do you resonate most?
- What do you find most confounding?
- What surprised or delighted you?

Discussion questions

- What does it mean for you that the world is both a wonderful and a not-so-wonderful thing? How do you make room for both realities in worship?
- What is the role of lament in your faith community or worship services?
- How does worship nourish, create and embody hope?
- In what ways is worship our participation in the coming reign of God?

Suggested hymn for this session

"Pelas dores deste mundo/For the Troubles and the Sufferings of the World" *Glory to God* 764

Hymns and songs heard in this segment

"How Long, O Lord," from a collection titled *When Grief Is Raw: Songs for Times of Sorrow and Bereavement*, by John L. Bell and Graham Maule, Wild Goose Resource Group, GIA Publications Inc.

"Pelas dores deste mundo/For the Troubles and the Sufferings of the World" *Glory to God* 764

"Come, O Spirit, Dwell Among Us," *Glory to God* 280

For further exploration

Did you catch a glimpse of two women walking down the aisle of the seminary chapel with branches in their hands? They were sprinkling worshipers with water using bundles of rosemary to remind people of their baptism. The practice is called "asperges" and is used by a wide range of Christian communities. In remembering that we are baptized, we remember the promises of the coming reign of God. A hymn that captures beautifully the eschatological hope of the church is "When All is Ended," *Glory to God* 376.

Musical Resources

From *Glory to God* hymnal

“Jesus, Remember Me”

2:28–2:45 *Glory to God 227*

Text and Music c. 1981 Les Presses de Taizé
(admin. GIA Publications Inc.)

“Light Dawns on a Weary World”

7:08–7:31 *Glory to God 79*

Text: Mary Louise Bringle, 2001;
Music: William P. Rowan, 2000

Text c. GIA Publications;
Music: William P. Rowan
(admin. GIA Publications Inc.)

“Veni Sancte Spiritus/Holy Spirit, Come to Us”

10:26–10:50 *Glory to God 281*

Text: Taizé Community, 1979;
Music: Jacques Berthier, 1979

Text and music c. 1979 Les Presses de Taizé (admin. GIA
Publications Inc.)

“Pelas dores deste mundo/For the Troubles and the
Sufferings” 32:43–32:59 *Glory to God 764*

Text: Rodolfo Gaede Neto, 1998;
trans. Simei Monteiro and Jorge Lockward, 2004
Music: Rodolfo Gaede Neto, 1998;
harm. Jorge Lockward, 2004

Text and Music c. 1998 Rodolfo Gaede Neto

English trans. and music harm. c. 2004;
General Board of Global Ministries

t/a GBGMusik

“Come, O Spirit, Dwell Among Us”

33:16–33:39 *Glory to God 280*

Text: Janie Alford 1979;
Music: Thomas John Williams, 1890
Text c. 1979 Hope Publishing Co.

Wild Goose Worship Group

“Mayenziwe” 2:09–2:28

Words and Music: South African traditional

From collection titled *There Is One Among Us: Shorter Songs
for Worship*, John L. Bell and the Wild Goose Worship
Group. GIA Publications, 1999

“How Long, O Lord”

29:28–30:05

From collection titled *When Grief Is Raw: Songs for Times of
Sorrow and Bereavement*

By John L. Bell and Graham Maule

Words and Music c. 1987, 1996, WGRG, the Iona
Community.

GIA Publications Inc. exclusive North American agent

Josh Blaine, *Finding Our Voice*

“A Song Can Hold You Up”

0:02–0:12; 7:59–8:56

Words: Melanie DeMore; Music: Josh Blaine.
Used by permission.

“Gevurah” 9:06–9:36

Text and Music: Molly Bajgot. Used by permission.

Manos Indocumentadas

Text and Music: Edith Alomar and Jorge Lockward. Used by
permission.

“I Am Not Just a Stranger” 21:20–21:54

“Remember Well” 21:54–22:19

“For Love” 22:19–23:44

