

JOY

Celebrating the goodness of life or particular events (eg a birthday)

- The service outline below is a guide, which you can adapt in any way you wish.
- **The sections in dark blue comprise an outline lasting about 10 minutes. Sections in light green can be added for a longer version.**
- Introductions to each section may be spoken by the leader or by different members of the group.
- Please feel free to adapt them so that they are natural to what you would say.
- Text in *italics* represent instructional text for you, all other text are the words to be spoken.
- The participants' version is a separate document. You are welcome to print it off and give each person a copy, and/or use the PowerPoint slides if you have projection facilities.
- Participants will be most helped if your words **are spoken slowly**.
- **Don't forget to review how it went afterwards.** Take five minutes to ask: what went well? What could we do better next time? Do this on your own or with others who help you.

Coming together in joy

Welcome people by adapting one of the following or by making up your own.

A Welcome to our time of headspace. Our theme is joy. We are opening our hearts to the goodness of life (*in particular, name an event, such as a birthday or wedding anniversary*).

OR

B Joy is something that we have all felt at one time or another. Today we are going to spend time focusing on the joy in our lives and in the world, and how we can be better connected to it.

OR

C Welcome. You are here among friends. There are no VIPs or special guests. The door is open to all. Jesus welcomed everyone, the children, the sick, the beggars and the powerful, even the thief on the cross next to him as he went to his death. The joy of God's welcome is that there are no bounds to it. Whether we think we deserve it or not, all can feel at home.

OR

D *Your own words.*

Encourage people to open their hearts to wisdom. Here are three examples, which you can accompany with a track from the playlists supplied on the [Church Support Hub](#) (open the link and scroll down to 'Music playlists').

Option 1 *Focus on the goodness of life by adapting one of the following or by making up your own.*

- A** Take a moment to look around the room, silently notice who is here and what they mean to you. Maybe focus on one particular person. Ask quietly: in what ways do they bring joy to me? And be thankful for them.

OR

- B** Soften your gaze and think about the people in the room. You might want to find a spot on the floor where you can do so. Perhaps, in your mind, you might like to think about the way the people around you (in the room or elsewhere) bring you joy.

OR

- C** A poet in the Christian Bible wrote about God: "...in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore." (Psalm 16. 11) Let us welcome God's joy into our thoughts and feelings. As we do so, let us notice the other people round us, ask how they bring joy to us, and be thankful.

OR

- D** Your own words.

Option 2 *Light a candle. As you or another person does so, adapt one of the following or make up your own.*

- A** Joy is like a flame that lights up even the darkest of days. Each of us carries a light within us. The flame was lit when you were in your mother's womb. Sometimes in your life it has burnt strong and bright, at other times it may have felt in danger of going out. Just as the smallest light can chase away the greatest darkness, so the tiniest flame can bring joy amid the stresses and setbacks of normal life. As we look at our candle, let us take a moment to notice how we feel and to find our flame.

OR

- B** The candle gives us joy as it brings us light and reminds us of warmth. As we focus on its flame, let's imagine this light and warmth filling our bodies from head to toe. Think about what else fills you in the same way, and spend a few moments focusing on those things.

OR

- C** We light our candle as a reminder that joy is like a flame that glows in the darkness. St Paul, one of the founders of the Christian faith, wrote: "Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice." Use the quietness to silently ponder: What have been reasons for joy in the past few days? (**Or:** What brings you joy in the event we celebrate today?)

OR

- D** Your own words.

Option 3 *Place a glass of water in front of people. As you do so, adapt one of the following or make up your own.*

- A** As we gather today, our glasses may be empty of joy, or full of joy, or somewhere in between. Take a quiet moment to look around the room; notice who is here and what they mean to you. Focus on one particular person or the whole group, and ask silently: How do they fill my glass with joy?

OR

- B** When we are thirsty, we need water. When life is hard, we need joy. Imagine drinking from this full glass and, as you do, also imagine being filled up with things that bring you joy. Give thanks for these things.

OR

- C** One of the spiritual leaders in the Christian Bible wrote: "The joy of the Lord is your strength." (Nehemiah 8. 10) Ponder silently: how does joy bring strength? How might your joy bring strength to the others around you? If you believe in God or a higher power, pray quietly that your glass today will be filled with joy.

OR

- D** *Your own words.*

Shared reflection

Adapt one of the following or make up your own.

- A** As we draw this reflection to a close, have any thoughts come to you that you would like to share with others in the group? (Please don't feel you have to share.)

OR

- B** We have time now for you to share some of your reflections, if you would like to. There is no pressure to say anything and there are no right or wrong answers. You might like to sum your reflection up in just one or two words. For example, "I felt...(leader supplies their own example)."

OR

- C** I wonder if any of you had any promptings that you would like to share with the rest of the group.

OR

- D** *Your own words.*
-

Finding joy

Choose from one of the following.

Option 1 A reading from the Bible

Select from:

A This reading from 1 Chronicles 16:31–34 (to be read slowly):

Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad; And let them say among the nations, "The Lord reigns." Let the sea roar, and all its fullness; Let the field rejoice, and all that is in it. Then the trees of the woods shall rejoice before the Lord, for he is coming to judge the earth. Oh, give thanks to the Lord, for he is good! For his mercy endures forever.

OR

B Select a reading from those offered on the [Church Support Hub](#) (open the link and scroll down to 'Bible readings').

Introduce the reading by adapting one of the following or by making up your own.

We shall now have a reading from one of the world's most famous spiritual books, the Christian Bible. I shall read it through twice, and as I do so you may want to ask yourself, "What is this reading saying to me, especially about joy?"

OR

C This reading comes from...(complete as appropriate). These verses celebrate joy because... (complete as appropriate). I will read this through twice. Feel free to just sit and listen to it the first time. Then I will read an explanation (provide your own), after which I shall read the passage through again. Perhaps think about what images or pictures this reading brings to mind.

OR

D We shall now have a reading from the Bible. I shall read it through twice, and as I do so you may want to ask yourself, "What is this reading saying to me?"

OR

D Your own words.

Leave a few moments for quiet reflection on the reading, then continue to the next section, "Bringing joy to others".

If you sense people would like to discuss the passage, you can choose from the questions in the 'Discussing the Bible Readings' download on the [Church Support Hub](#) (open the link and scroll down to 'Discussing the Bible readings').

Option 2 Reflecting on a picture

Instead of the reading, you can reflect on a picture. To avoid copyright issues, try the [Unsplash](#) and [Pixabay](#) websites, which have photos you can download for free.

Invite people to consider one or two questions as they look at the photo. You can choose from the following:

The photo you see (on your sheet or on the screen) was taken by (Alex Alvarez).

- What is the piece doing? Does it tell a story? Evoke a feeling? Document an event?

Present an idea? If so, what? Does it speak of joy in any way?

- How does it make you feel?
- Are there aspects that bring you joy?
- Does the piece bring to mind any of your own life events or memories, especially ones that brought you joy at the time or do so now?
- Does the photo connect you to something greater (perhaps the source of joy)? If so, in what ways?
- How have your feelings changed from the time you started looking at it till now?

Introduce this section by adapting one of the following or by making up your own.

- A** We are going to reflect now on the photo, and as you do so you may want to ask yourself (*choose one or two questions from the above*).

At the end there will be an opportunity for you to share any reactions if you would like.



OR

- B** Spend time looking at this photo. Perhaps think about how this photo makes you feel and in particular if it makes you think of joy in any way. There are no wrong answers; what does it make you think of? You might like to write some thoughts down either on the photo itself or around the border. You can use just one word if that feels right to you.

At the end there will be an opportunity for you to share any reactions if you would like.

OR

- C** We are going now to look at a photo. Sometimes photos can spark spiritual feelings or thoughts. They can even be vehicles for a higher power or for God to speak to us, however we understand God. As we look at this photo, you may want to ask yourself (*choose from the above questions*).

At the end there will be an opportunity for you to share any reactions if you would like.

OR

- D** Your own words.

Leave a few moments for quiet reflection on the photo, then continue to the next section, "Bringing joy to the world", or carry on with the option below if you're having a longer session.

After the silent reflection, adapt one of the following:

- A** I wonder if anyone has any thoughts they would like to share? Have you noticed things that bring you joy? I'd now like to share this quote by Jon Krakauer

"God has placed it all around us. Joy is in everything and anything we might experience. We just have to have the courage to turn against our habitual lifestyle and engage in unconventional living. My point is that you do not need me or anyone else around to bring this new kind of light in your life. It is simply waiting out there for you to grasp it, and all you have to do is reach for it. The only person you are fighting is yourself and your stubbornness to engage in new circumstances." *Leave a few moments of silence at the end.*

OR

- B** Give each person a copy of the photo and then say: If you feel comfortable, place your photo (with your written thoughts on it) on the floor and gather round to see how other people have responded. If you would rather not share your reflections, that is fine; just fold your photo in half to indicate this.

OR

- C** I wonder what you have noticed in this photo. Are there things that bring you joy?

I'd now like to share this quote from Jesus, who claimed to be the human embodiment of God: "These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full." Might the things that bring you joy in the photo be God speaking to you and the group?

OR

- D** Your own words.

Option 3 A poem

The poem is written by Mark Berry, a chaplain. You are welcome to give each person a copy. It can either be read out loud by yourself or someone else in the group, or it can be read silently. Introduce the poem by adapting one of the following or by making up your own.

- A** We are going to reflect silently now on a poem, "Scattered gold," written by a chaplain, Mark Berry. You may want to focus on an image or phrase and ask why it strikes you.

At the end, there will be an opportunity for you to share the phrase or image if you would like to.

OR

- B** We are now going to read through (part of) a poem twice. It is called "Scattered gold" and is written by Mark Berry, who works for the church. As you listen, perhaps see if one or two things speak to you and what they might be saying. You don't have to think about this too much; go with your gut reaction and don't stress about coming up with a perfect answer. Think about what speaks to you and why.

At the end, there will be an opportunity for you to share the phrase or image if you would like to.

OR

- C** We are going now to reflect quietly on a poem, "Scattered gold," written by Mark Berry, a chaplain. Sometimes poems can spark spiritual feelings or thoughts. They can even be vehicles for a higher power or God to speak to us, however we understand God. As we think about this poem, you may want to focus on a phrase, an image or an idea.

At the end, there will be an opportunity for you to share any reactions if you would like to.

OR

- D** Your own words.

The poem: Scattered Gold

Scattered gold,
 Tiny morsels of treasure, So small and delicate, Flaky, broken, worthless, Just as beautiful,
 As any fashioned piece, Perhaps more precious,
 In their raw fragility,
 A breeze could take them, Static lift them,
 And they are lost,

Taken, gone,
 No king could gather them, lock them beyond sight, Hold them, hoard them, No one can own them,
 Scattered gold,
 Tiny morsels of treasure,
 I can see them,
 As the light bounces,
 Some can't,
 They see only darkness, But I see riches,
 In you,
 In each of us,
 Some buried deep,
 But visible,
 to those who choose,
 I choose,
 I see flashing brilliance, Glorious sparkles,
 I see your gold,
 Our gold,
 Scattered gold,
 Tiny morsels of treasure.

Leave a few moments for quiet reflection on the poem, then continue to the next section, "Bringing joy to the world", or carry on with the option below if you're having a longer session.

After the silent reflection, adapt one of the following:

- A** I wonder if anyone has any thoughts about the poem that they would like to share?
 Were there any images, phrases or ideas that struck you?
 What emotions did you have as you read/listened to the poem?
 Were there any words of phrases that surprised you?

OR

- B** We now have time for you to share some of your reflections, if you would like to. There is no pressure to say anything and there are no right answers. You might like to write down some of your thoughts before we start. (Short time of silence.) Would anyone like to share a thought, word, or idea?

OR

- C** I wonder what reactions you had to this poem?
 Did you think about it in relation to God? Or in relation to a friend, family member or someone who is close to you?
 Were there any images, phrases or ideas that you relate to most?
 Did this poem remind you of any personal experiences or feelings?
 If you could ask the poet (Mark) one question about the poem, what would it be?

OR

- D** Your own words.
-

Bringing joy to the world

This section follows the reading, photo or poem. If you want some music to accompany it, you can play a track from the playlists supplied on the [Church Support Hub](#) (open the link and scroll down to 'Music playlists').

Adapt one of the following introductions or make up your own:

A We now have a short time of silence when you can think about an item in the news, a person you are concerned about, or a situation you face. You can send joy to the situation through positive thoughts, or ask God as you understand God to bring joy to those involved.

OR

B Think about or write down three things that bring you joy. These might be people, hobbies, or something you think of as divine. Feel your gratitude for these things. *(A period of silence.)* Perhaps now you might write down or think about some ways that you could bring joy to other people.

OR

C If God exists and was here with us, what joyful news would you bring to God? What situation or person would you ask God to bring joy to? We'll have a few moments of quiet while you think about this, and then an opportunity to share your thoughts if you would like to. ***(At the end, if appropriate, you could ask people to say a collective 'Amen'.)***

OR

D Your own words.

To bring this section to a close, use the following prayer.

We are so grateful that in the darkest of nights and the brightest of days you always are here,
 For the wisdom you reveal to us,
 For the truth you show to us,
 For the way you came to us,
 Became one of us, yet so much more than us:
 We are so grateful.
 For the expanding grandeur of Creation, Worlds known and unknown, Galaxies beyond galaxies,
 Filling us with awe and challenging our imaginations: We are so grateful.
 For this fragile planet earth,
 Its times and tides, its sunsets and seasons:
 We are so grateful.
 For our human community,
 Our common past and future hope, Our capacity to work for peace and:
 We are so grateful.
 For the joy of life,
 Its wonders and surprises, its hopes and achievements: We are so grateful.
 We all say together: **Amen**

Conclusion

Use one of the following:

A We conclude our time with a poem based on a Scottish blessing.

If there is goodness in the heart, there will be beauty in the character.

If there is beauty in the character, there will be harmony in the home.

If there is harmony in the home, there will be order in the nation.

If there is order in the nation, there will be peace in the world.

If there is peace in the world, there will be joy in the universe.

So let it be.

We say together: **Amen**

OR

B Focus on one or two things that have spoken to you from this session. Hold them in your mind for a few moments. You might like to think about this over the next few days. We give thanks for the time we have spent together, for the thoughts we have had, and for the joy that we leave with.

OR

C We conclude this time together with a short prayer.

The Lord bless you and keep you;

the Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you;

the Lord turn his face toward you

and give you joy.

We say together: **Amen**

OR

D *Your own words.*

Too much silence?

The shorter version will be largely silent, with the option of accompanying music. If people would like more time to talk, you could:

- Use some of the discussion questions with the reading in the **Discussing the Bible Readings download on the Church Support Hub** (open the link and scroll down to 'Discussing the Bible readings').
- Allow time for reactions to the photo or poem, as suggested in the light green sections.
- Invite other members of the group to read the poem and the prayers (if you use them).