**Soulspace: Finding Joy**

**Connecting to one another**

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.

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 me joy? Be thankful for them.

*Light a candle*

Joy is like a flame that lights up even the darkest 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 the candle, let us take a moment to notice how we feel and to find our flame.

**Making spiritual connections**

We are going 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.

There will be an opportunity to share your reactions to the photo after the silence if you wish to do that.

*Quiet reflection on the photo*

*After a period of silence you may ask any of the following questions:*

* *I wonder what you noticed in the photo? Does it tell a story? Evoke a feeling? Document an event? Does it capture joy in any way?*
* *Does the photo bring to mind any events or memories from your own life, especially ones that brought you joy at the time or do so now?*

Jesus of Nazareth, who is known as a great spiritual teacher and claimed to be the human face of God once said, “I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.”

Might the things that bring you joy in the photo be God speaking to you and the group in some way?

**Connecting with the world**

If God exists and is here with us, what joyful news would you share with God? What situation or person would you ask God to bring joy to? Let’s observe a few moments of silence while you think about this. Afterwards there will be an opportunity to share your thoughts if you would like to.

*Silence*

If you are comfortable doing so, I invite you to name the person or situation you asked God to bring joy to.

In the Bible Amen means “so be it” in Hebrew. Let us now say “Amen” together. ***Amen*.**

Let us pray together:

**We are grateful that in the darkest nights and the brightest days you always are here,**

**for the wisdom you reveal to us,**

**for the truth you show us,**

**for the way you came to us as one of us, yet so much more.**

**We are grateful**

**for the grandeur of creation, worlds known and unknown, galaxies beyond galaxies, filling us with awe and challenging our imaginations.**

**For this fragile planet earth,**

**its times and tides, its sunsets and seasons.**

**We are grateful**

**for our human community,**

**our common past and future hope, our capacity to work for peace.**

**For the joy of life,**

**its wonders, surprises, hopes, and achievements.**

**We are so grateful. *Amen*.**

**Conclusion**

Let us conclude our time together with a short blessing:

May God bless and keep you;

may God make God’s face shine on you and be gracious to you;

may God turn God’s face toward you and give you joy.

Let us now say Amen together: ***Amen*.**

*These materials are drawn from Soulspace, compiled by the Rev. Dr. Michael Moynagh: cofe.io/soulspace. The poems are written by Mark Berry and © Mark Berry / Greenhouse, The Archbishops’ Council of the Church of England (edited).*