

Welcome and Introductions

Leader: Wherever we are we meet in the presence of God.

All: And we do not meet alone.

Leader: With the angels in highest heaven

All: We gather to worship the Lord.

Leader: With the Saints of every age

All: We gather to worship the Lord

Leader: With the church throughout the world

All: We gather to worship the Lord

Leader: By children and babes at the breast,

All: God's holy name is praised.

Leader: With drums, sitars and trumpets,

All: God's holy name is praised.

Leader: In barrios and basilicas,

All: God's holy name is praised.

Leader: And here in our hearts and voices

All: God's holy name is praised.

Leader; We meet in the presence of God

All: and we do not meet alone.

**Song: Sing praise to God on mountain tops and in earth's lowest places,
from blue lagoon to polar waste from ocean to oasis.
No random rock produced this world but God's own will and wonder:
Thus hills rejoice and valleys sing and clouds concur with thunder.**

**Sing praise to God where humankind its majesty embraces,
where different races, creeds and tongues distinguish different faces.
God's image in each child on earth shall never pale or perish.
So treat with love each human soul and thus God's goodness cherish.**

Prayer:

Leader: Let us pray:

Generous God, you gave us our voices, no two the same,
no finer instruments with which to praise you.

All: For these we thank you God.

Leader: You gave us words and music, peculiar gifts, with which to wound or wonder,
bore or bless, inspire or disable.

All: For these we thank you God.

Leader: As your church you have gathered us in your community of common folk and
complainers, prophets and puzzled people, you have made a place for us.

All: For this we thank you Lord

Leader: So let what we say and do this night, what we ponder and decide, be real for us and
honest to you, and prepare us for the life of the world in which you are praised.

All: Amen

Psalm 121

Women: If I lift up my eyes to the hills, where will my help be found?

Your help comes from the Lord who made heaven and earth.

Men: God will keep you from stumbling; your protector is always at hand.
God never slumbers or sleeps.

Women: God is your keeper at all times: the Lord is at your right hand.

In sunlight no harm will befall you; in moonlight your life is secure.

Men: The Lord will guard you from evil: God will protect your soul.
God watches for your coming and going both now and for evermore.

Scripture: Ephesians 1 v 1-10

Reflection by Kate Bruce (taken from BRF Guidelines Notes)

The spiritual decision to be joyful, choosing to look to God's loving kindness in all circumstances- cannot help but feed into a hopeful attitude. Ephesians 1 is full of reasons to be hopeful for ourselves and for our society. God blesses us, chooses us, adopts us, redeems us and forgives us – lavishing grace upon us. How many people struggle on in despair, abandoned, afraid and alone, not knowing that God desires them, and that they are inherently precious? How many people feel lost, crippled with guilt, unaware that God seeks them and forgives them? How many people feel that the world is in chaos and there seems no order, no plan, no direction? Many people are unaware that God holds creation in his hands – and has a purpose for all things, however broken they seem to us.

It is easy to lose hope when we cease to locate the hope in Christ. When hope wavers, mission initiatives look flimsy, knocked out by a committee of bright ideas. Hope in Christ grounds us. It reminds us that we have a message deeply relevant to our culture: an invitation into relationship with God, an invitation to become more fully who we are called to be. When human rule, authority, power and dominion rage and clash, we can have confidence in God's power which raised Christ from death and seated him above all human agencies.

Now is the time for hearts to be enlightened and for a message of hope to sing out from Christian communities. That message needs earthing in practical ways; it is useless to speak theological truth without putting flesh on the words. It is no good assuring the lonely they are loved and never visiting them.

To allow cynicism, fear and despair to sound their discordant dirges unchallenged would be a colossal failure of mission. God invites the outsider, the broken, the grieving, the sinner and the saint to his table in a kingdom where there are no walls, no back rows, no second-class seats. This is the counter narrative to intolerance, isolationism and downright nastiness spun by agencies of evil. Aware of our frailties, we may not have much confidence in ourselves as God's agents, but we can have tremendous hope in God.

Time of Sharing:

Spend a few moments making a **list of reasons to see hope in today's world**, and another of ways which you feel **you demonstrate your hope in your daily life** and we will share some of these thoughts with one another as you feel able.

Chant: If you believe and I believe *(Sing twice)*
and we together pray,
the Holy Spirit shall come down
and set God's people free,
and set God's people free,
the Holy Spirit shall come down
and set God's people free.

Leader: What if the darkness covers us, and the day around us turns to night?
Darkness is not too dark for God to whom dark and light are one.

Prayers of intercession:

Let us pray:

You never sleep, God. You are always awake, always watching,
always willing the world and its people to turn in the right direction.
So tonight, will you comfort those who cannot sleep because of illness,
or worry, or fear; or for reasons they cannot understand.

(pause)

God be near them.

All: God be near them.

Leader: And tonight will you be close to those who wait patiently or impatiently
for a birth or a death, for a visit,
or for the pieces of their life's jigsaw to fit together.

(pause)

God be near them.

All: God be near them.

Leader: And tonight will you be close to those who wonder, who look for inspiration,
who long to be with the one or the ones they love,
who hope to recognise the right time when they can say "I'm sorry",
or "I love you" or even "enough is enough".

(pause)

God be near them.

All: God be near them.

Leader: And God, listen to us as we share with you whatever joys or sorrows,
discoveries or questions we will take into the night.

(pause)

God be near us.

All: God be near us.

**All: Into your hands we commit ourselves – our souls, our bodies, our minds,
our futures – for all things come from you and are best kept in your care.
Amen**

Song: Sisters and Brothers with one voice confirm your calling and rejoice:
each is God's child and each God's choice. Alleluia, Alleluia! Alleluia!

Strangers no more, but cherished friends, live as the body God intends,
sharing the love the Spirit sends. Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!

Not, though, by wisdom, wealth or skill, nor by ourselves can we fulfil
what, for the world, is God's own will Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!

Christ is the way. By him alone, seeds of the kingdom's life are sown,
patterns of heaven and earth are shown. Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!

Then follow him through every day, fear not what crowds or critics say:
those on the move stir those who stay. Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!

In factory, office, home or hall: where people struggle, strive or stall,
seek out and serve the Lord of all. Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!

Seeking and serving, with one voice, confirm your calling and rejoice:
each is God's child and each God's choice. Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!

Prayer from the Church in the Philippines:

Leader: Lord in these times, when we fear we are losing hope, or feel that our efforts are futile, let us see in our hearts and minds the image of your resurrection, and let that be our source of courage and strength. With that, and in your company, help us to face challenges and struggles against all that is born of injustice.

Closing Responses:

Leader: Bless to us O God,

**All: The moon that is above us, the earth that is beneath us, the friends who are around us, your image deep within us, the rest which is before us.
Amen**

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BRF Guidelines Study notes – Kate Bruce RAF Chaplain.