

Welcome	Have you ever felt inexplicably joyful, despite your circumstances? Share when!
Worship ideas	Choose songs/ hymns/ music that emphasise 'joy'. <i>(If you like classical music, perhaps listen to the end of Beethoven's 9th (the 'Ode to Joy') – hymn words below.</i>
Word (refs.↓)	<i>some suggestions for discussion here</i>
Phil. 1:1-3	Remember - this letter was written <u>for</u> (though not <u>to</u>) us as believers, as well as for and to the church in Philippi. Is it important to you to know questions such as who, when, where, the church's origin and situation, etc – or can we just apply the lessons we need from the text itself?
<i>Optional study</i> Acts 16:6-15	<i>Questions to help if you <u>do</u> find it helpful to know the background – otherwise miss this out!</i> Try and trace the journey Paul and his companions took on a map (there may be one in the back of your Bible). Vv. 6-7: How do you think God directed them not to go to Asia (i.e. west to Ephesus) & Bithynia (i.e. heading north-east) – and, more importantly why? How would they have felt then? – and when they got to Macedonia? Vv. 9-10: How important to Paul was this clear call from God? How important is it to <u>you</u> to have clear guidance from God for decisions you have to make (can anyone share any examples?) Vv.13-15: do you think Paul would have thought this was a promising start?
Phil. 1:1a	What significance do you find in Paul's description of himself and Timothy here (<i>New Living Translation</i> has 'slaves'). Timothy doesn't actually contribute any of the letter's contents – why do you think Paul includes him here?
Phil. 1:1b	Is it more important to you to be a 'slave of Christ Jesus' or a 'saint in Christ Jesus'? Paul particularly mentions those with designated roles in the church as overseers (<i>NLT: elders</i>) and deacons. What are these roles? Do they matter these days? Why do you think he mentions these people separately?
Phil. 1:2-3	How often, if ever, do you wish blessing ('grace and peace') on your fellow-Christians? Do you pray it for them? How? What difference does it make to them? What difference does it make to you? Do you thank God every time you remember other believers? Do you ever let them know how thankful you are for them? When? How? Does it help <u>you</u> ?
Witness	Pray – for one or more other Christians that you know who have chosen not to attend church regularly at present. Thank God for them. Can you think of a way to let them know (sensitively!) that you miss them, that you have prayed for them, that you are thankful for them? Discuss whether you could encourage them, or maybe others who <u>do</u> come to church, to join your group or cluster (or another one) this year.
Reminder	Hellen (Sewe) from Nairobi arrives this Thursday 13 th and there will be 'tea' at church at 4.15pm and also a shared lunch at 12.15 on Sunday. Please try and get to one or other 'welcome' for her (or both) if you can!

Hymn to Joy: Joyful, joyful we adore Thee/ God of glory, Lord of love/ Hearts unfold like flowers before Thee/ Hail Thee to the sun above./ Melt the clouds of sin and sadness/ Drive the dark of doubt away./ Giver of immortal gladness/ Fill us with the light of day./ Mortals join the mighty chorus/ Which the morning stars began./ Father love is reigning o'er us/ Brother love binds man to man. / Ever singing march we onward/ Victors in the midst of strife/ Joyful music lifts us Sonward/ In the triumph song of life!