

Call to Worship

Shout for joy to the Lord, all the earth. Worship the Lord with gladness; come before him with joyful songs.

Know that the Lord is God. It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people, the sheep of his pasture.

Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise; give thanks to him and praise his name.

For the Lord is good and his love endures forever; his faithfulness continues through all generations. (Psalm 100)

Prayer

Father God, I thank you that I have the freedom in this country to come/go to church to worship you. I praise you that you love me so much – that I am a sheep of your pasture, that your love endures forever.

Help me today as I sing, pray, read, and listen. Help me to understand the height, depth and breadth of your amazing love for me.

in Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

Song: AHB 80 “Immortal, Invisible” (by Walter Chalmers Smith)

1. Immortal, invisible, God only wise, in light inaccessible hid from our eyes,
Most blessed, most glorious, the Ancient of Days,
Almighty, victorious, thy great name we praise.
2. Unresting, unhasting, and silent as light, nor wanting, nor wasting, thou rulest in might;
Thy justice like mountains soaring above,
Thy clouds which are fountains of goodness and love.
3. To all life thou givest, to both great and small; in all life thou livest, the true life of all;
We blossom and flourish as leaves on a tree,
And wither and perish: but nought changeth Thee.
4. Great Father of glory, pure Father of light, thine angels adore thee, all veiling their sight;
All praise we would render: O help us to see,
'tis only the splendour of light hideth thee.

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Prayer of Intercession

Father God, as your word asks us to, I pray for our government and leaders as they begin this 3-year term of governing us. I pray for servant hearts for those elected. I pray that their first concern will be for the people they serve. I pray for integrity, truthfulness and care in dealing with people and issues.

And I pray for those Christians who have been elected, that they will be ambassadors for Jesus in their words and in their actions.

Barry Believes!

I pray too with those Christians who live in countries where the freedom to vote, worship and live is not like that which we enjoy.

- I pray with those in Pakistan where they can only work in menial, low paid jobs where they may be regularly beaten and put out of work.
- I pray with those in Afghanistan and Iran where they are often arrested and jailed for attending house churches.
- I pray with those in some states in India where churches are burnt, pastors and their people are killed.
- I pray with those in Myanmar who regularly have their villages bombed, even as they are suffering from the recent earthquakes.

Father, I pray for strength of faith under these persecutions. Lord, lift their hope in you, that regardless of circumstances, they will stand strongly and witness to the love of God.

Father, you are the Lord of the universe and Lord of this world that Jesus died for. I pray for justice and mercy in his name. Amen

Song: “O, Church Arise” (by Chris Tomlin et al)

1. O, church arise and put your armour on, hear the call of Christ our captain,
For now the weak can say that they are strong in the strength that God has given.
With shield of faith and belt of truth, we'll stand against the devil's lies,
An army bold whose battle cry is love, reaching out to those in darkness
2. Our call to war, to love the captive soul, but to rage against the captor,
And with the sword that makes the wounded whole, we will fight with faith and valour
When faced with trials on every side, we know the outcome is secure
And Christ will have the prize for which He died, an inheritance of nations
*Arise, shine for your light has come. Arise, shine for the risen Son
Lift your eyes, we are His radiant bride. Arise O church, arise.*
3. Come, see the cross where love and mercy meet, as the Son of God is stricken,
Then see His foes lie crushed beneath His feet, for the Conqueror has risen.
And as the stone is rolled away, and Christ emerges from the grave,
This victory march continues till the day every eye and heart will see Him.
4. So Spirit come, put strength in every stride, give grace for every hurdle,
That we may run with faith to win the prize of a servant good and faithful.
As saints of old still line the way, retelling triumphs of His grace,
We hear their calls and hunger for the day when, with Christ, we stand in glory.

Chorus

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Bible Reading:

- John 17:20-26
My prayer is not for them alone (*the disciples*). I pray also for

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those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me, and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one – I in them and you in me – so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.

Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory, the glory you have given me because you loved me before the creation of the world.

Righteous Father, though the world does not know you, I know you, and they know that you have sent me. I have made you known to them, and will continue to make you known in order that the love you have for me may be in them and that I myself may be in them.

Message: “Barry Believes!”

Do you know Barry? He's quite famous, apparently. There are even roadside signs reminding us of him, saying, “Barry believes”. His name is on everyone's lips. Even some well-known sporting faces speak of him. Still puzzled? Never heard of him? Neither had I until I watched the Toyota ad on TV. If you have seen it, you will know that Barry (and his wife, who is not so famous and doesn't have a name) has bought an electric car. The whole of the country is abuzz. Why is he doing it?

So, a huge crowd and the media turn up at the front gate of his house when he arrives home in his new car. As he gets out of the car, the reporter asks, “Why have you gone with an electric car?”, and the whole crowd waits with bated breath for the much-awaited answer. Is it for some environmental reason? Is it because it's quieter, cheaper to run? And Barry replies, “Because it's a Toyota”. “Oh”, says the crowd. Nothing complicated. Simple answer from his heart. It's a Toyota. He didn't add that a Toyota meets all his needs - price, comfort, looks, mileage (“kilometrage” has never quite done it for me!). He didn't have to, it's a “no-brainer”.

Suppose a crowd gathered outside a church because they had heard that people they know or had heard about were going there every Sunday morning. If you were bailed up on the steps of the church and a reporter puts a microphone under your nose and asked you “Why?”, what would be your response? The simple answer from the heart should be, “It's God”.

That's the simple answer, but you could have added, God meets all my needs, he never stops loving me, he forgives me my sin through Jesus dying in my place, he gives me the gifts to lead my life in service to him and others, and he gives me eternal life in his Kingdom. It's a “no-brainer” for those who believe. It's God!

Everything we do at church is about God from start to finish. All of it no doubt a bit strange to outsiders, and not common in the general community.

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- We sing. It doesn't happen very much apart from at church. Even funerals, where traditionally songs were sung, don't do it much now. But we do. And it doesn't really matter if the singing is not great. It's about joyful praise to God, telling of his glory, expressing a love of God, and recognising his love for us.
Psalm 100:2 **Worship the Lord with gladness: come before him with joyful songs.**
Ephesians 5:19 **Sing and make music from your heart to the Lord.**
- We pray. We actually talk to someone we can't see. That's not something we see outside of a church very much. Together, we ask for forgiveness. Together we praise God for his greatness. Together we ask God to help those we care about, we ask God to heal, we intercede for the government, for the persecuted, for the hurting, for the homeless.
Matthew 21:13 Jesus speaking **My house will be called a house of prayer.**
Isaiah 56:7 **For my house will be called a house of prayer for all the nations.**
- We have Holy Communion. Outside the church, meals of fellowship are common. But not ones to celebrate the death of one who died in our place. Anzac Day goes closest, but even there we don't eat and drink bread and wine, symbolising body and blood. It is a reminder of why we call Good Friday good.
1 Corinthians 11:26 **For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death, until he comes.**
- We preach and teach. A fair bit of this happens outside the church. In politics, in schools, in universities, and in the public square, but in many of these places it is illegal or near illegal to preach and teach about God or Jesus.
Praise God that our churches are still places where we can preach and teach, where we can learn what God says through the scriptures about how we should live and how we should love. And it's the most radical preaching and teaching of a way of life that defies the common wisdom of the world. If you want to see how radical it is, try reading the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7).
Matthew 28:19 **Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.**
- We love our brothers and sisters. In fact, the warmth of our fellowship together at church is, or should be, a powerful witness to the world (John 17:22 above).
Having built that picture of the curious standing outside the church doors questioning why we believe, some do come through the doors and experience that warmth of fellowship. They feel welcomed and included. They feel loved and accepted.
It's so important to our churches that their hospitality should be known and obvious, that it will be known and obvious that we love our neighbour, and that we love each other. It should be known and obvious that needs are met, prayers are answered and friendships formed.
And we need to recognise that the source of all this is not ourselves. What people see in us are the fruits of the Spirit, and we are enabled by the gifts of the Spirit which are given to us for this very purpose.
1 Corinthians 12:4-7 **There are different kinds of gifts, but the**

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same Spirit distributes them. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but in all of them it is the same God at work. Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given *for the common good*. (Italics mine)

So, Barry believes. What about you if the microphone is held out to you? Try this.

~~Barry~~ believes (insert own name here).

I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only son, our Lord. He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary, he suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of the saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen

Why? Simple really. It's God!

Song: AHB 153 "This, This is the God we Adore" (by Joseph Hart)

1. This, this is the God we adore; our faithful unchangeable friend;
Whose love is as great as his power, and neither knows measure nor end.
2. 'Tis Jesus the first and the last whose Spirit shall guide us safe home;
We'll praise him for all that is past and trust him for all that's to come.

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Benediction

Finally, brothers and sisters, rejoice! Strive for full restoration, encourage one another, be of one mind, live in peace. And the God of peace will be with you.

May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. (2 Corinthians 13:11-15)

This service was prepared by Ron Tiller, HopeNet SA