



Rejoice always is one of the shortest verses in all of scripture. It is also one of the most challenging. What did these words mean to a church community in transition? What do they mean for us today? In this five week series we will find joy in our past, our present and our future as we celebrate our progress and face our challenges.

### **Series Verse**

1 Thessalonians 5:16 "Rejoice Always."

### **Prayers**

Prayers have been written by GNJ pastors and staff members. They are available for use during worship, both printed and on screen, as best fits in your community.

### **Conversation Prompts**

Objects or pictures can evoke strong memories of joy. Throughout this series you can encourage the congregation to bring an object or photo that reminds them of a time of joy. We've included a conversation prompt for each week. In worship, you may make space for folks to share in groups of 2 or 3 about their item.

### **Hymnals/Song Books**

Traditional selections can be found in the United Methodist Hymnal (UMH), Faith We Sing (FWS) or Worship and Song (W&S). Contemporary selections can be using using Songselect through CCLI, or via Google or Youtube search.

**Music Resources from Eric Drew:** All sheet music and music resources for songs by Eric Drew are available for free download at [www.ericdrewmusic.com/free-resources](http://www.ericdrewmusic.com/free-resources).

## Week 1: Choose Joy, Happiness is not Enough

**Scripture Passage:** Philippians 4:4-9

**Prayer:**

Dear God,

Happiness is fleeting and temporal, but with You there is something deeper and everlasting. In You we find a joy we can carry with us because of who You are, Your faithfulness, and Your eternal love. Remind us of Your great character so our hearts may choose an attitude of joy and find the true happiness our soul longs for. Amen.

**Music:**

Traditional

Joyful, Joyful We Adore Thee UMH 89  
Blessed Assurance UMH 369  
Bless the Lord FWS 2013  
Hakuna Wakaita sa Yesu W&S 3036

Contemporary

Today is the Day (Lincoln Brewster)  
Again I Say Rejoice (Israel Houghton)  
All Around (Eric Drew)

**Conversation prompt:** Throughout this series, we'll invite you to bring something (an item, picture, or symbol) with you to worship. For the first week, please bring something that gives you joy.

## Week 2: Joy in Our Past

**Scripture Passage:** Psalm 126:2-3

**Prayer:**

Dear God,

As we reflect on our stories we find joy knowing You have been with us. Your guiding hand has seen us through and our faith, trust, and character have grown. We thank You for walking with us, for Your faithfulness in our lives, for never letting us down. You can transform our regrets and lost opportunities into constructive thoughtfulness. We rest assured knowing our past rests in Your sweet embrace, and for that we have joy. Amen.

**Music:**

Traditional

O God Our Help in Ages Past  
Amazing Grace UMH 378  
Spirit of Gentleness FWS 2120  
And Are We Yet Alive? (Eric Drew)

Contemporary

Jesus, You're the Center of My Joy (R. Smallwood)  
O Praise the Name (Hillsong)  
Center of It All (Eric Drew)

**Conversation prompt:** We invite you to bring in a photo or momenta from the past that brings you joy to share during worship.

## Week 3: Joy in the Struggle

**Scripture Passage:** James 1:2-3, 1 Peter 1:6-9

**Prayer:**

Dear God,

We know You are bigger than our struggles and hardships. Although our circumstances may change, You remain the same forever. Your love and care for us never dissipates and in You we have a sure thing. Draw us close to You so we may experience joy in the midst of our pain. Our present troubles won't last forever and behind the scenes they are achieving for us an eternal glory that outweighs them all. Amen.

**Music:**

**Traditional**

My Hope is Built on Nothing Less  
Spirit Song UMH 347  
Be Still My Soul UMH 534  
Cares Chorus FWS 2215  
I Believe (Mark Miller)

**Contemporary**

Lord, I Need You (Matt Maher)  
Always (Kristian Stanfill)  
Let the Peace (Housefires)  
Trust in Your Name (Eric Drew)  
Holy Spirit Fall (Eric Drew)

**Conversation Prompt:** We invite you to bring something that represents a time of struggle in your life. This can be a symbol, relic, or an item.

## Week 4: Joy in Our Purpose

**Scripture Passage:** Matthew 13:44, Psalm 16:11

**Prayer:**

Dear God,

Thank You for making us each with specific qualities, interests, skills, and talents. We are a piece of Your artistic masterpiece; a member of Your magnificent orchestra. In You we have an unparalleled purpose. Help us to see ourselves from Your perspective so our hearts may find a purposeful everlasting joy. Amen.

**Music:**

**Traditional**

Here I Am, Lord UMH 593  
God of Grace and God of Glory UMH 577  
The Summons FWS 2130  
We Are Called FWS 2172  
Sent Out in Jesus' Name FWS 2184

**Contemporary**

Happy Day (Tim Hughes)  
You are Good (Israel Houghton)  
Oceans (Where Feet May Fail)  
We Will Be Bold (Eric Drew)

**Conversation Prompt:** We invite you to bring something that helps describe your purpose.

## Week 5: Joy in Things Hoped For

**Scripture Passage:** Jeremiah 29:10-13, Romans 12:12

**Prayer:**

Dear God,

Help us to pray expectantly like children who trust and rely upon You. The journey of life has led us this far and we know that You're not finished and greater things are yet to come. Although the future is unclear, we're certain in our uncertainty, and cling to You as we continue on into the unknown. Thank You for being with us, for Your trustworthy and unchanging faithfulness. Because of this we have joy for the future. Amen.

**Music:**

Traditional

Contemporary

Standing on the Promises UMH 374

All My Days W&S 3011

Hymn of Promise UMH 707

10,000 Reasons (Matt Redman)

Grace Alone FWS 2162

Yes and Amen (Chris Tomlin)

Welcome W&S 3152

Song of Praise (Eric Drew)

**Conversation Prompt:** We invite you to bring an object or picture that helps you rejoice and celebrate in where God is calling you forward.