

ENTERING THE RETREAT

- Settle yourselves comfortably...
- Let your thoughts and feelings come to rest...
- Let yourself be drawn fully into God's presence. He is here with us now...
- Ask yourself: "What is the special gift from God that you would like from this retreat?"
- What is it that you want? (...WAIT in silence.....)
- As we come to the Lord this weekend, we come expectantly and prayerfully. We have laid aside these two days so as not to be busy but rather reflective: prayerfully waiting for God to move and speak.
- God is faithful as we wait for his initiative and his timing.
- A retreat is a time to let go, to rest, to become still and to relax so as to be attentive for God's will and way for you. It is really a time to take a vacation with the Lord.
- As each person begins to quieten internally and externally, it is important to be silent – for your own sake and for the sake of others. Silence – a fast from words – allows our caring God an opportunity to communicate personally and at depth with each of us.
- We will have 4 specific topics over the 2 days with a short presentation to introduce each topic followed by a longer time for you to reflect on it.
- Try to keep in harmony with the retreat by relaxing, reading the Scripture texts, reflecting, sleeping, enjoying nature, going for a walk in nearby parks, listening to music, and painting...
- Times for socializing will be over meals only. The remainder of the time we request that you spend in silence before the Lord: expecting and allowing Him to lead and help you. Be considerate of others need for silence.
- A suggestion is that you approach the retreat with an attitude of true leisure. It will be something enjoyable, surprising, something of a discovery of how God is in your life, and that God will make it evident if given the chance to speak. So begin the retreat with a holiday frame of mind – often a necessary attitude if one is indeed more fatigued than one suspects!

1. ORIGIN / CALL

MUSIC:

SCRIPTURE * Read Mark 6:30-32

SONG or POEM: * Be still for the presence of the Lord...

PRAYER: * Prayer (from Scripture – Psalm 46:10)

IMAGERY: Buds on a branch – to open on Sunday
Expectancy / Life

INTRODUCTION TO FIRST TOPIC:

Come with deep thankfulness to the Lord Almighty.

God made you.

God met you.

God nurtured you.

God called you.

Draw near to Him now and allow Him to meet you...

NOW GIVE OUT AND PRAYERFULLY READ THROUGH THE HANDOUT
TOGETHER

Explain that this sheet is only a guide for your thoughts.

EXPLAIN THE PAINTS PROCESS and the sharing of paintings in small groups.
Give time, location and leader of each small group.

GOAL of session

YOU ARE SPECIAL!

Gratitude to God for creating us, meeting us personally
and calling us into his service.

We come into the presence of God with gladness.

**Before I formed you in the womb
I knew you;
Before you came to birth
I consecrated you.**

Jeremiah 1:5

You were called into life at a special time,
in a special place.

You were given a family and a position in it that is uniquely yours.

As you grew through your years of childhood and adolescence
into adulthood,
you were nurtured and formed in a culture
that gave you a sense of rightness and belonging...
and you met the Lord along the way.

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**Yahweh said to Abraham,
“Leave your country,
your family and your father’s house for the land
I will show you.”**

Genesis 12: 1

You too were called from your home,
your family, from all that was familiar
to another place and another people.

Like Abraham,
you stepped out in faith and hope
into the unknown in obedience to God.

Recall the place of your birth,
the people amongst whom you grew up,
the landscape that formed your worldview.

Let memories come to you of God’s call to you
to go to another country.

What feelings are awakened in you
as you think of your place of origin, the people who nurtured you
and the call of God to serve him?

Express in colour the feelings that these memories evoke.

2. GIFTS / STRENGTHS

MUSIC: Celebrate!

SONG or POEM:

PRAYER

BIBLE: "He made some to be apostles, some prophets, some..."

IMAGERY: Ethnic cloth in Western wrapping as a gift.

INTRODUCTION

This is a time for celebration. A time to revisit significant moments in your life when you have known God's anointing: His blessing on your life and ministry.. Take time now to allow God to remind you of joyous or richly meaningful occasions whilst you were overseas: times when you sensed God's delight in you and you delighted in God's world, His coming Kingdom or the work God gave you to do.

READ PRAYERFULLY THROUGH HANDOUT TOGETHER

GOAL of session:

- Celebrate God's goodness
- Celebrating the times of giving & receiving overseas : giving of ourselves and receiving from our time in another culture.

**God created humankind
in His own image.
In the image of God they were created:
male and female God created them.**

Genesis 1.27

God made you.
You are unique.
He equipped you and gave you strengths.

Beyond your imagining
you were given new awarenesses of yourself,
of others and of the world.

There were moments when these discoveries
filled you with significance and joy.

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**We were determined to share with you
not only the gospel of God
but our very selves:
that is how dear you had become to us!**

1 Thess 2:7-8

Your time in another culture has been a gift to you
and you have been a gift to those who received you.

What are these special gifts that you have received
and that you have given in this time of exchange?

- the gifts of friends, of family, the gift of ministry,
the opportunity of experiencing the beauty of God's earth.

Let the memories come to you of happy and grace filled moments
of your time in another culture.

Remember God's goodness.

Celebrate in colour the gifts and strengths
you have given and received whilst overseas.

3. TROUBLES / FEARS

MUSIC:

SONG or POEM:

PRAYER: Psalm – The miry clay

IMAGERY: Candle
Dead branch
Cross

INTRODUCTION

We are pilgrims on a journey. “It is tempting for some to be glib about suffering: especially if we suffer for Jesus’ sake. Indeed we may think it our “Christian duty” to deny affliction and to rush toward joy, forgetting that a dark and somber thread runs through joy. The apostle Paul felt despair ... yet faith can survive it. Uncomfortable as it is, there is a time when we must let loss be loss, let desert be desert. There is no denial. The rocks there are real...

Yet one of the great and most obvious fruits of loss is simplification. As the extraneous falls away, priorities change; the essential, what really matters, stands out in sharp relief.” Adapted from “Towards Holy Ground”

READ PRAYERFULLY THROUGH THE HANDOUT

GOAL of session

Facing and naming the fears, difficulties, failures, doubts.

**In the beginning
when God created
the heavens and the earth,
the earth was a formless void
and darkness covered the face of the deep
while a wind from God
swept over the face of the deep.**

Genesis 1: 1- 2

This, too is your story.
At times you have been engulfed in total darkness.
Yet all the while,
the breath of God
blows creatively over the chaos.

The invitation to growth is sometimes through
our most painful experiences of loss and
grief, of failure and abandonment, of lostness.

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**We should like you to know
how serious was the trouble that came upon us
in the province of Asia.
The burden of it was far too heavy for us to bear,
so heavy that we even despaired of life.**

2 Cor 1: 8

Our deepest fears can trouble us:
- that we are or were inadequate,
- that we dare not feel the loss,
Or examine the guilt, the grief, the trouble too closely.

Look again at your time in another culture.
Remember the moments of darkness and desolation.

Maybe dark clouds have hung heavy and low since your return.
But you are not giving up. How could you?!

Trust in God's Spirit hovering over you
as you face the darkness and the void.

Dare I give colour to my difficulties, doubts and fears?

COMMUNION

The suggestion is that we have communion at this point before lunch on Sunday.
This would enable people to

Focus on the cross of Christ and his saving power.
Surrender their doubts/fears/troubles to God.
Have prayer for release for each participant.

Laurence is happy to lead Communion.

4. VISION for FUTURE

MUSIC:

SONG or POEM:

BIBLE Isaiah 58:11
 Lam 3:21-24

PRAYER:

IMAGERY: Hand with person lying safe.
 Buds in bloom

READ THROUGH AND EXPLAIN HANDOUT
Don't let the past strangle the future.

GOAL of session
Putting oneself back into God's hands.
Future hope

**Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth
and I heard a loud voice from the throne saying,
“See, the home of God is among mortals.
The Holy One will dwell with them as their God
and they will be God’s people.
Yes, God himself will be with them
wiping every tear from their eyes.**

**Then the One who was seated on the throne said,
“See I am making all things new.”**

Revelation 21: 1,3,5

The God of HOPE is with us.
He walks along beside us showing us mercy
and pointing us to the true and living way to live.

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**I alone know my purpose for you,
says the Lord:
wellbeing and not misfortune,**

Jer 29:11-13

There is a vision, a dream that motivates your choices
and keeps you moving ahead.

God will give you the desire of your heart
as you seek Him.

What has God been saying to you
as you have re-entered this culture and
reflected this weekend?

What is that direction,

the special gift from God which you seek?

Make visible in colour the beauty and power of your dream.