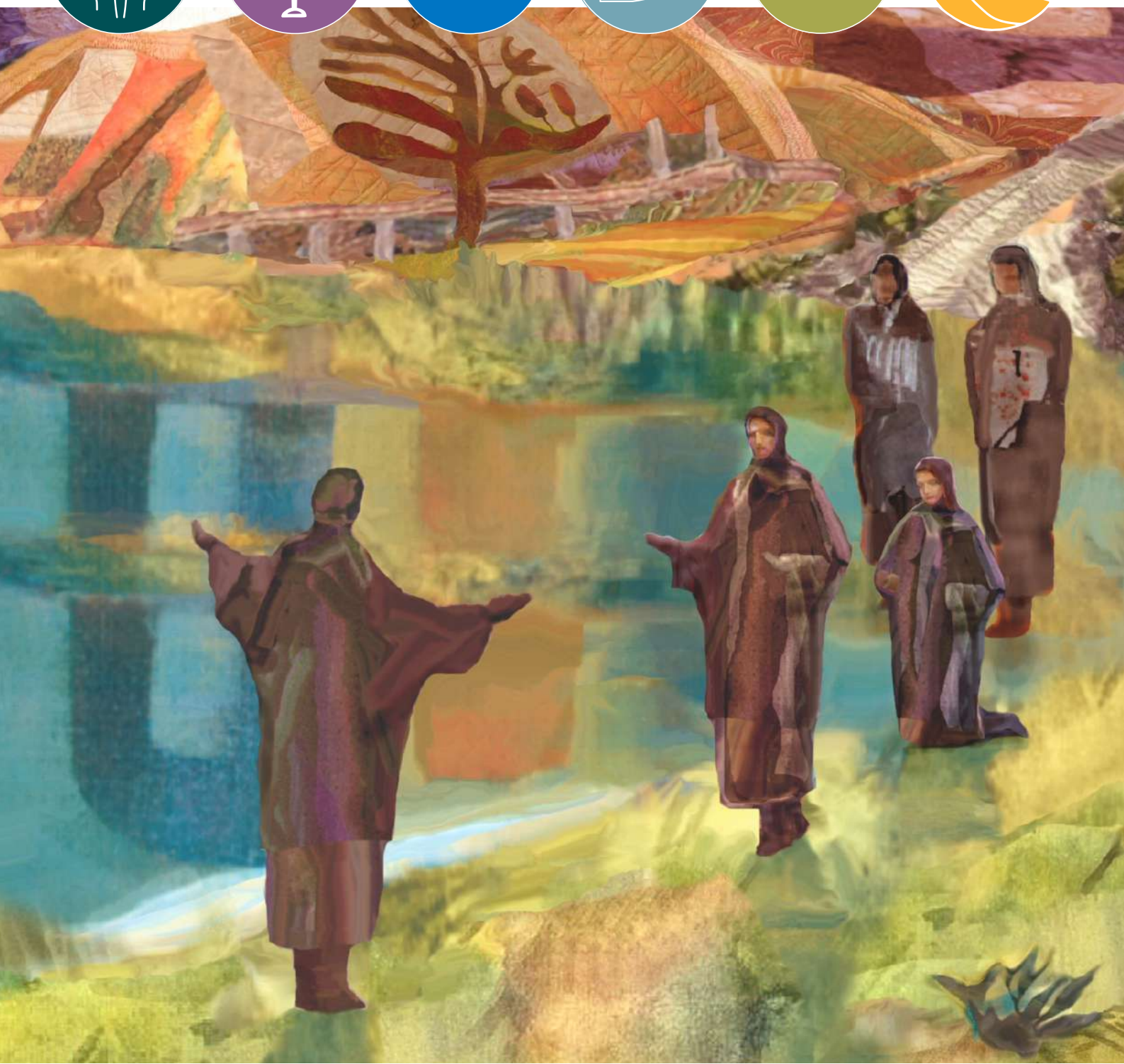


# RHYTHM OF LIFE

## REFLECTIONS



*"Abide in me as I abide in you. If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask for whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit and become my disciples." - John 15.4, 7-8*

## WHAT IS A RHYTHM OF LIFE?

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As followers of Jesus we are all called to live and grow as disciples. We are invited to abide in the presence of God, to be nurtured as we sit in Christ's company, to grow inwardly and give outwardly, enabling us to live Christ's story in our day-to-day lives.

If we are to live Christ's story and be part of a growing and flourishing church across the whole of the Diocese of York, then we need to abide in Christ. A Rhythm of Life is a framework, a pattern of holy living which helps us to become more like Christ. It is a simple commitment to specific actions that can help to focus on our faith and release us to live more fruitfully.

Based around six actions that Jesus asked us to do, our Rhythm of Life invites every individual and every community to adopt these patterns of holy living to abide in Christ and become more like him. We hope that each of us can adopt these habits, and that every church will teach them so that we can all grow as missionary disciples of Christ.

"My hope is that by engaging in this series of talks we can think more about how we can live and work together across the diocese in all our parishes, schools and communities by sharing a simple Rhythm of Life. It recalls us to our primary vocation to be people of prayer, people who gather around the Word, people who worship God, and people who let these things overflow into every part of our life, shaping who we are and therefore shaping the world around us."

*The Most Revd and Rt Hon Stephen Cottrell  
Archbishop of York*



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# REGULARLY PRAYING AND READING THE BIBLE

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**The Right Revd Dr Eleanor Sanderson**

Bishop of Hull

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Becoming more like Christ is God's greatest, most joyful gift to us all. Each of the coming weeks in this study will focus on the Christ-like shape of our lives in different ways. All of these aspects of discipleship are rooted in abiding in the presence of God through prayer. Having these regular patterns of prayer might look different to each of us, but a good place for us all to ground ourselves is in the prayer that Jesus gave us – the Lord's Prayer.

The main reason why we have the Lord's Prayer is because Jesus' disciples asked him to teach them how to pray. That is an important inspiration for us when we desire to become more like Christ. It inspires us to be humble and teachable, and also to be courageous and hungry to grow in our Christ-like maturity; to want to pray like Jesus.

The prayer that Jesus gives us, the Lord's Prayer, can shape all our prayers, because in the words of this prayer Jesus gives us clarity about who God is and who we are, he gives us a framework of intercession and he gives us a prayerful anchor for our daily lives.

I want to focus on three different ways that we can pray the Lord's Prayer, as a way of giving us just a taste of the wealth and the riches that can lie within it – in the hope that this can help us develop patterns of prayer for our daily lives. Those three ways of praying the Lord's prayer are: contemplation; discerned intercession; and proclamation.

Firstly contemplation. To put it bluntly, contemplation, simply means, thinking about something. When words are familiar to us, they can sometimes lose their power and meaning. Contemplation slows us down, and asks us to dwell upon and wonder at the meaning behind the words that we are given to pray.



When we contemplate the Lord's Prayer we come first to the words 'our Abba', Father. We have a father, we have a heavenly Father, we are children who are encouraged to say Abba, Father, a Father who wants to hear our prayers. Contemplating on the Lord's Prayer helps to move that knowledge from our lips, to our heads, to our hearts and to our lives. Each aspect of the Lord's Prayer invites us to dwell on the truth that Jesus gives us in this prayer.

For example, that in Christ, God gives forgiveness, that we are forgiven and that we ourselves forgive. To dwell slowly and deeply on that truth in a society culture shaped by blame and shame, daily coming to this truth and dwelling deeply within it is important.

Contemplation leads us into adoration. Our heart and our lips say thank you Jesus, thank you for your goodness, thank you for your intimacy, thank you for your grace, thank you for your power, thank you that this is who you are, thank you that I am your child, thank you.

The second way that the Lord's Prayer can help build our life of prayer is to pray the Lord's Prayer in active relationship with God in daily discernment for intercession – continuing to ask and answer that question, 'Jesus, teach me how to pray'. We can do this in two ways. Firstly, the daily liturgies and offices of prayer, in their rich variety, have, as their cornerstone, the Lord's Prayer. One of the liturgical options in the New Zealand prayer book that has shaped my adult life, is a morning and evening set of daily devotions framed around each line of the Lord's Prayer. They gather together scripture and reflections around the different themes within the Lord's Prayer. That then encourages and holds us in a flow of intercession for our world, for our church and for ourselves. Throughout centuries of Jesus' disciples and around the world, we have the gifts of prayerful liturgies that lead us into deeper intercession anchored in this prayer that Jesus taught us.

Another way that the Lord's Prayer can lead us into deeper intercession is to bring ourselves, our family, our world, the issues that face – to bring all these things – into the prayerful presence of God and to offer the Lord's Prayer as a means of discerning how to intercede. For example, any part of our lives and our world where God's Kingdom has not yet fully come on earth as it is in heaven (which is quite a lot!) can be brought to God and with the same humble posture of those first disciples that said, 'teach me how to pray'. We can pray the Lord's Prayer with that same request, that same teachable heart, and invite Jesus to draw attention to what in particular may be the need of further petition or intercession. Is there a particular part of the Lord's Prayer that Jesus puts his finger on for us as we pray? Does Jesus counsel us with patience in a time of



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endurance, or does Jesus convict us to ask for what we need, or does Jesus highlight where greater grace is needed?

This one prayer can lead us into multiple prayers of greater discerned petition and intercession with our heavenly father. This can be in an extemporary prayer, or in liturgical formation, both leading us into deeper maturity and deeper intercession.

And thirdly, the Lord's Prayer can be a prayer of proclamation. We can feel confident that this was a prayer that Jesus prayed in Aramaic, but in the Greek, in which the prayer is recorded, it is interesting that the grammar used is less a question mark and more an exclamation mark. From that I believe Jesus at times very clearly invites us to proclaim the truth of the Lord's Prayer powerfully and assertively. Prayer changes things. Prayer changes us. Prayer changes our world. There are moments when we stand in the truth proclaimed in prayer and things change. So, there are times when I think heaven delights to hear us proclaim:

Our Father who is in heaven, hallowed, holy, be your name, your Kingdom will come, your will will be done on earth as it is in heaven, you give us this day our daily bread, you forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us, you do not lead us into temptation, you save us from the time of trial and you deliver us from evil, for yours is the Kingdom, yours is the power and yours is the glory, now and forever. Amen!  
Proclaiming the Lord's Prayer is a powerful birthright for the children of God.

So – contemplation leads us into adoration; discerned petition and intercession develops our lives into ever maturing relationship with Jesus; proclamation develops our power and agency with and in God. It helps us to own the truth that Jesus gives us.

Finally, one really important part of the Lord's Prayer is the word 'daily'. Jesus lived a life of prayerfulness and all of us who follow Jesus are invited into a life of prayer. Jesus prays for us without ceasing. To pray the Lord's Prayer in any way first requires us to make time to be with God in our daily lives – and that is the commitment we want to make to each other and for each other.





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# QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

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**Who has taught you how to pray?**

**Which part of the Lord's Prayer has the greatest impact on you?**

**What will you do differently to live out this rhythm of developing patterns of prayer and bible reading in your daily life?**



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# BEING PART OF THE WORSHIPPING LIFE OF YOUR CHURCH

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**The Most Revd and Rt Hon Stephen Cottrell**  
Archbishop of York

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"You don't need to go to church to be a Christian" is the popular cry of those who probably think being a Christian is all about being good – we'll come back to that later – and who, of course, often don't go to church themselves.

And hearing this, some of us who do go to church find ourselves wondering whether we've got it wrong. After all, these people who don't go to church seem to be as good as us. And, inevitably, Church is for all of us, sometimes, irritating, petty and mundane.

In fact, in so many ways it's so much like the rest of life. It lets us down a bit. It's not quite what we hoped it would be. If only everyone was just like us.

So why do we go to church? Well, first all when we say 'church', what do we mean? Well, not a building. Nor a service. Nor a list of things to believe in. But a community of people – in fact, a bunch of very ordinary, yes, irritating, petty and mundane human beings, with a great tendency to get things wrong, and usually in a muddle, but somehow drawn together, not because we like each other or agree with each other, but because we have been impacted by the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and believe that, knowing him, and following in his way will make a difference to our lives, and a difference in the world.

In fact, we believe that the church is his body. And therefore, just as the elbow cannot say to the pancreas, I don't need you, so no one part of a body can be a body on its





own, and therefore, I can't be a Christian on my own. I need to be part of the body, part of the community. Even when I find it difficult. Perhaps, especially so. I need to see the church as me and us. Not you and them. I need to be part of it.

I also need to be faithful to the things Jesus gives me and the things that he asked me to do to know him and remember him and follow in his way. Central to that is our fellowship with one another, and with God, in the one service that Jesus himself gave us, namely the Eucharist, or as we tend to call it in the Church of England, the Holy Communion. That service, where in sharing bread and wine, we visibly and tangibly express our commitment and belonging to each other and to God.

There are, of course other acts of worship, and, of course, all worship is offered to God in thanksgiving – that's what the word Eucharist means – and involves breaking open the word of God, the bible, as well as the sacramental bread of communion. And all worship begins with an acknowledgement that we all fall short; that we all need God's grace and forgiveness. That's why being a Christian isn't about being good. I hope we strive to be good, of course I do – but I am a Christian not because of my goodness, but because of God's love and mercy to me in Jesus Christ. I am just a sinner taking the cure.

One of my greatest predecessors, William Temple, described worship as “quickening the conscience by the holiness of God; feeding the mind with the truth of God; purging the imagination by the beauty of God; opening the heart to the love of God; devoting the will to the purpose of God – and all this gathered up in adoration, which is the most selfless emotion of which our nature is capable.”

Let me put it rather less elegantly. Some people say that dogs sometimes grow to look like their owners. Worship works in the same way. It changes us. We become like the thing we adore. We become more like Christ, the one we worship.

In the Diocese of York, we are called to live Christ's story together, and if that togetherness is to bear fruit in our lives, in our homes and families, in our communities and places of work, and in the world, then it must be rooted in our common worship. Each of us needs to think carefully and intentionally about what it means for us to be faithful in that worship. Firstly, by developing disciplined patterns of attendance; but also thinking about how we can contribute to the life of worship, and also developing new ways of worshipping which will reach out in new ways to those who do not yet know Christ.

Worship isn't just what sustains a Christian life, it is one of the ways in which we commend that life to others, inviting them to be part of the story too.



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# QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

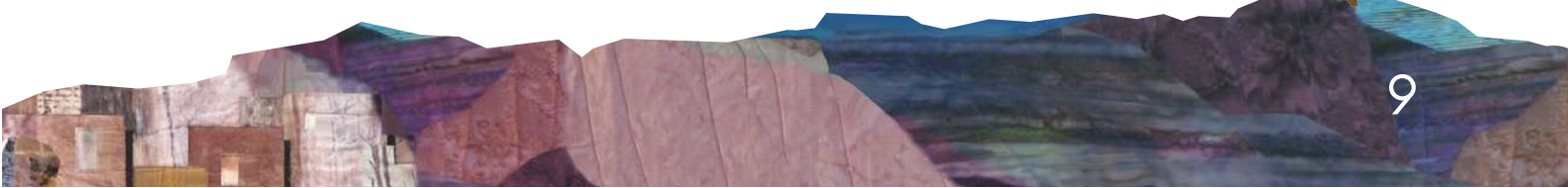
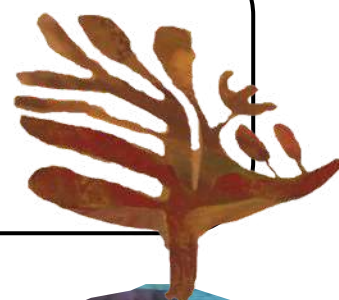
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**What do you think worship is, and what is it for?**

**What is the right pattern of attendance for you to stick to, and your contribution to worship?**

**What gifts and experiences do you have to bring, and what part is God calling you to play in the worshipping life of your local church?**



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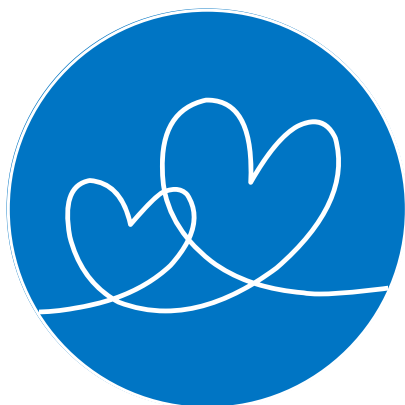
# LOVING ONE ANOTHER

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**The Right Revd Paul Ferguson**

Bishop of Whitby

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Having grounded ourselves in being people of prayer and abiding in the presence of God's Word, and how we fruitfully embody being part of the worshipping lives of our churches, this third part of our Rhythm of Life explores a movement of our faith overflowing into action, loving one another as Christ loves us, with grace and humility.

I sometimes wonder what it would have been like to spend time with Jesus those almost 2000 years ago. The Bible tells us about the twelve disciples – his closest group of men – and we get some tantalising hints about a wider number of followers, women and men, and people such as his friends Mary, Martha and Lazarus.

Jesus walked and talked with these people, he taught them, prayed with them and inspired them by what he said and did. Sometimes, the Bible tells us, he spoke to them sharply and put them back on the right track. What would we have seen and said and done?

This comes to a focal point for me in John's gospel. He gives us a very special and very full picture of Jesus speaking and praying with his disciples on the night before he is put to death. Early on in that very intense session we read this: [Jesus says] 'I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another.'

Now there's a bit of me that would want to say back to Jesus 'Just hang on a moment! This isn't a new commandment. The old Jewish scriptures tell us that we must love God with all our heart and soul and strength, and our neighbour as ourselves. You've quoted them yourself. So how is this new?'

But then I imagine Jesus looking at me and saying 'No, the part you missed out, Paul, is that I said you must love one another just as I have loved you.'

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If we think of the Gospel story as a whole, then we see how everything that Jesus did is part of a great programme of love. It doesn't come and go from minute to minute or day to day. When we experience Good Friday, there's nothing that can compare with that amazing climax point of Jesus's love when he gives himself up to death on the cross for the sake of the world, and the opening-up of hope for eternity that comes with the first Easter Day. Even though, obviously, it's before his death when Jesus says 'just as I have loved you', what he's putting into words then is all of a piece with the story of what has happened to that point, and what will happen. Jesus's love for his disciples is more than being kind to them — though he does call them his friends — and it goes deeper than doing loving things for them — though there was that time when he shocked his disciples by getting down on the floor and washing their dirty feet, to show them that loving and serving one another busts straight through ways of thinking that have to do with status.

Christ's story of love is the best and most powerful story the world has ever known. And for us, 'living Christ's story' of love and embracing this fully in our Rhythm of Life means connecting with his limitless love, and becoming more like Christ by committing ourselves to love in a more Christ-like way. It is an integral part of this rhythm of holy living, as it is the catalyst which overflows into every other value of lived-out-faith and fruitful living. This love goes far beyond choosing the people we like and doing them favours. It's even in a different league from the feelings we have towards our family. It means seeing each person, even the people we don't like and the people who would do us harm, as someone whom God loves and someone for whom Jesus was ready to die. And if that idea shocks us a bit, well maybe it should.

Now one of the great things about that kind of love is that it doesn't need to come with a great fanfare. It's a love that gives of self, it is relentlessly aimed at the good of the other, and it's often hidden from wider sight.

I'm hugely inspired by the work of Whitby lifeboat station, and I do think of what the crew offer as something that's an image of Christlike love. When people are in trouble at sea it makes no difference who they are or what mistakes they've made: they just need rescuing, and the crew go out to them knowing that they may be putting themselves in harm's way to do what's needed.

So love that's modelled on what we see in Jesus isn't just to do with emotions and how we happen to feel, because it may be that bringing love to a situation is a deliberate and costly act of will. It can be risky. It might need a big change of mindset to forgive or to accept forgiveness. Love can take the form of a single action or it can be hard work over a long period. Its companions are truth and justice and its training course is prayer.

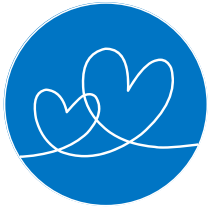


There may be times when we realise we've been able to offer that Christlike love, and there will surely be times when we know we've received it.

We all know that the world is a tough place and it's easy to think that it's short of love. We might hear voices from inside us or around us, saying that it's naïve or a waste of time. But living out Christ's story of love and embodying it as part of our Rhythm of Life in whatever way we're able to do, brings about a real change and transformation. In all this, we are inviting everyone to consider what this looks like in practice in each of our everyday lives, helping us to move from love being something that we do to something integral to who we are by becoming more like Christ. We could say that this love is the currency of the Kingdom of Heaven. 'By this everyone will know that you are my disciples,' said Jesus, 'if you have love for one another.'



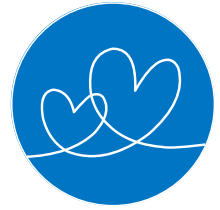




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# QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

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**If we'd been in that room and heard Jesus's words, what would our reaction be?**

**When have we found it easy or harder to offer the kind of love we see in Jesus?**

**What can we do in our daily lives, as part of building a Rhythm of Life, in response to God's Invitation and commandment for us to love one another?**



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# LIVING GENEROUSLY

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**The Right Revd Dr John Thomson**  
Bishop of Selby

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I'll never forget Maimoona Jaffar. She was a class mate at primary school and was often bullied for her size, but she showed me what generosity looked like. I had forgotten my juice and biscuit for our mid-morning break and got a rollicking from the teacher who told me I would have to miss out. When the teacher's back was turned Maimoona slipped me one of her delicious biscuits under the table.

As we each grow in Living Christ's Story, the next element of our Rhythm of life is embedding the pattern of living generously. As with love, this rhythm of holy living is about how we live out our faith, having taken time in our space of abiding to discern what generosity looks like in our lives – continuously seeking to go deeper as we embody Jesus' model of sacrificial and joyful generosity which seen most when we give to those who can give us nothing back – the poor.

This is at the heart of our Christian faith, seen in the gift of Christ, the gift of Creation and the gift of the Church.

## **The Gift of Christ**

Christ is God's generosity in the flesh. His story is all about self-giving, self-forgetful, self-emptying love, as the Christ Hymn in Philippians 2 puts it. This story is God's story since, as Paul says in Colossians 1.19, 'Christ is the fullness of God', or as the late Bishop David Jenkins put it, 'God is as he is in Jesus, therefore we have hope!' Jesus' story of generosity is God's story of generosity, a generosity which offers everything even to death out of love for the world. It is love which refuses to force people into line but is open to being rejected. We see what this sort of generous love looks like as Jesus lives the Nazareth Manifesto of Luke 4 which speaks of the poor, the captives, the blind and the oppressed as central to his mission – all central to our calling of a Rhythm of generous love.



In this commitment to share God's generosity with the poor, Jesus embodies the call of Israel as the true Israelite. Israel is constantly challenged to demonstrate the love of God by the way they relate to those with no power in their society – the economically and socially poor, widows, orphans and aliens. Jesus does this as he feeds the hungry, heals the sick, sets free those bound by forces of darkness, brings blessing to widows and welcomes children. He challenges those in his society to do the same as we read in Luke 14, 'when you give a banquet invite the poor, the crippled, the lame and the blind and you will be blessed because they cannot repay you!' This is the test of real love for us today, and what our Rhythm of generosity looks like, rather than giving only to those who can give us something back!

### **The Gift of Creation**

For Christians, generosity is at the heart of creation. Creation is a gift since God is not compelled to create, and he entrusts that gift into our care. In this act of generosity God makes a world in which love is possible, albeit with all the costs that rejecting this love brings. Indeed creation is stitched through with generosity and abundance even in deserts as they teem with life and possibility. Creation represents God's disinterested delight, a gift with no stings attached since, as Jesus says in the Sermon on the Mount, the rain rains equally on the just and the unjust. However, creation is a gift which brings a challenge to humans as those made in the image of God. The challenge is to treasure this gift as trustees rather than to use this gift to extract value simply for ourselves. Our Rhythm of living generously is to ensure that all share in the blessings of creation, to live generous lives which tread lightly on the earth and bless our neighbours who include animals and plants. This is why living generous lives involves living green lives and green lives mean that life is better for those with least.

### **The Gift of the Church**

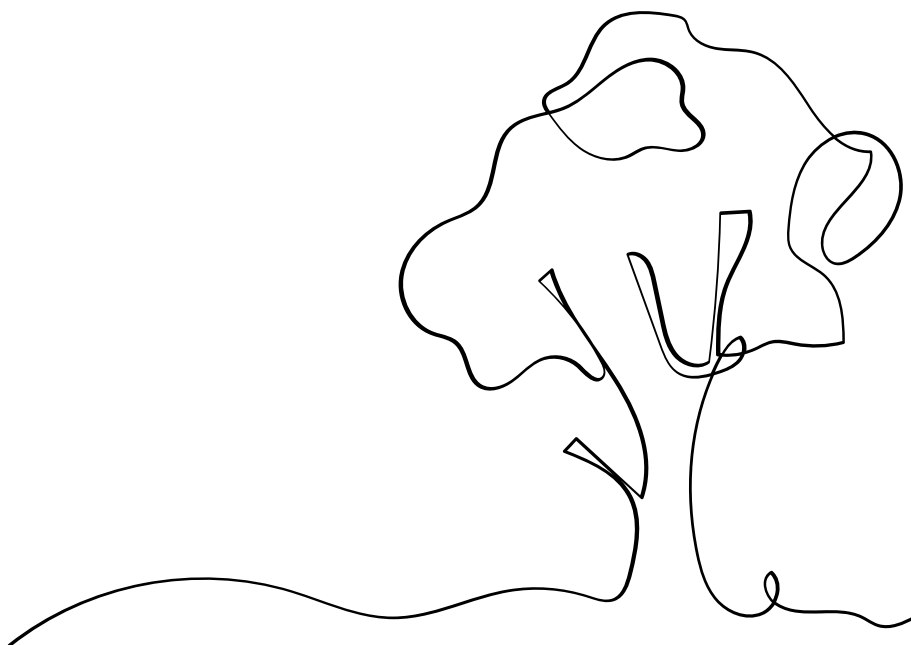
So as we seek to live Christ's story as his Body, the Church, our challenge is to embody generosity in all that we are and do and in particular to test how generous we are by how we relate to those who can give us nothing back, the poor. Such generosity is not so much doing things for the poor but being with and walking with the poor in ways that enable them to have increasing agency or power to take responsibility for their own lives. I deeply admire the work and ministry on the Flaxley Road Estate, which is in one of the poorest wards in the Archdeaconry of York and where the Edge Community led by Church Army Evangelists have been walking with these communities for years. Simply being with the people is a sign of God's generosity and love. It is why as a Diocese we are committed to ensuring that there is ministry in our poorest communities. It is at the heart of the Mustard Seed agenda and fits within the overall commitment of the Church of England to ensure a Christian presence in every community. It's why St Paul in 2 Corinthians chapter 8 says that 'God loves a generous...a hilarious giver', that is God



loves people who give with joy, a theme at the heart of our own Freewill Offer approach.

In the ancient world, most regarded the poor as worthless and to be treated with contempt. Remarkably Israel and the Church proclaimed the opposite. The poor are just as much made in the image of God as anyone else. The generosity of God in creation and in the gift of Christ is for all but especially for the poorest. This was why St Lawrence described the poor as the treasures of the church and was martyred for this view by the Romans.

So as we seek to live Christ's story and build a Rhythm of Life into our lives, may the Lord help us to work out what living generously looks like to us in practice – treading lightly on the earth and giving a particular care for the poor, becoming more like Christ by giving most generously to those who cannot repay, and in so doing witnessing to the gifts of God in creation and in Christ.





# QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION



**In what ways does Christ's story challenge your understanding of generosity?**

**How could you treasure the gift of Creation by living more generously?**

**What practical ways does or could your Church walk with the poor in ways which embody the generosity of God we see in Jesus Christ?**





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# SHARING THE GOOD NEWS

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**The Right Revd Dr Eleanor Sanderson**  
Bishop of Hull

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As we continue our exploration of a Rhythm of Life, we now look at how we each share the good news to those around us. In our Christian lives, it's important that we began in a place of prayer, nurturing our own faith in order to then be equipped to share it with others.

I became a Christian in my teenage years and was baptised at age 19. Although I always had a sense of God growing up, and can share lots of different stories about the way that I was seeking God and that God was there calling to me, the most pivotal influence in me coming to faith was meeting Christians. It was that that changed my life. To this day I can tell you their names. Each one of those important people in those pivotal years. Some passing strangers, some deep friends. They were each a kind of vital steppingstone for me coming closer and closer to understanding the Gospel of Jesus Christ and making that decision myself to follow him.

When I look back, I don't think that any of them would have categorised themselves as natural evangelists. None of them had clever pre-thought-out answers to the questions that I was wrestling with. They all just seemed to honestly wrestle with me as I wrestled, but very simply and humbly say, each in their own way, that they had decided to follow Jesus and that that was the best and most important decision they had ever made. Given how significant other people's witness was for me, you would think that I would be enthusiastic to do the same for others. But I have to admit I really was not. I remember people praying for me in those early days and telling me that they thought that God had a real evangelist calling on me – and, honestly, I remember saying in my head, “no, no, no, please no, I don't want that, please not that!”



I don't think I am alone in admitting to that fear. This is why I love the simplicity given to us in Living Christ's Story: to be people who know the story of Jesus and who, as we share our lives with others, continue to witness to the power and love of Christ's ongoing story of redemption in our own lives.

As we grow in our Rhythms of Life, we want to help each other to be less afraid, and more confident and joyful in our witness. We witness by bringing together: presence and proclamation. Presence means that we are with people. Jesus is Emmanuel, he is God with us. We are with people, just as they are, just as we are. In a gospel of grace, just as Jesus is with us. God so loves, that God sends. As followers of Jesus, we choose to lose our lives by offering ourselves to God to be sent by him, to be sent to people God loves. We may be living in a particular place because God has asked us to do just that. Or we may not have ever relocated for the Gospel in our lives, but we are still surrounded by people, neighbours family and friends to whom we are called to bear witness. We are with people that God wants us to be witnesses of God's presence to.

Proclamation means that we tell the story of Jesus. Presence and Proclamation go together. We need both. Proclamation can feel a bit daunting sometimes, so this is how I have learnt to live into this witness. Our Gospel contains both certainty and mystery. There are things of which we are utterly certain. And there are things that are full of wonder and mystery. We are a disciple when we are learning. We witness by sharing what we have learnt and what we are learning about following Jesus, honestly and humbly.

So, we are with people – we are present. And we proclaim – we tell the certainty and the wonder of Jesus' story of salvation through the witness of our own desire to learn. We do both things in the context of real relationship. In genuine sincere loving relationships, we share how Jesus continues to be alive in our own lives. Our testimonies are powerful. I particularly want to reassure us that it can be equally powerful to share a testimony of wonderfully answered prayer as it is to share a testimony of grief and loss – seemingly unanswered prayer accompanied by the honesty of saying that our faith remains and our hope remains and our love remains in Jesus.

In my first year of being a Christian I had a spiritual dream. In this dream I was with Jesus and I was so pleased to see him because I wanted to show him something that I was excited about. I took his hand and I led him below the brow of a hill and under a thicket of bushes, I lifted up the branches and showed him this incredible light, that was glowing there safely hidden away. I looked at his face and his face didn't match the joy of mine – he looked sad. And I woke up.

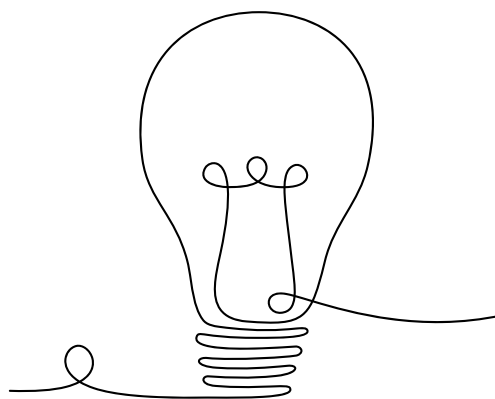


I didn't know many scriptures at all at this point in my life. In the coming weeks I read about the way that Jesus describes our faith in him as a light. A light that should be on the top of a hill. A light that shouldn't be hidden under something. And I thought about my dream and I understood what Jesus was telling me.

I wanted to hide my faith because I was scared that it would be broken by people who could argue better than me. I was scared of being mocked. I was scared of throwing away the things that this world values. I am not scared of those things anymore.

To explain why, I want to share a poem with you by the poet Leunig:

There are only two feelings.  
Love and fear.  
There are only two languages.  
Love and fear.  
There are only two activities.  
Love and fear.  
There are only two motives,  
two procedures two frameworks,  
two results.  
Love and fear.  
Love and fear.  
Amen.



God asks us to be in partnership with him in witnessing his love in word and deed, in presence and proclamation, knowing both certainty and mystery and being both humble and courageous.

All this reminds me of the powerful image of a lighthouse. We have some of these in our diocese, known for the beacons of light which guide safe journeys. We celebrate the boldness of light and the light of God's love. Lighthouses, beacons are important markers in our land and coast. You and I are God's beacons, it is God's light, it is God's mission, because it is God's love. We simply have to choose to be available and allow ourselves to be witnesses of the love of God given to the world in friendship with Jesus. May the love of God embolden us to make that commitment to each other.



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# QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

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**Who has been an important witness to you in your faith journey?**

**What are you currently learning about following Jesus that you can share with others?**

**What would you like to do differently, particularly in relation to your own love and fear, to be a witness to Christ?**



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# ADOPTING REGULAR PATTERNS OF REST

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**The Most Revd and Rt Hon Stephen Cottrell**  
Archbishop of York

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Years ago, I remember seeing a bumper sticker on someone's car saying, 'On the seventh day, God went windsurfing.' It may have been meant as a joke, but I considered it a profound reflection on the meaning of Sabbath and the importance of rest. Moreover, I've always been intrigued by the fact that the climax of the creation story at the beginning of the book of Genesis is not the sixth day when humankind is created in the image of God, blessed by God, and given stewardship of the Earth, but the seventh, the sabbath, when we are told God rested, and that God, "Blessed the seventh day and hallowed it."

And I can't help but also notice that 'Keeping the sabbath day holy' is the fourth commandment. Therefore, I wonder to myself, whether the reason keeping the sabbath day holy became a commandment was because of our failure to receive it as a gift, and enter into and enjoy rest, and be refreshed by the gift of God's sabbath.

For we all need rest and refreshment. We all need replenishing.

As followers of Jesus Christ, this comes through prayer and worship, but it also comes from taking sabbath seriously. After all, if we broke the other commandments, we would undoubtedly feel guilty, know that we had crossed a line, and hopefully seek to make amends and accept the consequences in our lives. But many of us – most of us! – don't keep the sabbath day holy and don't expect there to be any consequences. In fact, we act as if we know better than God on this one.





Now don't misunderstand me, in a culture like ours we probably need to think about the principle of Sabbath, rather than being able to keep the whole of Sunday holy in the ways our forebears could. The world has changed, and though we may not like all the changes, we have to inhabit this culture, but with a different set of values. So many of us have to work on Sundays, and we have no choice about it. And we live in a 24/7, 365 days a week, very busy, very frantic, very driven culture. So, for us, taking hold of the Sabbath principle may mean building regular and disciplined times of refreshment into our lives each week, even if it isn't always on a Sunday. We do need to be very serious about our commitment to worship on Sunday wherever that is possible, but for some people, the main act of worship will have to be on another day, and that is okay.

In the gospels, we often see Jesus taking himself away from the disciples and away from the crowds. Usually this is to pray. For Jesus it is delight to spend time apart, and to spend time with the Father. It is in this replenishing relationship of love that Jesus receives the affirmation and energy he needs for his ministry in the world. But I also guess that sometimes it was just to rest and be refreshed. In the midst of the storm, the disciples find Jesus asleep in the stern of the boat.

As we build a Rhythm of Life across our diocese, and in so doing seek to become more like Christ, then we too must build disciplined rhythms of prayer, of worship, and also of rest and replenishing. We need to give time to the people we love, especially our family and friends, and also to the things that give us energy and life so that we can fully be the people we are meant to be.

Years ago, I remember a new Christian in the church where I was serving, telling me that she couldn't come to a meeting on Thursday evening because that was the night she went to her amateur dramatic group. A year or so later I noticed she was at Thursday evening meeting. I asked her whether her drama group wasn't meeting that evening. 'No', she said 'I've given that up now. I want to give more time to the church.'

Well, I applaud and welcome her desire to be more committed to the life of the church. But I also felt sad that she had given up the drama, because this was obviously something which gave her life, and also, of course, brought her into community and contact with many people outside the life of the church.

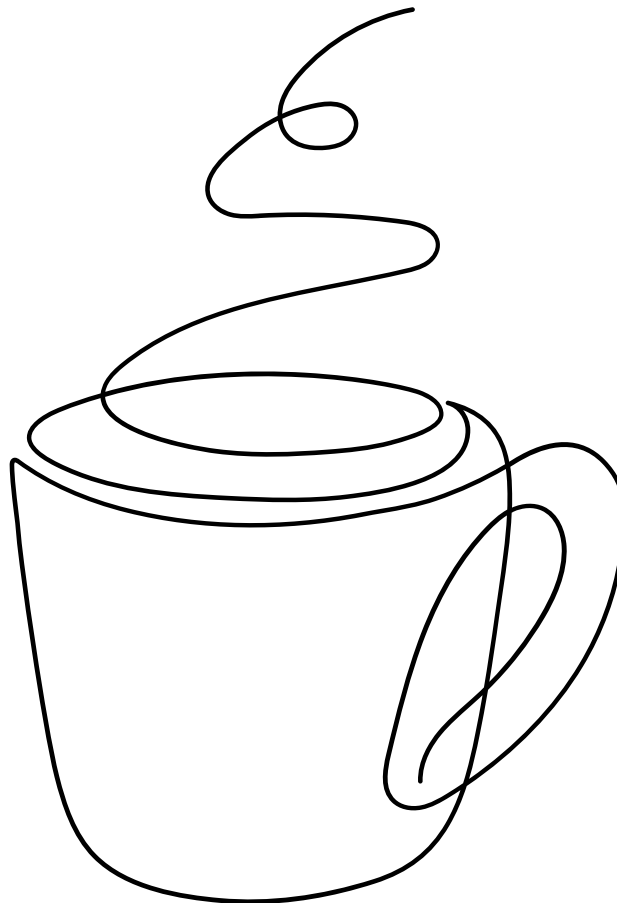
What we need is balance.

What we need are disciplined and set aside times for prayer, for worship, for rest, and for refreshment. And the Rhythm of Life we develop so that we might become more like Christ is not an end in itself, but in order that we might better share the love of Christ



and the beauty of the gospel with others; that it might be evident in the lives we lead, for as we become more like Christ we won't become less like ourselves. Rather, in Christ we will become the very best person we can be and Christ's light and goodness and beauty will shine in us and from us.

Because we live in such a frantic, driven and busy world, one of the best things we can offer is the simple beauty of rest and refreshment, and show what a priority it is in our lives – for ourselves, for our families, but also for the well-being of the church. We are called to show the world a better way, and we rest in the knowledge, security and affirmation of God's love.





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# QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

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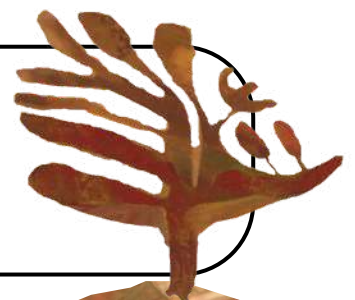


**Do you have a regular discipline of taking time off, just for the joy of being able to be replenished in yourself and your spirit?**

**Do you make time to be with your family and those you love a priority?**

**What are the things that give you energy and life, and how can you devote a bit more time to them so that you can fully be the person you are created to be?**

**What more could your church be doing to be a place of rest and replenishing for the community you serve?**





# PRAYER

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Loving God,  
we thank you for all the many blessings  
that you give us in Christ,  
and pray for our Diocese of York,  
all its people and parishes and communities.  
Help us to live and share Christ's story  
and to become more like Christ ourselves,  
for the building of your kingdom in the world,  
and so that Jesus may be known.  
And please, please, show us your way.  
For we ask it in the same Jesus Christ,  
our Lord and Saviour.  
Amen.



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