



Rhythm OF LIFE

TOOLKIT *FOR CHURCHES*



DIOCESE OF
YORK

www.dioceseofyork.org.uk



Rhythm OF LIFE

As churches across the Diocese of York discern a shared vision for Living Christ's Story, this Rhythm of Life offers us all a framework for living in a more Christlike way. Designed to be flexible and creative, the Rhythm of Life is for everyone - young and old, deep faith and explorers - and is shaped around seven things which we are called to as Christian people:



Prayer



Scripture



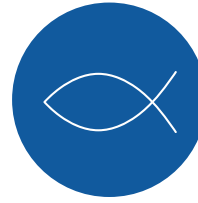
Worship



Love



Generosity



Sharing Faith

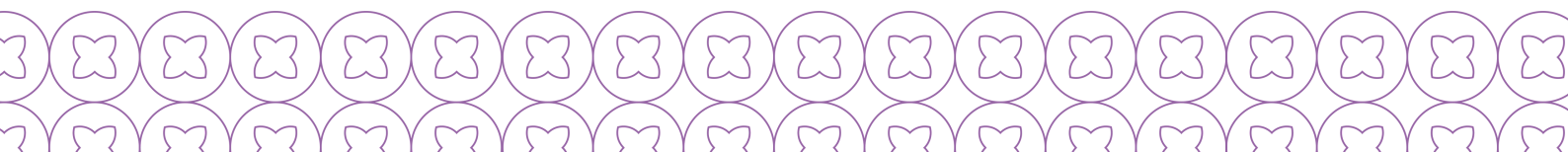


Rest

Rhythms of Life have been around for centuries, each tailored to their community but with a shared family likeness in how we live and grow in everyday faith. One of the most well-known is the Rule of Benedict, whose framework for living was primarily focused on how those in monasteries lived alongside each other. Patterns of living and ways of life have had many different titles over the years, and sometimes none at all, though they all seek to do the same thing which is to enable and encourage one another to express what we believe through the way we shape and order our everyday lives.

All of us already have a rhythm of life in some form, whether we realise it or not. Some will be secular patterns of rising with the sun, or watching a favourite TV programme each week. Others will be spiritual rhythms of prayer, worship, or gathering with our church community. Our values and behaviours are shaped by the communities we belong to.

In the Diocese of York, we seek to Live Christ's Story as a pattern of missional discipleship - in other words, the way we live is formed by following Jesus, and adopting particular spiritual habits along the way. This is our everyday faith, and our Rhythm of Life.





TOOLKIT FOR CHURCHES

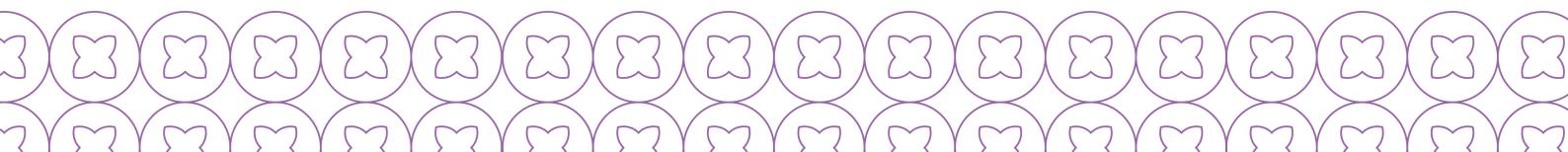
The Diocese of York's framework for a Rhythm of Life is for everyone - young and old, those exploring faith and those who have been a Christian for several decades, individuals and communities. We have Rhythms of Life in households, in places of work, in church communities, and in our personal lives. Whatever our Rhythm of Life is, as Christian people we grow *together*. Our churches are key places where we live alongside each other, and a shared Rhythm of Life is a part of how we can be intentional about growing in aspects of everyday faith.

This Toolkit is designed to help your church in a process of discernment, reflecting on what we already do well in enabling our community to grow in these aspects of faith, as well as prayerfully thinking about future opportunities to grow and develop in these areas together.

This process will take time, and prayer. You might want to do this as a quiet day, offering plenty of space for reflection, grounded in prayer and worship. It also might be that you want to reflect on this over a longer period of time, looking at two or three of the parts of the Rhythm of Life, then returning to look at the remaining parts on another occasion. The key is to take this at the pace which suits you and your church. At the end of the process, you may wish to discern three priorities to take forward, which you can make a note of on the last page.

Jesus said, "I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing. My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit and become my disciples. As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete."

John 15





PRAYER



Prayer is the foundation of our Christian faith. There are so many ways of praying - whether it be alone or with others, sharing a sacred space where we deeply connect with and grow in relationship with God. Praying regularly helps us to develop a spiritual rhythm, and changes the way that we think about our lives, because it creates new habits of heart and mind. As with any relationship, we learn to listen as well as speak, to give and receive in equal measure. Prayer can be wonderfully creative and simple, finding the patterns that work for us.

WHAT DO WE ALREADY DO?

As a church, how are we enabling our community to pray? There may be small groups which pray together, perhaps using resources guides to help delve into a particular season or topic. It might be that we have a notice board or WhatsApp group where communities share prayer requests, or organise prayer walks or prayer arts and crafts. We might have a culture of supporting people in their personal prayer lives, through prayer Apps, prayer partners or journaling.

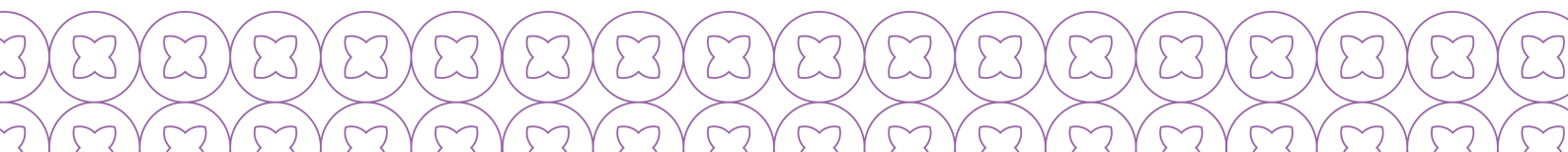
WHAT COULD BE?

How do we teach people in our community to pray? Are there any resources we want to use to help embed a culture of praying for and with one another?

A pattern of prayer isn't something we ought to do only when we're in church. How could we enable prayer in households, in places of work, or other regular parts of people's lives?

What are we praying for as a church community? Are there things we want to be more intentional about in our shared life of prayer?

NOTES





SCRIPTURE



The Bible is a space in which Christian people expect to encounter God – it is, in short, God's story. There are many ways in which we can engage with scripture – through reading and listening, through apps and collective study, and even through music. Throughout the Bible, God speaks to us through telling stories, and as we reflect on these they shape who we are as beings made in the image of God. We find ourselves in God's story, and learn then to live that story on earth. In our church communities, we can grow a culture of reading the Bible together, sharing a journey of discovery as we seek to live God's story and be shaped by scripture.

WHAT DO WE ALREADY DO?

There are many creative ways in which we encourage one another to engage with scripture. As a church, we frequently encounter scripture in our worship, through the reading of passages as well as in our liturgy and in the music we sing. Do we have small groups which explore the Bible together in prayer and discussion? It might be that we offer something seasonally to explore scripture during Lent or Advent, or have a culture of engaging well with scripture in households.

WHAT COULD BE?

Do we have a pattern of people gathering in small groups to be shaped by scripture together?

If so, is this something which needs growth, development or nurture?

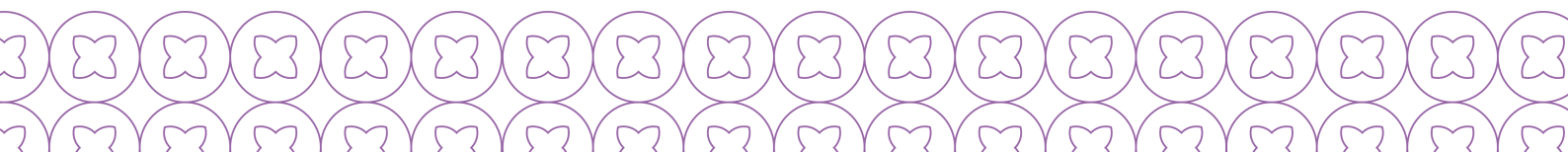
If not, is this something we could start?

There are so many opportunities for people to engage with digitally scripture.

Do we intentionally encourage this, and suggest apps such as Daily Prayer or Lectio 365?

Are there opportunities for us to have fun exploring scripture together, like Bible quizzes or musical meditations?

NOTES





WORSHIP



One of the definitive features of Anglican identity is our worship. As we gather, our words, music and action offers us the opportunity to express our faith, learn about God in a particular way, and to be formed by all that we encounter. Worship is therefore transformational – we meet with God, we're transformed by that encounter, and we're sent out as changed people. Enabling people to be part of the worshipping lives of our churches is also about belonging – as relational beings, we are invited into a community of faith, and that community is a place that we love, worship, pray, and grow together.

WHAT DO WE ALREADY DO?

Our churches will each have their own patterns of worship. What worship does our church offer?

Is it enriching and engaging? Do our patterns of worship help people to grow in their faith?

How do we go about planning worship, as well as communicate and invite? Do we enable people to be involved in planning and leading worship, and ensure that everything flows well together?

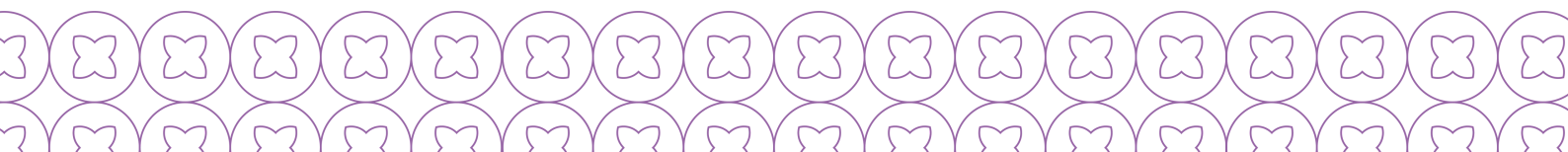
WHAT COULD BE?

Think about your context and community (both worshipping community and wider). What missional opportunities might there be to grow the pattern of worship you offer?

Are there any new patterns of worship you feel called to explore? Are there new occasional acts of worship we could begin, such as marking a day or a season, or an annual service celebrating a life event?

How might we enable people in our communities to deepen their spirituality of worship, such as understanding why we do what we do?

NOTES





LOVE



As disciples of Jesus, we are called to love one another. Loving one another points us to think about missional discipleship as we engage with social action, racial justice, radical hospitality and invitation. In our churches, we love one another by the welcome we offer, whether it is to someone who is new to the community or someone who has been worshipping with us for 60 years. It's important here also to think about what it means to love ourselves – as beings made in the image of God, perhaps one of our challenges is to consider what that love of ourselves and God within us looks like.

WHAT DO WE ALREADY DO?

If a visitor were to walk into our church, what would they see? Often if the people in a place are loving and welcoming, you can either see or experience it. It might be that there are regular invitations to share meals, or spaces reserved in buildings to give people space to talk. It might be that you have a culture of sharing the whole of life with those around you. Does our church community engage in projects for social action, or have a growing culture for seeking justice?

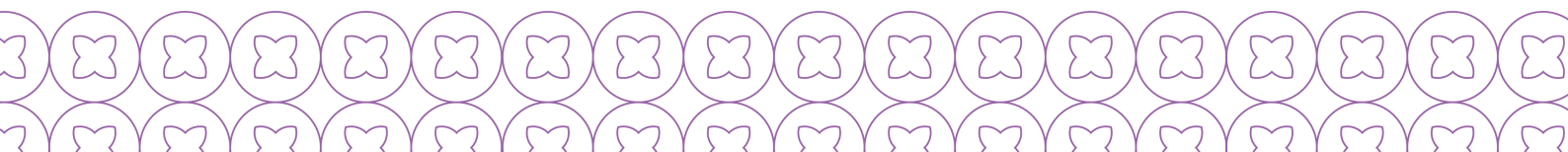
WHAT COULD BE?

Is there a place (such as small groups) where we can explore growing a culture of loving one another and ourselves well? Is there a pattern of hospitality and invitation that we could grow or develop?

Do we have people responsible for welcoming in our church? Spend some time thinking together about what that looks like, and physically what people see when they walk into your building.

Are there ways we could engage well with local needs, areas of social action, or intentionally grow a culture of racial justice through prayer and practical action?

NOTES





GENEROSITY



Generosity is at the heart of our God-given identity - we are created in the image of our generous God, so generosity is in our nature as well. At its best, it is a joyful outpouring of love. We express generosity in how we give of ourselves to the world around us, and our attitude towards that giving. The rhythm of generosity is grounded in a rhythm of gratitude - thankful people tend to be more generous people.

Generosity recognises our role as stewards of God's resources, and so practice of generosity is also about creation care and living in an eco-friendly and ethical way.

WHAT DO WE ALREADY DO?

Talking positively about generosity helps to shape a culture of living generously. It might be that our church has a pattern of preaching about giving and creation care, or are working towards becoming an Eco Church. We might have a policy of giving away a percentage of regular giving to named charities, which also helps missionally and in how we show love and support beyond our church walls. There might also be opportunities for people to give their time to our church, which is encouraged, affirmed and celebrated.

WHAT COULD BE?

When was the last time we preached or taught in some way about generosity?
Is there a resource we could engage with to explore the spiritual aspects of living generously?

Could our church work towards becoming a registered Eco Church?

How do we encourage individuals and households to reflect on how they live generously - are there ideas or practices we could encourage them to think about adopting?

NOTES





SHARING FAITH



Sharing our faith with others can sometimes appear daunting at face-value, but it is not as complicated as we might think. Sharing our faith with others can be a wonderfully freeing, creating and enjoyable thing to do, and often it is simply about finding the tools that enable us to open those doors. There are so many ways in which our very way of living exudes our faith and shines from us, what we might call our 'everyday faith' – as St Francis is famously attributed as saying, "Preach the gospel at all times; where necessary use words".

WHAT DO WE ALREADY DO?

There are many ways in which churches, individuals and communities share faith with others. It might be that there are stories of faith being shared in small groups, or as testimonies in worship. There may be a culture of invitation to things in the life of our church, that is to be celebrated. There might also be wonderful stories of people living everyday faith, that when shared inspires other people in your communities.

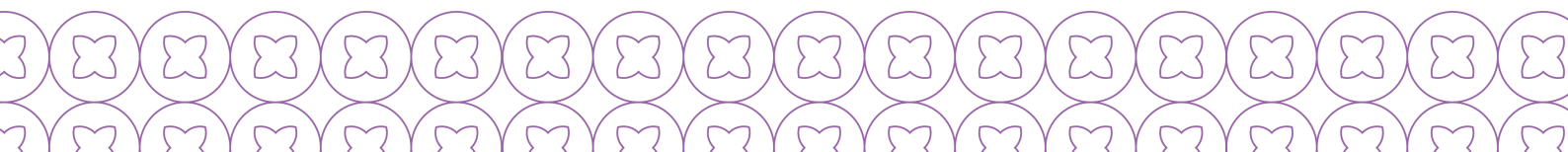
WHAT COULD BE?

Often, confidence is an obstacle people name when reflecting on how they share their faith with others. Is there a workshop or small group series that we could offer to help equip people in this?

How might we encourage people to reflect on what excites them about their faith, or their love of God, that they enjoy sharing with others? Is there a culture of invitation we could grow?

How might we enable people in our church to explore what everyday faith means in their lives, and to share that joyfully with others in our church community?

NOTES





REST



Rest is commonly one of the most challenging parts of the Rhythm of Life, particularly with the many distractions of modern culture. Patterns of rest can be traced right back to the beginning of Genesis, where on the seventh day of creation, God rested from all the work he had done. Rest brings us back into a space of re-creation and restoration. Having a pattern of rest is essential for good physical, mental and spiritual wellbeing – and therefore not something we should only do when we have real need of it, but something we enjoy as a healthy and regular pattern, intentionally making space for being with people we love and who love us, and for things that bring us joy.

WHAT DO WE ALREADY DO?

Churches, households and individuals will all have varied patterns of rest. There may be a good culture of setting aside time to be with others, such as a commitment to not checking emails when on days off or holiday. It might be that there are patterns of weekly games nights, either in a household or with friends in the community. There may be a good practice of listening to what brings joy to others, and sharing what that is for you. It might be that our church organises day trips out or walks to enjoy time together.

WHAT COULD BE?

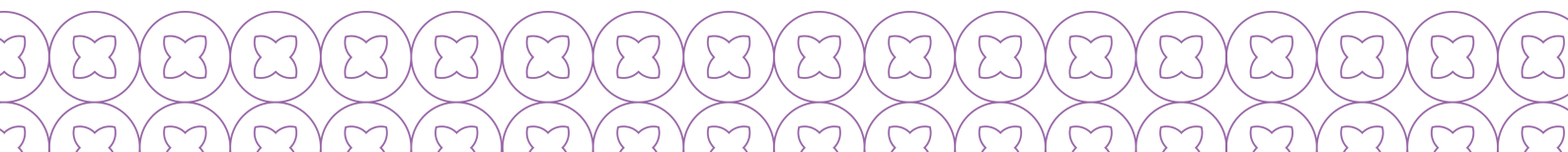
How might we as a church care for everyone, encouraging regular patterns of rest and re-creation?

Are there individuals whose burdens could be eased by finding ways of sharing workloads?

Is there an opportunity we could create to enable people to regularly review the balance of work, ministry and life, to make time for rest and enjoyment?

Having fun together and doing things that bring us joy is a central part of patterns of rest - are there opportunities we could create as a church for these to happen?

NOTES



WHAT NEXT?

Growing a culture of missional discipleship takes time, and requires something of all of us within a community. It helps to have shared commitments, and intentionality in growing or developing particular ministries. Having prayerfully worked through this toolkit, you will hopefully have had conversations about areas of your shared life as a church which are going well, and others that you want to grow - this is a space to discern what you might want to focus your time, energy and prayer on in the coming months. Selecting three priorities offers a degree of focus and intentionality, and having a timeframe for these helps with accountability - you might want to put these as items of business at PCC meetings to monitor how they are growing and enabling your community on their journey of everyday faith.

PRIORITY ONE

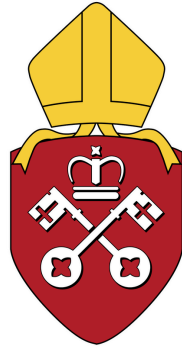
Related Rhythm

Action

Timeframe

PRIORITY TWO

PRIORITY THREE



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For more resources to enable this movement for missional discipleship,
visit the Diocese of York's website:

www.dioceseofyork.org.uk/rhythm-of-life

