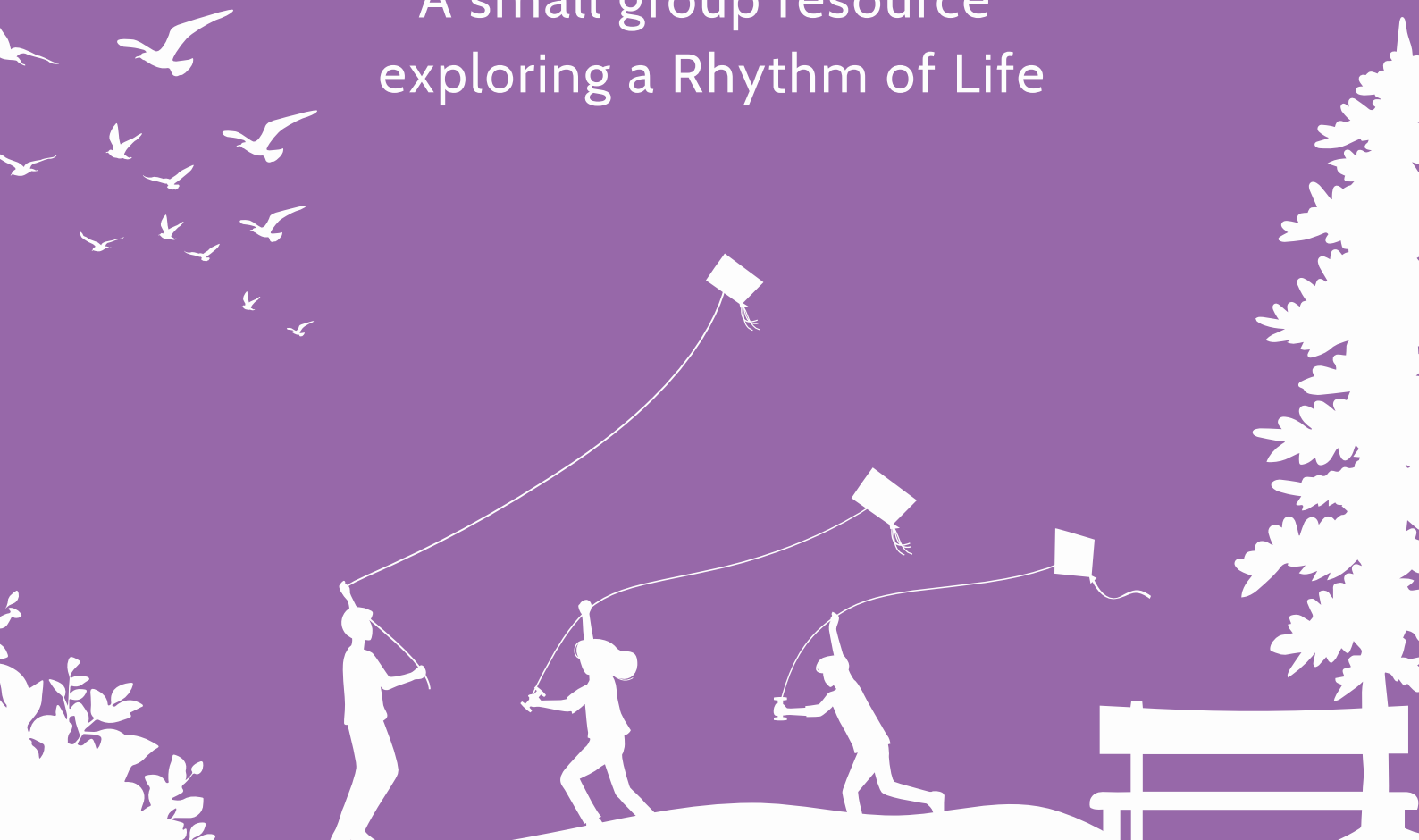


DIOCESE OF  
**YORK**

# LIVING *holiness*

A small group resource  
exploring a Rhythm of Life



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exploring a Rhythm of Life



Prayer



Scripture



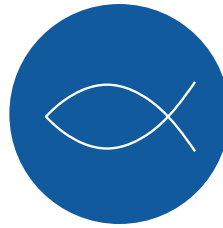
Worship



Love



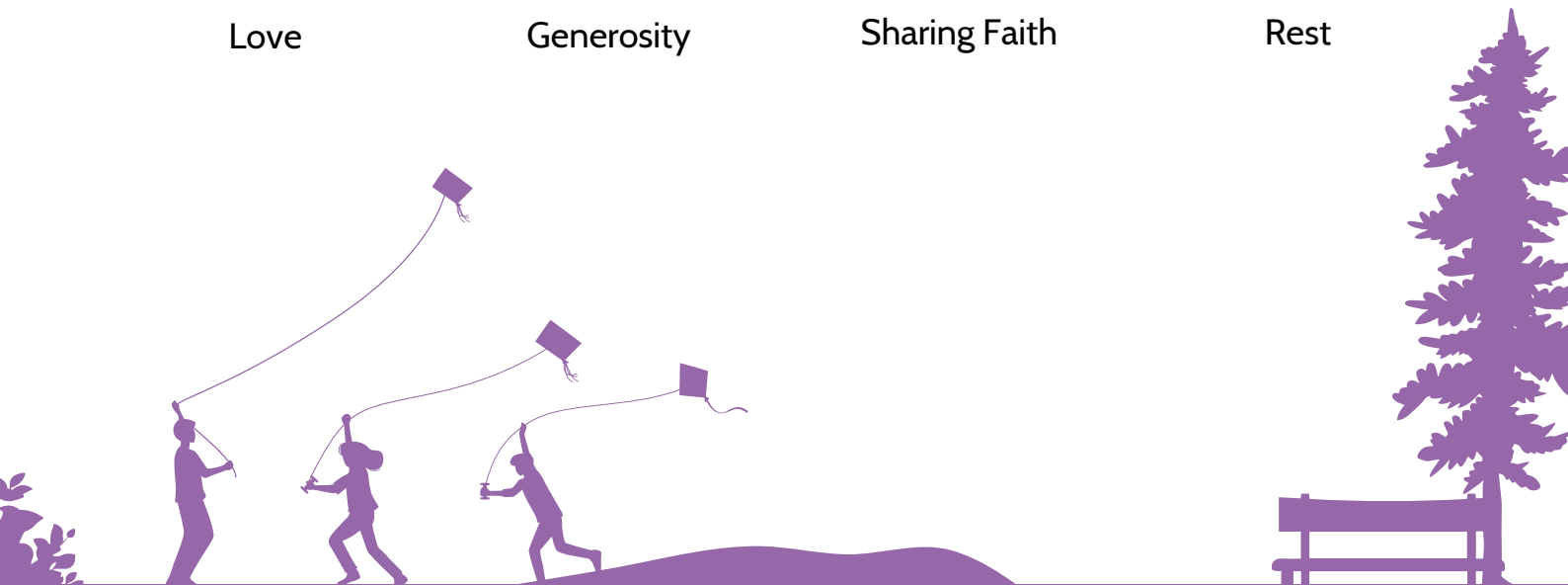
Generosity



Sharing Faith



Rest



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# FOREWORD

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

*He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what  
does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to  
love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?*

*Micah 6.8*



As disciples of Christ, we are called to Live Christ's Story, which is our vision for the Diocese of York. One of the ways in which we learn how to do this, day by day, is to spend time with God and give time to God each day.

A Rhythm of Life is about developing habits and disciplines for doing this.

This small group resource, Living Holiness, invites us to explore this with others and support each other in our walk with Christ. By listening to each other's stories and sharing our experiences of prayer, bible reading, generous giving and the other disciplines that shape our rhythm of life, we will build a kind of spiritual muscle memory. This will strengthen and uphold our life in Christ, help us to hear what God is saying to us today, and allow our lives to be shaped by Christ so that we can be part of Christ's story in the world today.

So, I encourage you to build a rhythm of life and may God richly bless you as you spend the next eight weeks 'Living Holiness'.

*Archbishop Stephen Cottrell*





# INTRODUCTION

Rules, Ways and Rhythms of Life have been around for centuries. These patterns of living have taken different shapes and forms, and perhaps the best known of these is The Rule of Benedict from the sixth century. The common thread which binds all of these together is fairly simple: how does our faith shape the way that we live?

In 2023, the Diocese of York created a Rhythm of Life, centred around seven spiritual practices - prayer, scripture, worship, love, generosity, sharing faith and patterns of rest. Together, these form a flexible and creative framework for our discipleship as we seek to grow in faith and Live Christ's Story.

This small group resource offers eight sessions in which we explore each of the practices in turn, beginning with a space to consider the value of having a Rhythm of Life. You may choose to use the material for personal prayer and reflection, with friends over coffee, in a small group, or as a church community. However you choose to use this resource, it is important to ensure that it is a safe space for everyone.

In each session we begin with prayer, with optional music (we suggest choosing one of the options each week for quiet reflection).

 Celtic    Contemporary    Hymn    Classical

The session then explores the theme, through a passage of scripture and a reflection written by someone within the diocese. You are welcome to choose whichever Bible translation you find most helpful as a group. This is followed by a series of questions for discussion, concluding with prayer.

In prayer, as we take this journey of faith together.

*Sammi Tooze; Diocesan Discipleship Adviser*

## Opening Prayer

We come from scattered lives  
to meet with God and one another.  
Let us recognise God's presence with us.

*Silence is kept.*

As God's people we have gathered:  
**let us worship him together.**

Blessed are you, Holy God,  
creator, redeemer and life-giver;





for speaking the world into being,  
filling it with wonder and beauty, with abundant variety.  
For every blessing we have received  
**we give you thanks and praise.**

for Jesus Christ our Saviour, truly divine and truly human,  
living and dying for us, and going before us into heaven.  
For every blessing we have received  
**we give you thanks and praise.**

for the Holy Spirit, the fire of love burning in our hearts,  
bringing us to faith, and calling us to holiness  
in the Church and in the world.  
For every blessing we have received  
**we give you thanks and praise.**

### Optional Music



-  Take, O take me as I am (Iona Community)
-  Teach me to dance (Graham Kendrick)
-  Eternal light, shine in my heart (Christopher Idle)
-  Canon (Tallis)

# Introduction

Rhythms of Life have been around for centuries. Tracing themselves back to St Benedict or even before, these examples of patterns of living are ways of structuring lives of Christian people and communities. They are there not as a set of binding rules, but rather as a framework in which to order our lives, and intentionally grow in aspects of faith as missional disciples. We all have patterns in our lives, sometimes without even knowing it – it is a fundamental part of being human. The aspects which make up a Rhythm of Life are a creative response to God's call of us, consciously choosing to do things that will help us to grow in becoming more like Christ.

# Scripture

Read 1 John 2.1-11.

# Reflection

When Jesus ascended into heaven he left behind no writings, no creed or systematic theology, no plan for the church - just his life, actions, preaching and his death and resurrection. It was left to his early followers to fathom what it all meant. Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit they had to work out the Christian faith.

The New Testament writings are made up of the early church's response to that challenge. The first epistle of John was probably written in Ephesus some 60 or 70 years after the death and resurrection of Christ. We don't know who the recipients were as it does not begin in the usual way of a letter by addressing them by name, nor end with any greetings. It seems likely it was written to a group of churches at a time when the infant faith was encountering challenges from other philosophies and faiths.

The writer wants to assure his readers of at least three important things. First, Jesus really was human as well as divine. There were those who said he was a human who became a god and others who said he was a god disguised as a human. How he was both at the same time is a mystery beyond our comprehension but it is important. Being fully human means Jesus understands what we face and being fully divine means he authoritatively reveals God to us.

Second, believing in Jesus gives eternal life. Believing in Jesus is not just another item to add to a list of beliefs. It changes the way you see and understand everything. Eternal life is a quality of life rather than a quantity of life. And third, that Christians need to bear witness to all this by living a life of faith and love.

## Questions

- A key verse in our passage is verse 6: “Whoever claims to live in him must live as Jesus did.” What might ‘living as Jesus did’ mean?
- In verse 8 the writer says, “Yet I am writing you a new command; its truth is seen in him and in you, because the darkness is passing and the true light is already shining.” How does our light shine in the world?
- In what ways could having a regular rhythm of life help us do these things?





# Closing Prayer

We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you:  
**by your holy cross  
you have redeemed the world.**

*Silence is kept.*

**Holy God, Holy and strong,  
Holy and immortal,  
have mercy upon us.**

Almighty God,  
who sent your Holy Spirit  
to be the life and light of your Church:  
open our hearts to the riches of your grace,  
that we may bring forth the fruit of the Spirit  
in love and joy and peace;  
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord.  
**Amen**

Jesus, lord of time, **hold us in your eternity.**  
Jesus, image of God, **travel with us the life of faith.**  
Jesus, friend of sinners, **heal the brokenness of our world.**  
Jesus, lord of tomorrow, **draw us into your future. Amen.**

**May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,  
and the love of God,  
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit  
be with us all,  
now and evermore.  
Amen.**

## Takeaway Activity

Draw a wheel, and segment it with the seven practices of the Rhythm of Life. Write in the wheel all the things you do over the week.

What do you notice about your Rhythm of Life? Are there practices which come more naturally than others?

You could place a fidget spinner over your wheel and use it as a way to guide your prayers.





## Opening Prayer

Lord, speak to us  
**that we may hear your word.**  
Move among us  
**that we may behold your glory.**  
Receive our prayers  
**that we may learn to trust you. Amen.**

Cast your burden upon the Lord:  
**who will sustain you.**

*Silence may be kept.*

Create in us clean hearts, O God;  
**renew a right spirit within us.**  
Cast us not away from your presence;  
**take not your Holy Spirit from us.**  
Give us the joy of your saving help;  
**sustain us with your life-giving Spirit.**

You have made us a kingdom and priests  
to serve you for ever,  
with all the company of heaven, saying:  
**Holy, holy, holy Lord,**  
**God of power and might,**  
**heaven and earth are full of your glory.**  
**Hosanna in the highest.**

### Optional Music



-  Silent, surrendered,  
calm and still  
(Margaret Rizza)
-  Switchfoot - On Fire
-  Prayer is the soul's  
sincere desire (James  
Montgomery)
-  The Lord's Prayer  
(Rimsky Korsakov)



## Looking Back

Take a moment to reflect on what we explored in the last session, and on the past week. Has anything come to mind as you have dwelled with the spiritual practice of having a Rhythm of Life?

## Introduction

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.

## Scripture

Read Matthew 6.5-14.

## Reflection

We know this prayer so well; often taught to us in childhood and committed to memory, it's the prayer that it's easy to reach for. I wonder though, does its very familiarity mean that we stop thinking about what it is we're praying and why it matters?

Earlier in the Gospel, Jesus has been identified as God's Son. That is revolutionary enough, but in this prayer, Jesus reminds his followers that they are all children of a heavenly Father. Instead of surrounding their prayers with flowery phrases, they are encouraged to talk simply

and directly to God. This is prayer not as performance, but as conversation, open and honest. When I look at the prayer, I see seven themes summed up in those ten short lines. Firstly, a reminder that God is my parent, but also yours too, 'Our' Father. We acknowledge that we are entering the presence of the Holy One and then look outwards, praying that our world will become a place where God's goodness will reign until earth and heaven are indistinguishable from each other. We move inwards to our own needs, praying for sustenance for the day ahead and forgiveness for the wrongs which we know we have committed. Set us free from the burden of sin, we pray, so that we, in turn, are able to forgive others. Finally we ask God to defend us from things that are too hard to bear.

In praying the Lord's Prayer, we are led from ourselves to dependence upon the God who made us and cares for us. We are joined with that great community of faith around the world and with Christ as we pray these words; in prayer we are never alone.

## Questions

- How is prayer a part of your daily life? Do you have a pattern of prayer in your life?
- What have you found helpful in learning to or growing in prayer?
- The Lord's Prayer begins with 'Our Father', How does God fit with your understanding of parenthood?
- Why, if Jesus told his followers to pray in secret, do we say the Lord's Prayer in church?



# Closing Prayer

We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you:  
**by your holy cross  
you have redeemed the world.**

*Silence is kept.*

**Holy God,  
Holy and strong,  
Holy and immortal,  
have mercy upon us.**

Lord of heaven and earth,  
as Jesus taught his disciples  
to be persistent in prayer,  
give us patience  
and courage never to lose hope,  
but always to bring our prayers before you;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

In darkness and in light,  
in trouble and in joy,  
**help us, heavenly Father,  
to trust your love,  
to serve your purpose,  
and to praise your name;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.**

**May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,  
and the love of God,  
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit  
be with us all, now and evermore. Amen.**

## Takeaway Activity

Look at different translations of the Lord's Prayer. What do you notice? Are there versions which connect with your life of prayer more than others?

Part of the Lord's Prayer speaks of forgiving others, as we have been forgiven. Sometimes, it can be difficult to forgive a person when they have treated us badly and although we know we should forgive them it can feel too big a think to ask. In the coming days, take some time to discern if there is anyone that you haven't forgiven after they have hurt you, or someone you love. Pray for the desire to forgive them; and that from that desire to forgive may come the ability to do so.



## Opening Prayer

Be with us, Spirit of God;  
**nothing can separate us from your love.**  
 Breathe on us, breath of God;  
**fill us with your saving power.**  
 Speak in us, wisdom of God;  
**bring strength, healing and peace.**

*Silence is kept.*

The Lord is here.  
**God's Spirit is with us.**

We give thanks and praise  
 through Jesus Christ our Lord.  
 Jesus is Lord of all creation. **We worship and adore you.**  
 Jesus made his home among us. **We worship and adore you.**  
 Jesus died to set us free. **We worship and adore you.**  
 Jesus was raised to life again. **We worship and adore you.**  
 Jesus reigns in glory now. **We worship and adore you.**

We worship and adore you with angels and archangels  
 and all the company of heaven, saying:  
**Holy, holy, holy Lord,**  
**God of power and might,**  
**heaven and earth are full of your glory.**  
**Hosanna in the highest.**

### Optional Music



- Confitemini Domino (Taizé)
- Thy word is a lamp unto my feet (Amy Grant)
- Your words, O Lord (Bernadete Farrell)
- Locus Iste (Bruckner)



## Looking Back

Take a moment to reflect on what we explored in the last session, and on the past week. Has anything come to mind as you have dwelled with the spiritual practice of being rooted in prayer?

## Introduction

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 collectively 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 to then 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.

## Scripture

Read 2 Timothy 3.10-17.

## Reflection

St Paul's letters to his protegee, Timothy, are among the writings that show Paul most clearly as a person. He writes urgently and directly, not holding back from expressing his opinions. It is writing that shows the human voice as well as the influence of God.

God has always worked through human beings. These encounters are recorded in the scriptures, both the Hebrew scriptures (also called Old

Testament) and the books concerning the earthly life of Jesus and after (the New Testament). The phrase that Paul uses to describe this intersection of divine and human experience with the written word is “God-breathed”. This is such a rich image, bringing suggestions of the life of the Holy Spirit. It can refer to divine breath influencing the intentions of the original author, but it can also include our own experience of encountering scripture today.

One of the gifts that the Church of England offers is the programme of daily readings for each day of the year. Rather than picking and choosing what to read, each day there are several passages set to be read. Following this discipline means that you can't rely on your favourite passages, but are invited to hear passages that are challenging, or perhaps even upsetting. When I sit down with the readings of the day, sometimes I am soothed and reassured of God's unwavering love. At other times, it is more like a wrestling match, or a passionate argument. The Psalms demonstrate that every human emotion is allowable in dialogue with God. So, when a passage of Scripture angers or upsets, or confuses, I take that to God, asking for God's divine breath to enter the conversation and show me what I have missed. The ongoing story of Scripture is played out in our lives through what we learn of the story of Christ and how we choose to join in.

## Questions

- How would you recommend a new Christian should start reading the Bible? Which passages would be high on your list of recommendations and why?
- How has your experience of reading or hearing Scripture shaped your life?
- Can you think of a time when your growing understanding of a passage of scripture changed how you interpreted it?





# Closing Prayer

We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you:  
**by your holy cross  
you have redeemed the world.**

*Silence is kept.*

**Holy God,  
Holy and strong,  
Holy and immortal,  
have mercy upon us.**

Almighty God,  
we thank you for the gift of your holy word.  
May it be a lantern to our feet,  
a light to our paths,  
and a strength to our lives.  
Take us and use us to love and serve  
in the power of the Holy Spirit  
and in the name of your Son,  
Jesus Christ our Lord.

God of glory, the end of our searching,  
help us to lay aside all that prevents us  
from seeking your kingdom,  
and to give all that we have  
to gain the pearl beyond all price,  
through our Saviour Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

**May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,  
and the love of God,  
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit  
be with us all, now and evermore. Amen.**

## Takeaway Activity

Many people have a favourite Bible story, or one that is special to them. Take some time to think about one of the stories in the Bible that you struggle with or only skim read when you come across it, and take time to read or listen to it.

What do you notice? You might want to consider why you might find that story challenging. Read the story again, and reflect on it from the point of view of one of the characters. Consider what you might see, imagine the conversations going on around you, and think about how you might feel. What could you learn from this story?



## Opening Prayer

Praise the name of the Lord:  
**ascribe greatness to our God.**  
 Let everything be said and done  
 in the name of the Lord Jesus,  
**giving thanks to God through Jesus Christ.**  
 Sing psalms, hymns and sacred songs:  
**let us sing to God with thankful hearts.**  
 Open our lips, Lord:  
**and we shall praise your name.**

*Silence is kept.*

Come, let us sing to the Lord our God;  
**raise the roof to the Rock of rescue.**  
 Come into the presence of the Lord with thanks;  
**raise the rafters with songs of praise.**  
 The Lord is the great God, over all;  
**greater than every other power.**  
 He holds the depths of the earth in his hands,  
**and the mountain peaks belong to him.**  
 The ocean is the Lord's: it was made by God;  
**the land was formed by his own hands.**  
 Come, let us bow before the Lord our maker;  
**with humble hearts we worship God.**  
 The Lord is God and we are his;  
**we are the Shepherd's very own flock.**

### Optional Music



- In the Lord (Taizé)
- Here for you (Matt Redman)
- O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness (Monsell)
- Psalm 150 (Talbot)

## Looking Back

Take a moment to reflect on what we explored in the last session, and on the past week. Has anything come to mind as you have dwelled with the spiritual practice of being shaped by scripture?

## Introduction

One of the key 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.

## Scripture

Read Psalm 96 (Common Worship Psalter).

## Reflection

If you are ever wondering about the scope of worship, Psalm 96 is a good place to start for ideas. This is a psalm where humanity is in awe at the greatness of God: it's awe that releases a torrent of joy and celebration. Look at its key words: sing, bless, declare; honour and majesty, power and splendour.

This is one of a number of psalms that picture the fullness of creation praising God – and however unlikely that seems at one rather flat and

rational level, it's a powerful image at the beginning and end of the psalm, that humankind is only part of what worships. The whole earth is invited to sing to the Lord (v1); the heavens are to rejoice (11), the sea to make a great noise (11), the fields to be joyful and trees to shout (12). God's glory is to be declared among all peoples (3), not confined to one nation or culture only. The sanctuary (6) — the place of meeting God and worshipping — was a place of encountering divine power. Humankind is called to respond with worship and offerings (8).

'O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness' (9) — this is the phrase from the psalm that is probably best known and remembered. It claims that what is perfectly holy is pleasing and wonderful. We cannot see God as he is, but through worship we can experience something that truly points to the nature of God. Again, the response is not confined to humans, because the whole earth will tremble.

The news that the Lord is king is to be told throughout the world (10) and his power is active, because he will bring equity, justice and truth (10, 13). And all this is a new song (1).

## Questions

- How does the theme of creation being caught up in worship and praise fire your imagination?
- The psalm invites us to sing and tell, and to worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness. How would you say that worship has influenced your mood or changed your thinking and behaviour?
- The Lord 'is more to be feared than all gods; for all the gods of the nations are but idols.' (4-5). What are the 'idols' and distractions that we might be tempted to put in the place of God, and how do true worship and discipleship guard us against them? What do you think of how this psalm tells of worship alongside justice?

# Closing Prayer

We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you:  
**by your holy cross  
you have redeemed the world.**

*Silence is kept.*

**Holy God,  
Holy and strong,  
Holy and immortal,  
have mercy upon us.**

Creator God,  
you made us all in your image:  
may we discern you in all that we see,  
and serve you in all that we do;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.  
**Amen.**

God of glory,  
you nourish us with your Word  
who is the bread of life:  
fill us with your Holy Spirit  
that through us the light of your glory  
may shine in all the world.  
We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ.

**May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,  
and the love of God,  
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit  
be with us all,  
now and evermore. Amen.**

## Takeaway Activity

Our worship often draws people together in community. We may have many places of being a worshipping community - Sundays, weekday services, Messy Church, home life, Scouts, Choir, small groups.

Draw a collection of overlapping circles, and write in them the communities in which you belong.

What do you notice? Is there a sense of rhythm in how your circles connect? What does your worship look like in each of these places of being community? Are there distinctive characteristics or habits we can aspire in order to grow as a worshipping community?



## Opening Prayer

The light and peace  
of Jesus Christ be with you  
**and also with you.**

The glory of the Lord has risen upon us.  
**Let us rejoice and sing  
God's praise for ever.**

*Silence is kept.*

We say together in faith:  
**Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God almighty,  
who was, and is, and is to come.**

We believe in God the Father,  
who created all things:  
**for by his will they were created  
and have their being.**

We believe in God the Son,  
who was slain:  
**for with his blood, he purchased us for God,  
from every tribe and language,  
from every people and nation.**

We believe in God the Holy Spirit:  
**the Spirit and the Bride say, 'Come!'  
Even so come, Lord Jesus! Amen.**

### Optional Music



- In love you summon  
(Wild Goose)
- The Greatest  
Commandment (The  
Porter's Gate)
- Let us build a house  
where love is found  
(all are welcome)
- Ubi caritas (Gjeilo)



## Looking Back

Take a moment to reflect on what we explored in the last session, and on the past week. Has anything come to mind as you have dwelled with the spiritual practice of being transformed in worship?

## Introduction

As disciples of Jesus, we are called to love God, ourselves and 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 sixty years. It's important here to also 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.

## Scripture

Read Romans 13.8-14.

## Reflection

Love is the fulfilment of the law, St Paul tells the Roman Christians. This law is God's law, the Torah, the law of Moses, which we find in the first five books of the Old Testament. Here we find a plethora of laws or instructions about what God looks for in how to live the good life. They encompass all aspects of life, and they were used, and sadly sometimes abused, within the religious tradition to which St Paul, and Jesus, belong. St Paul, however, echoing Jesus' own words, says to the Roman Christians that the whole law is summed up in this: 'Love your neighbour as yourself'. The law that we, as

Christians, are to live by, is the law of love. This is not a choice or an opt in. It is God's standard, God's instruction, in Christ. Loving our neighbour as ourselves is to be the character of all Christians and all Christian communities. But who is our neighbour?

This is the question the lawyer who wants to prove poses to Jesus by in Luke 10.25-37. Jesus responds with the parable of the Good Samaritan. This parable reveals that our neighbour is the stranger, the enemy, the one who lives beyond the boundaries we human beings have placed between peoples, whether they are socio-economic, ethnic, cultural, religious, or any others we can think of. Therefore, when we acknowledge our prejudices and cross these boundaries, and when we practice radical hospitality, work towards racial justice, and take social action, we are living out the law of love, and the kingdom of God comes on earth as it is in heaven.

But it is important not to miss the second part of this command: we are to love our neighbours as ourselves. We are God's children, deeply loved, and made in his image. But we are not God. We cannot love more than ourselves or beyond our resources, and we are to resist the temptation to do so. Lest we deny the dignity bestowed on us, make God less than he is, and make ourselves more than we are. In fact, loving ourselves helps us to love others better.

## Questions

- What do we think about the idea of love as 'crossing boundaries'? Which boundaries are we willing to cross? Which ones will we not cross? Why?
- What acts of justice are we currently involved with? How could this be extended?
- How can we resist the temptation to over-extend ourselves in the calling to love others as ourselves?



# Closing Prayer

We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you:  
**by your holy cross  
you have redeemed the world.**

*Silence is kept.*

**Holy God,  
Holy and strong,  
Holy and immortal,  
have mercy upon us.**

Great God,  
you are one God,  
and you bring together what is scattered  
and mend what is broken.  
Unite us  
with the scattered peoples of the earth  
that we may be one family of your children.  
Bind up all our wounds and heal us in spirit,  
that we may be renewed  
as disciples of Jesus Christ,  
our Master and Saviour. **Amen.**

Though many, we form one body in Christ. **We belong to one another.**  
By God's grace we have different gifts. **We will use them in faith.**  
Rejoice in hope, stand firm in trouble, be constant in prayer.  
**Filled with his Spirit we will serve the Lord.**

**May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,  
and the love of God,  
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit  
be with us all, now and evermore. Amen.**

## Takeaway Activity

This week, as you go about your life in your local community, consider the places you travel to. If you have a regular journey through your community, pick a special feature (such as a tree, a street corner, a school, or a garden gnome). Every time you pass it, say a prayer for your town, asking God to bless the people where you live.

What do you notice? Are there people or places of need which you are drawn to? How might your prayer lead you to offering love into those places?



## Opening Prayer

The Lord our God, the Almighty, reigns.

**Let us rejoice and shout for joy,  
giving God the glory.**

Glory to the Father and to the Son  
and to the Holy Spirit;  
**as it was in the beginning is now  
and shall be for ever. Amen.**

*Silence is kept.*

Come, rejoice before your maker  
All you peoples of the earth;  
**Serve the Lord your God with gladness,  
Come before him with a song!**  
Know for certain that Jehovah  
Is the true and only God:  
**We are his, for he has made us;  
We are sheep within his fold.**  
Come with grateful hearts before him,  
Enter now his courts with praise;  
**Show your thankfulness towards him,  
Give due honour to his name.**  
For the Lord our God is gracious,  
Everlasting in his love;  
**And to every generation,  
his great faithfulness endures.**

### Optional Music



- Live in charity (Taize)
- Gratefulness (Rend Collective)
- Brother, Sister, let me serve you (Gillard)
- God so loved the world (Stainer)



## Looking Back

Take a moment to reflect on what we explored in the last session, and on the past week. Has anything come to mind as you have dwelled with the spiritual practice of loving one another?

## Introduction

Similar to the practice of love, living generously is an outward-facing practice grounded in an inward spiritual understanding. To live generously, we first practice gratitude, growing as gracious receivers of the gifts and resources God gives to us. This culture of gratitude and thankfulness does, in itself, help us to become happier and more content. It encourages us to care for the world around us, mindful of God's gift of creation and how the way we live impacts the earth. The way we live is also shaped by love – we give and we live generously as an expression of love. At its best, living generously is a joyful, continuous outpouring of love.

## Scripture

Read 2 Corinthians 9.6-15.

## Reflection

Each year as we approach Advent, there is a lot of excitement when the John Lewis Christmas advert comes out. Known for their storytelling and their heart-warming nature, there's no wonder why they are so popular. One which I'm particularly fond of is from 2011 called 'The Long Wait' – we watch a young boy desperately waiting for Christmas Day to arrive, counting down the days and the hours. As he wakes on Christmas Day, he rushes past his stocking and into his parents bedroom, holding out his gift

for them. The slogan reads, 'for gifts you can't wait to give'.

One of the things I enjoy about this advent is that the concept that it's a joy to give to those we love. Both in the boy's act of giving, and the thought behind the gift, we see his giving as an expression of love. In the Second Letter to the Corinthians, Paul reflects on this too, writing of our attitude towards generosity. God calls us to live generously, but not in a way which is forced, or done because we feel we have to. Paul's instruction that we 'must give as you have made up your mind' reminds us that living generously is a choice, a conscious way of living grounded in a joyful attitude of heart, and when outpoured points beyond the act itself to the love of God.

In a contemporary culture where there are so many demands on our energy, our money and our time, this culture of living generously can feel really challenging. We can get trapped in the temptation of self-righteousness, conflicted by many charities seeking support, or worried about increasing household bills. But in all this, the challenge our faith offers to us is to ask ourselves what living generously looks like for us in our situation and context, growing to become people who are naturally generous, who want to give, and do so joyfully as people made in the image of our generous God.

## Questions

- Think of the last time you gave a gift – either to a loved one, your church, a charity, or a stranger – how did it make you feel?
- Living generously is an expression of love. What aspects of generosity do you find joyful and life-giving, what do you find more challenging, and why?
- For every act of giving, there is always a receiver. What do you think the value is in learning to grow as a gracious receiver?

# Closing Prayer

We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you:  
**by your holy cross  
you have redeemed the world.**

*Silence is kept.*

**Holy God,  
Holy and strong,  
Holy and immortal,  
have mercy upon us.**

Generous God,  
you give us gifts and make them grow:  
though our faith is small as mustard seed,  
make it grow to your glory  
and the flourishing of your kingdom;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.  
**Amen.**

**God of power,  
may the boldness of your Spirit transform us,  
may the gentleness of your Spirit lead us,  
may the gifts of your Spirit equip us  
to serve and worship you  
now and always.**

**May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,  
and the love of God,  
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit  
be with us all,  
now and evermore. Amen.**

## Takeaway Activity

For the next month, try to give away something every week. You could give some money to a charity or your church, or give things you no longer need to a charity shop, or you could be creative in making a gift or card for someone else or give five minutes to help someone who is in need.

What do you notice? How do you feel when you have been generous? How could this pattern of giving help in shaping your understanding of God's generosity towards you?



## Opening Prayer

We rejoice to meet in the name of Jesus;  
**Jesus is our Lord and King.**

*A candle may be lit.*

Jesus Christ is the light of the world;  
**Jesus is our Way.**

With Jesus even dark places are light;  
**Jesus is the Truth.**

In Jesus we shall live for ever;  
**Jesus is our Life.**

*Silence is kept.*

Great is the Lord and greatly to be praised:  
there is no end to his greatness.

**One generation shall praise your works to another,  
and shall declare your power.**

All creation praises you, Lord,  
and your faithful servants bless you.

**They declare the glory of your kingdom  
and tell of your mighty power.**

My mouth shall proclaim the praise of the Lord.

**Let every living thing bless his holy name  
for ever and ever.**

### Optional Music



-  To whom shall we go  
(Northumbria Community)
-  Day by Day The  
Porter's Gate)
-  Hope of our calling  
(Ally Barrett)
-  Christ has no body  
now but yours (David  
Ogden)



## Looking Back

Take a moment to reflect on what we explored in the last session, and on the past week. Has anything come to mind as you have dwelled with the spiritual practice of living generously?

## Introduction

Sharing our faith with others can sometimes appear daunting on 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 having said, “preach the gospel at all times, where necessary use words”.

## Scripture

Read Matthew 28.1-20.

## Reflection

This, for me, is a remarkable passage! Not just because Jesus has, once and for all defeated death, but because of who he chose to involve in the subsequent telling of the story. At the time, women were not seen as reliable witnesses to anything, their testimony would not hold up in a court and most people would have disregarded what they had to say. And yet, it was these women that he chose to reveal his resurrected glory. Jesus valued these bold women so highly, that they were the ones he decided would get to tell the men (who were in hiding), that he had risen from the dead. This radical approach, just underlines the upside down kingdom that God

instituted through Jesus. The people disregarded by society were allowed to be witnesses to the greatest moment in history!

Often, we can discount ourselves from telling people about Jesus because we aren't 'important enough', or 'articulate enough', or 'good enough'. We sometimes lack the confidence or the boldness to share our faith. And yet, the testimony of these brave women inspires us that those whom he has chosen, are exactly the ones that he wants to tell people about the good news. All of us who put our faith in him have a story to tell, a story of salvation and life that can be a witness to others about who Jesus is. You don't have to stand up in a pulpit or on a street corner to share your faith. You can simply do it though sharing your story with a few friends over a coffee. Let's be more like these women; obedient and willing to share with others the good news that the King of Kings values us enough that he chose us.

## Questions

- What do you enjoy about sharing your faith with others?
- What challenges do you experience in sharing your faith?
- What opportunities might you have this week to share your faith with someone else?





# Closing Prayer

We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you:  
**by your holy cross  
you have redeemed the world.**

*Silence is kept.*

**Holy God,  
Holy and strong,  
Holy and immortal,  
have mercy upon us.**

God, the giver of life,  
whose Holy Spirit wells up  
within your Church:  
by the Spirit's gifts equip us  
to live the gospel of Christ  
and make us eager to do your will,  
that we may share with the whole creation  
the joys of eternal life;  
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord.  
**Amen.**

O God our mystery, you bring us to life,  
call us to freedom, and move between us with love.  
May we so participate in your dance of trinity  
that our lives may resonate with you,  
now and for ever.

**May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,  
and the love of God,  
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit  
be with us all, now and evermore. Amen.**

## Takeaway Activity

Draw or find a picture of a Tree of Life. Reflect on the ideas of putting down roots, compost and renewal, new growth, blossom and fruits, enjoying the shade and protection of the mature tree, the invitation to creation to find home, shelter and sustenance in the life cycle of the tree, and pruning.

What do you notice?

Use the image to reflect on seasons of the year, and how these seasons offer opportunities to share our faith with others.



## Opening Prayer

O Lord, open our lips  
**and our mouth shall proclaim your praise.**  
 Give us the joy of your saving help  
**and sustain us with your life-giving Spirit.**

*Silence is kept.*

Lord our God, the whole world tells  
 the greatness of your name.  
**Your glory reaches beyond the stars.**  
 Even the babble of infants  
 declares your strength,  
 your power to halt the enemy and avenger.  
**Your glory reaches beyond the stars.**  
 I see your handiwork in the heavens:  
 the moon and the stars you set in place.  
**Your glory reaches beyond the stars.**  
 What is humankind that you remember them,  
 the human race that you care for them?  
**Your glory reaches beyond the stars.**  
 You treat them like gods, dressing them in glory and splendour.  
 You give them charge of the earth, laying all at their feet:  
 cattle and sheep, wild beasts,  
 birds of the sky, fish of the sea, every swimming creature.  
**Your glory reaches beyond the stars.**  
 Lord our God, the whole world tells the greatness of your name.  
**Your glory reaches beyond the stars.**

### Optional Music



- Come to me (John Bell)
- Come, all who are weary, come (The Porter's Gate)
- Sweet Sacrament Divine (Stanfield)
- In pace (Bouzignac)

## Looking Back

Take a moment to reflect on what we explored in the last session, and on the past week. Has anything come to mind as you have dwelled with the spiritual practice of sharing our faith with others?

## Introduction

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 traces 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.

## Scripture

Read Genesis 2.1-3.

## Reflection

Western culture has seemed for generations to pull us towards activity. The notion of a 'work ethic' is prized and we are trained to think of inactivity as laziness and to be disdained. We can tend to think that important people are busy and those who are not rushing around are perhaps of less value. But this passage shows us that God values rest from work. After a period of time full of creativity and action, summoning order from the chaos of a

world without form, God took the seventh day and rested. That rest isn't about hiding from action in a heap of exhaustion, but rather it is blessed and made holy. Jesus called to those who were heavy laden, worn down with labour, to come to him.

“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”

We need to learn what it is to be gentle - not constantly striving and pushing forward. And we need to learn what it is to be humble in heart – acknowledging that we are not indispensable. As we become more Christlike in this, our souls will find rest.

## Questions

- How do you rest most effectively? Where can you see the practice of joy in this?
- What is the difference between rest for exhausted bodies and rest for exhausted souls? What are the similarities?
- What might you be able to do to introduce or enrich the pattern of rest in your life?



# Closing Prayer

We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you:  
**by your holy cross  
you have redeemed the world.**

*Silence is kept.*

**Holy God,  
Holy and strong,  
Holy and immortal,  
have mercy upon us.**

Almighty God,  
you have made us for yourself,  
and our hearts are restless  
till they find their rest in you:  
pour your love into our hearts  
and draw us to yourself,  
and so bring us at last to your heavenly city  
where we shall see you face to face;  
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord. **Amen.**

The Holy Trinity,  
in whose name we were baptized, preserve us,  
**members of Christ, children of God,  
inheritors of the kingdom of heaven,  
saved by the waters,  
and filled with the Spirit.**

**May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,  
and the love of God,  
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit  
be with us all, now and evermore. Amen.**

## Creative Takeaway

Draw an infinity sign (below). On one side, write everything which you give time and energy to. On the other, write things which offer you rest and joy.

What do you notice? Are there ideas which challenge your understanding of rest? Does the rhythm feel balanced? You might want to share this with others in your household or group, and encourage one another.



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**The Ven Dr Amanda Bloor** - Amanda was appointed as Archdeacon of Cleveland in 2020, after serving in the dioceses of Oxford and Portsmouth. She has been a parish priest, a DDO and a bishop's chaplain and before ordination worked for the Civil Service, was a teacher and chaired the RAF Families' Association. She enjoys long walks in beautiful Yorkshire countryside, cannot imagine life without books and looks forward to spending time with her family. She regularly writes Bible reflections for BRF and loves wrestling with scripture.

**The Rt Revd Paul Ferguson** – Paul was Bishop of Whitby for ten years and retired in 2024 after 39 years in ordained ministry, most of them in the Diocese of York. A professional organist and music teacher before ordination, he was a university prizewinner in Hebrew at Cambridge. His interests include international Anglican-Lutheran relations among other aspects of ecumenism.

**The Revd Canon Liz Hassall** – Liz is the Priest-in-Charge of the York City Centre group of churches and a member of General Synod. She has a broad range of spiritual influences, including the Anglican evangelical and liberal-catholic traditions and Taize. Her academic interests are mainly in how to explain and defend the Christian faith to those outside it. When not at work, she loves knitting, spinning, folk-music and eating good food.

**The Revd Greg Hoyland** - Greg is a retired Anglican priest who spent 20 years in pastoral ministry as a curate, vicar and university chaplain and 20 years as a university lecturer in Theology. He has a particular interest in monasticism and volunteers for English Heritage as a guide at Byland Abbey and Rievaulx Abbey.

**Canon Dr Helen Lawrence** – Helen is Assistant Manager of Wydale Hall, the retreat house for the Diocese of York. Prior to this role, she worked in training and development, primarily in the research and non-profit sector, helping people to become more effective in their lives and work.

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**Ms Sammi Tooze** - Sammi is the Discipleship Adviser in the Diocese of York, and is also a member of the Liturgical Commission and General Synod. Sammi enjoys singing in The Ebor Singers, going to pottery classes, and exploring creative understandings of rest and joy.



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