

Walk with me
and work with me,
watch how I do it.
Learn the unforced
rhythms of grace.
Matthew 11.28

Rhythms of Grace with St Chad

A Retreat in Daily Life
for
Holy Week and Easter



Your Retreat

Welcome to this annual Holy Week Retreat in daily life. This is for all those who find it hard to get away on retreat, when life is just too busy, when there are too many responsibilities and constraints; we invite you to make this your own retreat, and experience a glimpse of Iona or Taizé here at home.

Each day during Holy Week there will be services at churches near you. You will be able to find information about these services from their notices, from www.achurchnearyou.com and information about the services at Lichfield Cathedral can be found at www.lichfield-cathedral.org

You can opt in to suit your own availability, either at home or by coming to church. You might like to create a prayer corner at home, with a candle and bible, to make space for your reflection time. In this booklet you will find a simple order of daily worship, a reflection for each day, a prayer, a passage of scripture and a focus for your own thoughts and intercessions. We hope that it is helpful.

The Community of St Chad Rhythms of Grace

‘Walk with me, and work with me, watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace’. These are Eugene Peterson’s translation of Matthew 11:28 in the Message Bible. They form the key text of the five rhythms of grace that are at the heart of the Community of St Chad. The Community is based in Lichfield Diocese and is made up of people who long to grow in their faith by being open to God’s grace.

This week is offered to you to learn from the wisdom of St Chad, through prayer, reflection on the Word of God in the bible, and by talking together about where we are on the journey. Each day we will focus on a different rhythm of grace, as we walk with Jesus through the last week of his earthly life, towards the cross.

St Chad was Bishop in Lichfield in the 7th century. His gentle, humble presence in walking among the people, led many to turn to follow him as disciples of Christ. Chad's Celtic Christian church was deeply rooted in a practical spirituality that held together worship, prayer, education, healthcare, and hospitality. For him there was no difference between Sunday best and weekday rest!

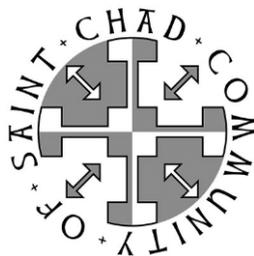
Today we are rediscovering this holistic approach to mission and ministry, and finding new ways to serve God in our neighbour and our community. The five rhythms of grace form a structure for our discipleship, a useful health check for our walk with God.

The Five Rhythms:

1. By God's grace, I will seek to be transformed into the likeness of Christ.
2. By God's grace, I will be open to the presence, guidance and power of the Holy Spirit.
3. By God's grace, I will set aside time for prayer, worship and spiritual reading.
4. By God's grace, I will endeavour to be a gracious presence in the world, serving others and working for justice in human relationships and social structures.
5. By God's grace, I will sensitively share my faith with others: participating in God's mission both locally and globally.

Daily Prayers

Gracious God
We offer to you
Our hearts, our mind and our will
That we might know and live
Your unforced rhythms of grace. **Amen**



Canticle

**All The glorious grace of God
is freely bestowed on us in the Beloved.**

1 Blessed are you, the God and Father of our Lord
Jesus Christ,

for you have blest us in Christ Jesus
with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places.

2 **You chose us to be yours in Christ before the
foundation of the world, that we should be holy and
blameless before you.**

3 In love you destined us for adoption as your children,
through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of your will,

4 **To the praise of your glorious grace,
which you freely bestowed on us in the Beloved.**

5 In you, we have redemption through the blood of
Christ, the forgiveness of our sins,

6 **According to the riches of your grace,
which you have lavished upon us.** Ephesians 1.3-10

**All 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.**

All **The glorious grace of God is freely bestowed on us in the Beloved.**

Scripture Reading

We read the passage set for today.

Reflection

Time to read the reflection for the day, and think about the questions posed.

Silence

A time to be still and listen for God's grace for you.

Song

**In the Lord I'll be ever thankful,
In the Lord I will rejoice!
Trust in God, do not be afraid.
Lift up your voices the Lord is near.
Lift up your voices, the Lord is near.** Taizé Community

Prayers of Recognition

With some times of silence between each prayer we allow space for God.

We bring to God our own sense of vulnerability, the times we feel inadequate.

Lord Jesus, your grace is lavished upon us
In your love and tenderness remake us

We bring to God our doubts and fears about the future

Lord Jesus, your grace is lavished upon us

In your love and tenderness remake us

We bring to God our own sense of vocation and calling.

Lord Jesus, your grace is lavished upon us

In your love and tenderness remake us

We bring to God our willingness to be a channel of grace in the world

Lord Jesus, your grace is lavished upon us

In your love and tenderness remake us

Intercession

We bring to God the people and situations on our hearts.

At the end of each prayer:

Lord, hear us

Lord graciously hear us

We conclude with the Prayer for the Day and the Lord's Prayer.

Closing Prayer

Be with us Lord as we seek to follow in the footsteps of your servant Chad, whose humility and prayerfulness attracted so many to your Kingdom. Let our lives, like his, reflect the light of Christ and the hope of faith. In the name of your Son Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen

Palm Sunday

Rhythms of Grace

Reading Philippians 2. 5-11

Reflection

John Newton had been a slaver, capturing African people and transporting them to the New World, selling them into slavery to work on the plantations. His was a cruel and inhuman capitalism that treated people as commodities. His own conversion to Christ led him to renounce his former life, but he could never forget what he had done. His hymn, *Amazing Grace*, describes himself as a wretch, lost and blind, but by God's amazing grace, even he could be saved. No matter how low we fall, God's grace can reach us, and lead us home.

In today's reading we have one of the very earliest hymns of the church. It is from St Paul's letter to the Philippians, a hymn about the God who empties himself to become one with us, to become a slave, even to die on the cross. The early church sang this hymn to remember that God calls us to be like Jesus in emptying ourselves of all pride and status, all power and popularity. We are called to be empty so that God's grace can fill us. When we are feeling vulnerable and inadequate, we are at our most open to God's grace. Jesus said "*Blessed are you who are poor in spirit*", because it is often when we are at our lowest point that we can allow God's grace to touch and change us.

To think about

When have been the times of grace for you?

Is there anything you need to put behind you like John Newton's past life?

Are you being called to empty yourself, to serve in some new way?

Prayer

God of amazing grace,

Help us to empty ourselves of all that clutters and clogs our life with you. Lead us to face up to what needs changing in our lives

Fill us, that we may walk with you, to learn the unforced rhythms of grace. **Amen.**

Holy Monday

The Likeness of Christ

Reading John 12. 1-11

Reflection

By God's grace I will seek to be transformed into the likeness of Christ - is the first rhythm of grace. It is something that can only be done by grace because it is impossible for us in our own strength. It is a lifetime's work, a journey of small steps! Sometimes we hear people ask "What would Jesus do?" which is part of the same process. How do we learn to see like Jesus, to see people for who they really are, to see the gold in them, and not to be caught up with image or prejudice?

In today's reading we witness a scene that is so familiar – Judas sneering at Mary who anointed Jesus' feet with costly perfume. In other gospels this act of overflowing emotion and generosity comes from a sense of having been forgiven a great deal. Jesus sees through Judas' justification for this criticism – that the money

might have been spent on the poor – and realises that Mary is anointing him for his death.

There are so many ways in which we can try to be transformed into the likeness of Christ, but this way of looking at people with love and not with judgement seems to be at the very heart of what made Jesus different. Jesus said "*Blessed are the meek*" because to become like Christ we need to let go of our own ego, and allow Jesus to become part of us.

To think about

Have you got very angry at someone recently – what was going on under the surface?

What are you grieving for at the moment, what have you lost, or are you to lose?

We have the poor with us always – what can we do to help them today?

Prayer

Jesus our guide,

Help us to see through your eyes,
beneath the surface, to the heart of things.

Cut through our excuses and justifications
when we are blind to your love.

Give us grace to be transformed into your likeness,
day by day,

As we make our lifetime's journey of small steps. **Amen**

Holy Tuesday

Open to the Presence

Reading John 12. 20-36

Reflection

By God's grace I will be open to the presence, guidance and power of the Holy Spirit – is the second rhythm of grace. Being *open* to the presence of God is an acknowledgement that God is present to us all the time, but it is us who are often not open to God's presence, guidance and power. We close our hearts to God when we live unheedingly, when we are too busy, too driven by the pressures of life. We dull our senses with noise, with stimulants, with entertainment. It takes an act of will to put aside these distractions and to focus on God.

In our reading today we catch a glimpse of the hustle and bustle of Jesus' life: some Greeks have asked to see him, the disciples are busy, the crowds are demanding and questioning and critical. When God speaks, some think it is thunder, others that an angel has spoken. It is no wonder that Jesus departed and hid from them.

Learning to be open to the presence of God is all about our attentiveness, our "mindfulness", becoming aware of God in all things. There's a helpful pattern for taking 15 minutes each evening to review your day. First, remind yourself that you are in God's presence. Secondly, review the events and conversations of the day: notice the encouraging, stretching and empowering moments (consolation) and also the times when you were not at your best (desolation). What is God saying, through this movement of our

emotions during the day? Jesus said "*Blessed are the peacemakers*" because we need that deep peace above all else if we are to be open to the presence, guidance and power of the Holy Spirit.

To think about

How often do you find that deep peace amid the busyness of your life?

What brings you a sense of consolation, what brings desolation?

How much can God influence the decisions you make?

Prayer

Holy Spirit of God, be present to us now
as we wait in the quietness of this moment.

Guide us with your gentle wisdom,
to put aside all that clouds your presence

And fill us with your power, made perfect in our human weakness.

Amen.

Holy Wednesday Set Aside Time

Reading John 13. 21-32

Reflection

By God's grace I will set aside time for prayer, worship and spiritual reading – is the third rhythm of grace. One of the marks of St Chad's life as a monk would have been the pattern, the rhythm, of his life. He would have prayed five times each day the different offices of the religious life. This scaffolding of time set aside for prayer, worship and spiritual reading was what enabled him to be so productive in his mission and ministry. He moved the centre of the diocese to Lichfield, walked about the land preaching and

teaching, establishing the Christian faith for generations to come. His activity and achievements are energised by the time he sets aside for God.

In our reading today we see the gradual disintegration of Judas. He has been stealing from the common purse, criticising the other disciples, and now he is preparing to betray Jesus. When we lose the rhythm of time for God it is so easy to find ourselves like a runaway train, careering off the tracks.

Instead of time being our servant it becomes our master, and in the end we run out of time. So when we find ourselves pushed to the limit, with no time for God or ourselves, it is even more important to set aside time to pray, to worship and to read. Jesus said "*Blessed are the pure in heart*" because we need to give time to getting our motives right and to stay on track. The more we have to do, the more we need to set aside time for prayer, worship and spiritual reading.

To think about

Do you ever feel like a runaway train, with no time to stand still?
When was the last time you did any spiritual reading?
Is time your servant or your master?

Prayer

God of time and eternity, we set aside this time for you.
Hear the prayer of our hearts, the offering of our worship.
Speak to us through the saints of old, and prophets of today, your ever living word of life. **Amen.**

Maundy Thursday

A Gracious Presence

Reading John 13. 1-17, 31b-35

Reflection

By God's grace I will seek to be a gracious presence in the world, serving others and working for justice in human relationships and social structures – is the fourth rhythm of grace. We sometimes sing a chorus "Freely, freely, you have received, freely, freely give" that describes this rhythm so well. As we become aware of the grace of God for us, of the forgiveness, the love of God for us, so we are called to become a gracious, loving, forgiving presence in the world. Of course it doesn't always happen! Jesus told the parable of the unforgiving servant (Matthew 18 23-35) to warn of the dangers of not "freely giving". In the Lord's Prayer we always say "Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who have sinned against us".

Our reading today shows Jesus kneeling and washing his disciple's feet, as a living parable of what it means to be a gracious presence in the world and serving others. They found it hard to receive, hard to be served, hard to see their teacher humbling himself like a common servant. Jesus turned upside down so many of the social structures of their world, and asked them to do the same.

Jesus said "*Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for justice for they shall be satisfied*" and calls us to follow him into a life of service.

To think about

How easy do you find it to receive, to be served, to accept help?

Do you think people find you to be a gracious presence in the world?

Are you working for justice?

Prayer

Gracious God, as we have freely received your love, forgiveness and grace,

So help us to freely give,

to be a gracious presence in your world.

Make us hungry for justice, and willing to kneel with you

To love and serve, in your name. **Amen.**

Good Friday Sensitively Share



Reading John 19. 1-42

Reflection

By God's grace, I will sensitively share my faith with others and support God's mission both locally and globally – is the fifth rhythm of grace.

For us in Britain sharing our faith may feel embarrassing, may even open us up to ridicule, but it is unlikely to lead us to be persecuted or discriminated against. But for many Christians today, sharing their faith can lead to arrest, beatings even to death. It is hard for us even to imagine it.

In our reading we reach the low point of Holy Week, the arrest, trial, and execution of Jesus. All he did was to share his faith, but his

words were deemed to be too dangerous to be permitted. But what is this faith that we share? At the heart of our faith is this act of incredible inhumanity, the cruel death of an innocent man. It stands for all the other inhumanities and injustices of our world, and of God's promise that evil will not triumph.

In the midst of the horror of what was happening to him, Jesus looked to his mother and his friend and asked them to look after each other. God's mission, locally and globally is just this – to hold on to love in the face of hatred, to bring new relationship in the face of enmity, to bring new hope out of despair, and on Easter day to bring new life out of death. Jesus said "*Blessed are those who are persecuted for the sake of justice*" and then he had to live up to his own words. But even on this darkest day, he allowed the light to shine by being true to his faith.

To think about

Do you feel embarrassed about sharing your faith?

Does your faith matter enough to you to want to share it with others?

Do you support people who are being persecuted for their faith?

Prayer

Lord Jesus, give us the courage and confidence we need sensitively to share our faith with family, friends and neighbours;

To share your story of love overcoming all things - betrayal, cruelty, injustice even death itself -

of your light shining in the darkest days. **Amen**

Holy Saturday Grace to Wait

Reading John 27. 57-66

Reflection

So, what do you do when the worst happens, when your hopes have been dashed, your love is crushed, all has gone as badly wrong as it can do? Where are those rhythms of grace then? What do you do when despite all your prayers, all your tears, nothing seems to have changed and all you can see is darkness or death, endings or dead ends? What do you do when you are completely overwhelmed?

Well, most often you just carry on mechanically, going through the necessary motions of what is expected of you – the mundane and practical, followed by sitting and waiting. Sometimes we simply run out of grace, and faith, and hope. Sometimes our faith seems useless and empty, and all we can do is wait.

Joseph, Mary and the other Mary had loved Jesus, trusted him, followed him, hoped for the new world that he had promised, but at this moment, that must have seemed like nonsense. All they could do was take the body and find a grave. How could Jesus be dead? What future could there be for them?

Holy Saturday is all about waiting – waiting because there is nothing else that can be done. We live in an activist world, where the mantra seems to be “Don’t just sit there, do something”. But sometimes the waiting is the only thing to do. The prophet Isaiah said *“Those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength, they*

shall rise up on wings as eagles" (Isaiah 40.31). Jesus said "*Blessed are those who mourn*" and promised that they would be comforted. In the waiting we take hold of that promise for all who mourn today.

To think about

What has been the worst moment of disappointment or loss for you?

How do you feel when you can't do anything, but only wait?

Did your faith help you in that situation?

Prayer

God in our desolation and loss, give to us your grace of waiting.

When there is nothing more that can be done,

Help us to be still, and to wait with you.

Renew our strength that we might rise up on wings as eagles.

Amen

Easter Day

I have seen the Lord!

Reading John 20. 1-18

Reflection

Tears are another grace from God. They allow the pent up feelings of grief and hurt and anger to flow out of us, and for us to begin to heal. Tears are a physical relief, like a pressure valve, allowing us to express our pain. Tears are also a way of clearing our vision, of keeping our eyes healthy.

Mary stood weeping outside the tomb, and with all that she had experienced, it is no wonder that she is not seeing things clearly. It has been an overwhelming experience. Through her tears she glimpses someone whom she takes to be the gardener; but as her eyes clear she sees that it is Jesus, risen from the dead. Mary is given the grace to be the first apostle, sent to proclaim the good news, *"I have seen the Lord"*.

For us, the resurrection of Jesus from the dead is a familiar story, we know the ending, so we find it hard to imagine how the disciples must have felt. For them it is a firsthand experience, Mary is able to say *"I have seen the Lord"*. But for our faith to be real, we cannot rely on a second hand story. The power of the Easter story is that it goes on being repeated in our lives today. Whenever we find a new way forward after our own experiences of loss and grief and disappointment, whenever we see life after death, hope after despair, we can say with Mary *"I have seen the Lord"*.

We can have a first -hand Easter faith!

To think about

Are there tears that you need to shed?

Where can you see the Easter story working today?

Is yours a first-hand faith?

Prayer

God of our longing, your gift of tears brings healing and hope.

May we see through our sadness and confusion
to your new life, bursting from the tomb.

May we say with Mary "I have seen the Lord"

And know our faith to be real. **Amen.**



The material in this booklet has been written by The Revd Preb Chris Thorpe, a priest in the Diocese of Lichfield.

For more information about the Community of St Chad see www.lichfield.anglican.org or visit our Facebook page www.facebook.com/CommunityOfStChad

Be with us Lord as we seek to follow in the footsteps of your servant Chad, whose humility and prayerfulness attracted so many to your kingdom. Let our lives, like his, reflect the light of Christ and the hope of faith. In the name of your Son Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen