

Notes  
on



the History  
of

# Kirk Christ Rushen,

Isle of Man.

(DEDICATED TO THE HOLY TRINITY.)



Paper read at a Meeting of the  
Rushen Branch of the  
Church of England Men's Society  
on Tuesday, 7th March, 1911,

BY THE

Rev. C. H. Leece, President,  
Vicar of Kirk Christ, Rushen.

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PRICE SIXPENCE.





RUSHEN CHURCH.

[ Photo. by V. L. Swales

## **Kirk Christ Rushen.**

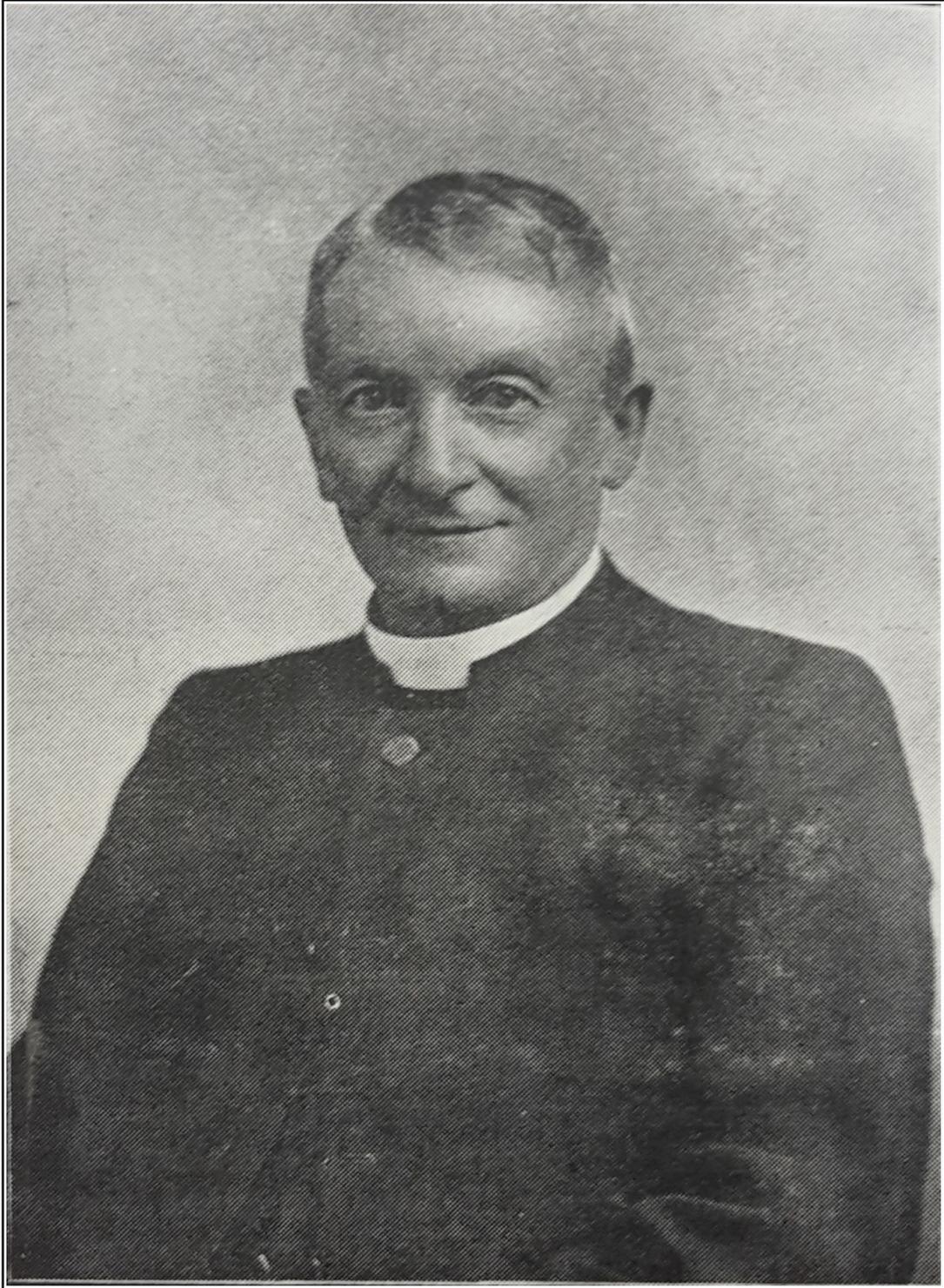
*(Paper read by the Rev. C. H. Leece.)*

In accordance with a suggestion made at our meeting in January last, that I should read a "paper" on the history our Parish Church, I have compiled the following "notes" which I hope you may find interesting.

To begin with the same -

### **"KIRK CHRIST RUSHEN,"**

"Rushen" is said to be a corruption of "Russien," a disciple of St. Patrick;



**REV. C. H. LEECE, VICAR OF KIRK CHRIST RUSHEN.**

*[ Photo. By Warburton, Douglas.*

and I may remind you that the dedication is to the Holy Trinity, but from early days it has been known as “Kirk Christ Rushen,” the name of the parish being added simply to distinguish it from “Kirk Christ Lezayre,” which is also dedicated to the Holy Trinity.

Why these and other churches – for example, Christ Church, Dublin; Christ Church, Oxford; Christ’s Church, Canterbury – dedicated to the Holy Trinity, should be called “Christ Church,” I do not know. All I can say is, that such has been the title by which these churches have been known for centuries.

In what I have to say with regard to the history of our own much-loved old church of “Kirk Christ,” I would to commence with acknowledge my indebtedness to Canon Quine, Vicar of Lonan, for much valuable information which he kindly sent me. Canon Quine is - as you are no doubt aware – one of our leading authorities on Manx History, and in a letter I had from him recently, he says:

“The present site of Rushen Church is undoubtedly very old, of time immemorial antiquity: I should say there was a small Christian church there as early as the seventh century (600-700 A.D.), or even earlier – that is to say, there were a number of such small churches in what is now the Parish of Rushen.”

We must, therefore, go back a long way in order to get some idea of the origin and early history of what has been for at least 700 years the Parish Church of Rushen.



**INTERIOR OF KIRK CHRIST RUSHEN.**

*[ Photo. By Mr. E. B. Gawne.*

And in the first place, it is necessary to get as clear an understanding as we can of the early religious foundations in the Island and the Periods when they were established, or re-adjusted so as to continue with new organisation.

(A.) We have first, the Early Celtic Period (A.D. 450-600) – the centuries associated with the names of St. Patrick and St. Bridget (5th and early 6th centuries), and with the work of St. Columba (the famous Irish missionary of Iona) in the late 6th century, whose work was continued by “the Family of Iona,” or successors of St. Columba, into the 7th century.

(B.) From Bede and other sources there is, say Canon Quine, a strong presumption that the “Angles” of Northumbria – who occupied the whole coast region of the South of Scotland as well as English Northumbria—did actually occupy the Isle of Man.

There is at least one dedication in the Island to St. Cuthbert (the Anglian Bishop of the late 7th century), viz., at Kirk Arbory. “Kirk Arbory” is a corruption of “Kirk Cairbre,” and Kirk Cairbre appears to be a corruption of Kirk Cuthbert (compare Kirkcudbright in Scotland). In that parish there was a chapel of St. Cuthbert as well as one of St. Columba, and sometimes the parish was called after one of them, at other times the after the other; and while the Parish Church is dedicated to St. Columba, the parish has long been called “Arbory,” after St. Cuthbert—the Anglian influences following in succession the Columbian as was the case in the

Northern parts of England and Lowland Scotland.

(C.) The Danish Period: It began with the 9<sup>th</sup> century, their settlements being from about the year 850, and their influence lasting till the Scottish occupation of the Island of Man, in 1266. To make these three periods quite clear to our minds, I summarise them thus -

1<sup>st</sup>: The Celtic Period, A.D. 450-600.

2<sup>nd</sup>: The Anglian Period, A.D. 600-850.

3<sup>rd</sup>: The Danish Period, A.D. 850-1266.

The Celts were divided into tribes or clans, the chief being supreme head of their tribal institutions. The Danes were independent freemen, as were also the Angles, ruled by a King, who was nevertheless dependent on the loyal support of freemen, who were tenacious of their rights.

Now, having got these three points clearly before us, let us look at the ancient divisions of the parish, called

### **TREENS,**

each of which appears to have had a small church or chapel belonging to it.

The Rushen Treens are (as written in the Manorial Rent Book of 1511) eighteen in number, the same as they appear in the Lord's Rent Book today. Rushen Treens:-

1. Fyshgarth (Fins-Garth) – Fistard, etc.
2. Glensast – Glenchass, etc.
3. Corvalley – Howe District and Port St. Mary.
4. Gleton – Ballacreggan, Ballahain.

5. Cregneash ( $1\frac{3}{4}$  quarterlands).
6. Edremony – Rowany, Ballakneale, Ballaqueeney.
7. Shenvalley – Balnahow, Droghad Fayle, etc.
8. Bradhawe – Bradda, Cronaback, etc.
9. Saureby – Surby, Ballachrink, etc.
10. Kentragh – Kentraugh, etc.
11. Kyrk Suason – Ballachurry, Ballagawne, etc.
12. Scaleby – Scolaby, Ballacorkish, etc.
13. Orristal – Croit-e-Caley, etc.
14. Kyrkepatryk – Ballakilpheric, Bealevaare, etc.
15. Renwolyn–Renwillen ( $\frac{1}{2}$  quarterland)
16. Scardr – Scard (1 quarterland)
17. Le Garre ( $\frac{1}{2}$  quarterland) – Part of Lingague
18. Le Calfr – Calf of Man.

I have given the names of some of the quarterlands only, for the purpose of showing the position of the respective Treens.

Leaving out the Calf of Man, we have thus 17 treens containing 44 quarterlands.

It is probable that all these tracts of land – which in Danish times became estates or manors, held by a chief – had in early Celtic times its own little church.

The remains, or indications of the site of several are still to be found, and you will find a number of them marked on Ordnance Map. The remains of the church on the treen of Kyrkepatryk (Ballakilpheric), for instance, were in existence a generation since – and I have met with men who remembered them

well - and it is only of recent years that the foundations were removed; and I have it on the authority of one of those old inhabitants that the stone, of peculiar shape, now standing against the south-east corner of Ballakilpheric Wesleyan Chapel, is one of two such stones which formerly stood outside the entrance to the ancient Keeill of Kyrkepatryk; and I know of another stone, at present in the highroad fence in the same neighbourhood, which, I have been assured by the same authority, formed the sill, or threshold of the doorway of the Church of Patrick, which the Danes found there, and considered of sufficient importance to be called a "kyrke" - one of the "kykes" of Danish times which did NOT become a parish church.

Now, let us look at some of these Treen names: Fyshgarth (Fistard) is Fins-Garth - the Garth of Fin, a Danish chief under Olaf I., King of Man, and a witness to Olaf's Charter of the year 1134, by which Rushen Abbey was founded and endowed. Like other witnesses to the Charter, Fin was a donor of land to the Abbey, viz., a part of his Manor or Garth at Port-le-Murra, where St. Mary's Chapel stood on Chapel Bay on the sea side of the present Board School; and when the road there was being re-made some years ago, the workmen came upon a number of ancient graves, evidently part of the graveyard of the little Chapel of St. Mary. The Promenade, Port St. Mary, from Gansey and back almost to the Smelt-road, is still Abbey Land, and includes the quarterland of Ballavrara (Abbey Farm). The Abbey Land boundary takes in part of the Cronk and comes down to the sea again between the Isle of Man and

the Post Office, thence along a little stream to the shore. This, I take it, was Fin's gift to the Abbey.

There was another Rushen Danish Chief in Olaf's time, named Snetol, and, like Fin, a witness to the Abbey Charter, and also a donor of land to the Abbey.

Canon Quine thinks that Snetol was the owner of EdremonyTreen, and that he was the donor of "the Abbey Lands" near the Parish Church, including a part of Ballakilley, or Ballakeilley (Church Farm) – possibly he also gave to Rushen Abbey the Church then existing on the site of the present Parish Church, and that from him the Abbey received the patronage or advowson.

It is doubtful if parishes were organised in this Island in A.D. 1134, when Rushen Abbey was founded; but they were organised during the next 50 or 60 years. Our evidence of this is that the earliest Parish Church, of which we have a record in Man, is in the year 1214 in the case of Marown, or Kyrke-Marown, of which a minister named Brice was then "Rector." In that year the then Bishop, Nicholas, stipulated when the grant of St. Trinian's was made to the Priory of Whithorn (1214) that it should not take effect so as to injure the rights of Rector Brice during his term of the Rectory, nor the rights of the Bishop.

This establishes the fact that by A.D. 1214 parishes had been formed in Man.

We do not know the exact dates, but they were organised in the interval between 1134 and 1214 – Canon Quine thinks probably in the reign of Godred II. about A.D. 1170 – for Godred provided

that a Glebe of not less than a certain area should be around each Church, exactly as it still is around Lonan Old Church.

Thus we learn that in Danish times (say 850 to 1150) the Church system was that each treen had its little church, and there were no Parish Churches, but, “we may boldly assert,” says Canon Quine, “that the organisation of parishes and Parish Churches took place sometime in the 12<sup>th</sup> Century – during the reigns of Olaf I. (1114-1154), Godred II. (1154-1187), and completed, no doubt, during the reign of Reginald I. (1187-1226).

To summarise what I have said -

1. Our Parish Church was originally the church of a Celtic Mission.

2. Later, the church of a Danish manor or treen – one of several within the present geographical parish.

3. In the 12th century, say about the year 1180, made the Parish Church of the newly-organised Parish of Holy Trinity, when the parochial system was first introduced into the Isle of Man.

Our church appears to have been on the Treen of Edremony, which Mr A. W. Moore explains thus (“Place Names,” page 249; 2nd edition, 1903: 178) - “Edremony, a corruption of Eddyrdaa-Moainee, ‘Between two turbaries or marshes,’ which exactly described its situation formerly.”

In the 13th century, it is stated in the “Chronicon Manniæ” (Chronicle of Man), kept by the Monks of Rushen Abbey, and now in the British Museum,

under date 3rd June, 1249: “Reginaldus II. Occisus est ab Yvaro Milite et a suis, in prato quodam, prope ecclesiam Sanctæ Trinitatis in Russin, ad australem partem ejusdem ecclesiæ.” “Reginald II. Was killed by Ivar the Knight and his men, in a certain meadow near the Church of Holy Trinity in Rushen, to the southern side of the said church.”

That is, as I understand it, somewhere about Ballakilley Flat or on Ballaqueeney – and NOT at Cronk Moar (Fairy Hill), as has been stated by some writers.

This Ivar was the first cousin of Reginald, and Canon Quine connects him with Orristal (Ballacreegan), and says his descendants possessed Kentraugh Treen and were afterwards connected with the family (afterwards Qualtrough) that possessed it for centuries down to the time of its becoming the property of the Gawnes.

But I have not time or space to enter into the history of local names and families, interesting as the subject is to me.

In the Rent Roll Book of 1511, we find this parish called “Parochia Sanctæ Trinitatis” in Rushen. It is elsewhere called “Holy Trinity inter prata” (“Holy Trinity between the meadows,” viz., the “moainees” or turbaries).

Thus we have the two titles identifying the one site -

“Edremony” -  
Eddyr-daa-Moainee  
inter prata.

I take it that it was originally the Danish (district) Church of “Edremony,” and that it continued to have this distinctive old name persistently attached to it – through finding it called Holy Trinity “between the meadows” (“interpretata”), or Holy Trinity of Edremony.

When or how did it become the property of Rushen Abbey ? Canon Quine thinks in the year 1134, by the gift of the Danish Chief Snetol, who was a party to Olaf’s Charter founding the Abbey, and like all parties and witnesses to that Charter, a donor of lands.

I think it probable that it might be a little later, possibly at the time when parishes were first organised: but, however that may be, we know that early in the history of the Abbey the patronage of Kirk Christ, Rushen, was in the hands of the Abbot, and continued to be so until the dissolution of the Abbey by the Commissioners of Henry VIII. in A.D. 1540, when the property of the Abbey was appropriated, or to put it more correctly, it became – in technical phrase – “impropriate,” that is, it passed into lay hands, and was appropriated to other than ecclesiastical uses, and the advowson or patronage of Kirk Christ Rushen passed to the “Lord of the Isle” (the Earl of Derby), in whose hands it remained until the completion of the purchase of the Lord’s Rights by the British Government at the beginning of last century – when Rushen became, as it is now, “a Crown living.”

The Vicar of Rushen had no “tithe,” as in some of the other parishes, but the patron paid him a stipend or pension of

£6 per annum. After the dissolution of the Abbey, this “pension” was still paid out of the Abbey revenues. In the year 1647 the then Vicar, John Keig, petitioned the Earl of Derby for an increase, and the stipend was fixed at £8 (Manks) - £6 17s 2d British- and allowing for the purchasing value of money being very much greater in 1647 than at present, unless the Vicar of Rushen had some other source of income, it would seem as if he would perforce have to lead the “simple life.”

As a practical link between those old days and the present, it may interest you to learn that the Vicar of Rushen still receives, every Easter, £6 17s 2d under the head of “Crown Stipend,” out of the money received by the British Government from the sale of the Abbey Tithe of Rushen.

Thus we have our old Parish Church, springing from and standing on the site of a small Mission Church of Celtic times, and made the church of the parish some 700 years ago.

We have traced its history from its infancy down to comparatively modern times, and I will only add a few notes in conclusion regarding some events in its later history.

In the year 1775 it was re-roofed, and I think the chancel was then enlarged and the walls partly rebuilt.

At a vestry meeting held on the 26<sup>th</sup> October, 1831, it was agreed that the churchyard was too small for the inhabitants of the parish, and additional

ground was provided by the purchase of a portion of "Ballahowe meadow adjoining the churchyard on the north side," and after being properly fenced and brought to the level of the old churchyard with earth brought from "The Barracks," it was consecrated by Bishop Ward on the 7<sup>th</sup> June, 1833. And I think I am right in saying that the "little gate" and flight of steps on the east of the church were added at this time.

In the year 1833, with the sanction of the Bishop and the Archdeacon, the Clerk's Glebe, near the church gate, was exchanged for the present Clerk's Glebe – Mr John Clucas, of Ballakilley, agreeing to give in exchange for the old glebe an equal quantity of land, and also to build a house thereon as a residence for the parish clerk. This arrangement does not appear to have been formally brought before a vestry meeting until April, 1852, when it was approved of as "being advantageous," and the exchange was subsequently confirmed by Act of Tynwald.

A new vicarage house was built in 1839 at a cost of £470. During the incumbency of the Rev. F. F. Tracy (1881), another storey was added to it and it was otherwise enlarged to its present size.

In 1839, by resolution passed at the Easter vestry meeting, the north door of the church was built up, new windows were put in, and other repairs carried out, at a total cost of £115.

In 1860 the new Parochial Boys' School was opened, and the old school-house at the church gate (known as the "Clerk's

School”), which had been the Parochial School for generations was closed. In the following year it was pulled down, and the ground on which it stood was added to the churchyard.

In 1864 the first organ was placed in the church, at a total cost of £78.

Four years later (1868), the Misses Isalen and Katherine Gawne, of Kentraugh, offered to provide £200 for repairing the heating arrangements and beautifying and improving the church. At a meeting of the parishioners on 27<sup>th</sup> November in that year, this generous offer was gratefully accepted, and a number of improvements were shortly afterwards carried out; and the pulpit was removed from the body of the church to where it now stands.

Four years later (1872) a very great improvement to the appearance and convenience of the chancel was made, by the erection of the “Apse,” with its beautifully coloured windows, by Mrs Gawne, in memory of her husband – the late E. M. Gawne, of Kentraugh, Captain of the Parish, and for many years Speaker of the House of Keys. The central window was erected by the parishioners to his memory.

In the year 1869, additional burial ground was provided, when nearly an acre was added to the churchyard. And in A.D. 1900 a further addition of an acre and a half was made.

At the Easter vestry meeting in 1905, it was resolved to apply to the Governor

to have the old churchyard closed for burials. A public inquiry was subsequently held by order of his Excellency, and in November, 1905, an order was made, closing the old churchyard as a place of burial.

In the year 1885 the church was re-seated, and the old high-backed pews were replaced by the present pews made of pitchpine.

The next notable event was a "new organ," which was "opened" by our present efficient organist, Mr Arthur Cregeen, A.I.S.C., at a service of dedication held on 24<sup>th</sup> March, 1904, the cost, including hydraulic engine and blower, being £350. The money was provided by a bazaar held in Kentraugh Grounds (by kind permission of Mr E. B. Gawne) and by voluntary contributions - £28 coming from South Africa, per the late Mr L. Collister, who forwarded this handsome contribution on behalf of a number of former parishioners, in token of affection for their old Parish Church.

Before closing, I might just briefly refer to church extension in the parish. In the year 1878 the Church at Cregneish was built and dedicated to St. Peter. In the following year (1879), through the benefaction of the late Mr Milner, St. Catherine's Church, Port Erin, was built. And five years later (1884), St. Mary's Church, Port St. Mary, was completed, and consecrated by Bishop Hill.

Thus we arrive at our own times; and as I look at our old church, I am

moved with feelings of deep affection and reverence for this ancient House of God, which through so many generations has stood a witness to the Christian Faith.

How venerable it is ! How it seems to call to us from the distant past, as we think of the Early Christian missionaries preaching to the ancient Celtic clans; and of their successors teaching the Danish chiefs, with their warlike followers telling about Gold and Christ, Truth and Justice, and planting in rough natures a reverence for holy things, which prompted them to give of their possessions for the support of God's House and God's work.

What changes has this ancient foundation seen !

Kings and Bishops, Governors and Abbots, Priests and People passing along on the rolling tide of years. Here it stands – here it has stood for some 1300 years.

### **GOD'S HOUSE**

The Mother Church of the district – the Parish Church of Rushen for 700 years. Through all the years speaking for God; witnessing to Christ, baptising the children, caring for the poor, ministering by her offices to the sick and the dying, the weak and the sinful; amidst all the changes of this mortal life, ever pointing to One Who changes not, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.

Here it stands ! The church of our fathers calling forth feelings of reverence and affection, no less to-day than in

former days. I am thankful that after its long and honourable history it is still by God's grace a living power in our midst; and I welcome as a fresh evidence of the continued love for and interest in her work this recently formed Branch of the C.E.M.S., which, I trust, is destined to render much useful service to the church and people of Kirk Christ Rushen.

We have a goodly heritage, may we be worthy inheritors.

The following is a list of Vicars for the past 337 years. I have not been able to find authentic records previous to 1574:-

VICARS OF RUSHEN.		A.D.
1.	James Smyth .....	1574
2.	Alexander Stevenson .....	1582
3.	William Watterson .....	1603
4.	John Corkill .....	1606
5.	John Keig .....	1638
6.	John Thompson .....	1660
7.	Richard Thompson .....	1689
8.	John Parr .....	1691
9.	Matthew Curghey .....	1703
10.	Thomas Christian .....	1713
11.	John Quaile .....	1729
12.	Nicholas Christian .....	1734
13.	John Clague .....	1782
14.	Joseph Qualtrough .....	1816
15.	William Corrin .....	1824
16.	Hugh Stowell Gill .....	1859

17. Edward William Kissack ..... 1872
18. Arthur Allwork ..... 1879
19. Frederick F. Tracy ..... 1881
20. Charles A. Dawes ..... 1885
21. Blundell Browne ..... 1887
22. Thomas Redfern Kneale ..... 1893
23. Charles Henry Leece ..... 1897



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**The Church of England  
Men's Society**

**RULE OF LIFE.**

“To pray to God every day, and  
to do something to help forward  
the work of the Church.”

