

Wigston Benefice

Achievable Spirituality



Creating a Rule of Life that works for you

What is a Rule of Life?

A Rule of Life is something to help Christians to grow in their faith and relationship with God. A rule is a set of guidelines or principles to help guide and direct our actions and prayers. It's not meant to be burdensome or complex but it should be something to think about carefully and to review regularly so it changes and develops as we do.

A rule of life is for everyone to create; young or old, employed or not, retired etc. It's about making sure that you're finding ways to grow and develop in your relationship with God.

In this leaflet is some guidance to help you to think about what you might do to shape your own pattern or 'Rule of Life':

- Learning from the Christian tradition
- Biblical inspiration
- Creating your own Rule

The most famous Rule was devised by St Benedict in the sixth century:

In drawing up a rule we hope to set down nothing harsh, nothing burdensome. Do not be daunted immediately by fear and run away from the road that leads to salvation. It is bound to be narrow at the outset, but as we progress in the way of life and in faith, we shall run on the path of God's commandments, our hearts overflowing with inexpressible delight of love. (Prologue)

Those who are called to the particular vocation of monastic life give their lives to following a Rule of Life in community, devoting themselves to work, study and worship. If this is something you believe God wants you to explore, have a word with Fr Trevor or Fr Chris.

But following a Rule of Life is not just for monks and nuns!

You can shape your own.
You can work on it on your own
or perhaps you might like to talk it through with someone.
It can change throughout your life.

A Rule of Life is for everyone.

Learning from the Christian Tradition

Things to ponder and that might help feed you on your spiritual journey.

The Eucharist

Commitment to regular attendance at the Eucharist should form the basis of any Rule as it's the point where we truly meet with Christ in bread and wine. Work out what you need to keep your relationship with God sustained and living. Some attend weekly, some daily and others somewhere in between.

Retreats, Quiet Days & Pilgrimages

Committing to take time away from everyday life in order to spend time with God. This might be a formal time staying at a Retreat House or Religious Community. Some people just find it really helpful to take a 'retreat in everyday life' by switching off your phone, removing distractions and devoting yourself to some quiet time and prayer.

Daily Office/ Prayer

Regular, scheduled prayer times to make sure that your relationship with God doesn't get lost in the busyness of life. It's often helpful to pray with other people and in the Benefice we hold Morning & Evening Prayer daily, Monday – Friday.

Playing your part in worship

The church needs you to take your part in its life and worship. This might be: reading a lesson, leading the prayers, administering a chalice, offering your gifts and skills to an ongoing project.

Meditation, Prayer & Contemplation

Learning different techniques as part of your prayer life and to be attentive to God. These might be the use of silence, meditation, imaginative prayer, prayer walking, using art and craft, music or a whole host of other ideas too.

Scripture

A regular pattern of Bible reading and learning to help faith to be immersed in the story of God's interaction with the world and God's people. There are techniques to help with this such as *Lectio Divina* and also Bible reading notes to help inform reading.

Confession

Committing to recognise those parts of your character that need work or those things that you've done wrong for which you need to seek God's forgiveness. Sometimes naming those specifically and out loud in the presence of a priest can be a major part of that process.

Mission

Working out how you can participate in the life and outreach of the Church or serving others by supporting other agencies- perhaps by volunteering or providing resources for local, national or international charities.

Care for God's Creation

Take time to ponder how you're going to be a good steward of God's creation. What are you doing to look after the environment and what simple or bigger changes can you make to help reduce any negative impact?

Prayers for Healing

Sometimes there are parts of us that are broken or times when we feel not quite whole. It might be that these need medical attention, it might be that we need to give some attention to the spiritual aspect of that brokenness too. The Church has offered prayers for healing for generations and we continue that here in the Wigston Benefice in the present day. Through laying on of hands with prayer and anointing with Holy Oil we pray that each of us may be made whole in body, mind and spirit. It doesn't necessarily mean miraculous cures but it might mean the grace to bear some of life's burdens in a different way.

Giving

A commitment to giving generously towards the work of the church from your financial and other resources. This might be thinking about how much money you give to church every month, giving your time to a particular project or helping the church run smoothly on a daily basis.

Biblical inspiration

Being and Doing

It's a bit simplistic, but we need to keep a balance between: 'doing' the business of ordinary human and Christian life, worship and service *and* 'being' in God's presence, God's love and attentive to God's calling and leading.

Peter at the Transfiguration (Luke 9:28-36)

Being in God's presence in that way must have been both spectacular and frightening! Peter is not only confused at the transfiguration, but also wants to stay there. He eventually comes back down the mountain and goes on to play a significant role in the birth of the early church. How might your own Rule of Life find a balance between the awesomeness of the transfiguration and everyday faith?



Being Realistic and Doing what you can

Pray as you can, not as you can't. Challenge is good and important for our development in so many ways. However... if you set unrealistic goals or tasks for yourself then you're setting yourself up for a fall and probably frustration or being disheartened.

A Time for Everything (Ecclesiastes 3)

Reminding us that 'there is a time for everything', the writer of Ecclesiastes is trying to emphasise the seasons of life we all move through. It's also about being realistic! Life, as we all know, has its ups and downs; what works for us when we're younger may not work as we get older, so don't be afraid to try new ways of praying.

Being a Mary *and* a Martha: Doing what needs to be done

We need to be involved and life is often busy but we need stillness and calmness too, however strange or uncomfortable that might be. Choosing when is the right time for which is important.

Mary and Martha (Luke 10:38-42)

In the tradition of the time it would have been scandalous for Mary to shirk her duties and sit at a man's feet. Mary teaches us about crossing boundaries to be in relationship with God and stepping outside of tradition. Whilst Martha often seems to come off worse in this story, there is a time when we need to follow her example. Martha was preparing her house *for Jesus*, as her guest - her hospitality in hosting him is definitely something we can all learn from.



Being true to yourself *and* to God : Facing up to reality

God is the one to whom all our hearts are open and all our desires are known. Sometimes the challenge is not so much admitting things to God but to ourselves. It might be that we need to talk that through with someone formally or informally but hiding things or pretending they're not a problem can get in the way or affect our relationship with God and others.

Jonah

We might sometimes feel God's pull on our lives, perhaps to spend more time with him or explore a new path. However, we might not always be ready or willing to listen. Whilst we're unlikely to end up in the belly of a whale (!) God will wait for us to hear him clearly, even if that takes years, and to grow in our relationship with him.

Being open-minded *and* Doing what we didn't expect to do

Growing in relationship with God can lead us into unexpected directions and can challenge some of the things that we've held dear or relied upon. We need to be open to God's leading to new ways of praying, worshipping and engaging with the world and the people God created and loves.

The conversion of Saul (Acts 9)

Before he was Saint Paul, Saul was persecuting men and women who belonged to the early Church. He was, in short, the last person you'd expect to turn to Christ. His conversion experience on the Road to Damascus transformed Saul's life in unimaginable ways. God's transformative power in our lives can manifest (be known) in the most unlikely of places and people, if only we keep our hearts and minds open to his possibilities.



Being proactive *and* Doing God's work

Christians are called to work in God's service, demonstrating God's love for the world and trying to make it a better place. Sometimes we need to take a lead or step up even when we don't feel confident or worthy. There are lots of examples in the Bible (Moses, St Paul, Our Lady) and also in Christian history of God calling people regardless of their age or situation.

The Servant of the Lord (Luke 1:46-55)

Mary is the ultimate example of courage in serving God and obeying his word. The Magnificat, her worshipful response to God working in her life, is one of the most beautiful parts of scripture. Mary acts upon God's call in her life, even though her age and marital status made that a risky decision. We are all called to serve God, in a variety of ways, and even though we may not feel worthy or strong enough, God will help us on our way.

Creating your own Rule of Life

There are some guidance notes on the back to help with some further thinking but as an initial response, jot down:

- ⇒ One or two things that you think you could do immediately

- ⇒ One or two things that you're already doing (whether they're listed above or not)

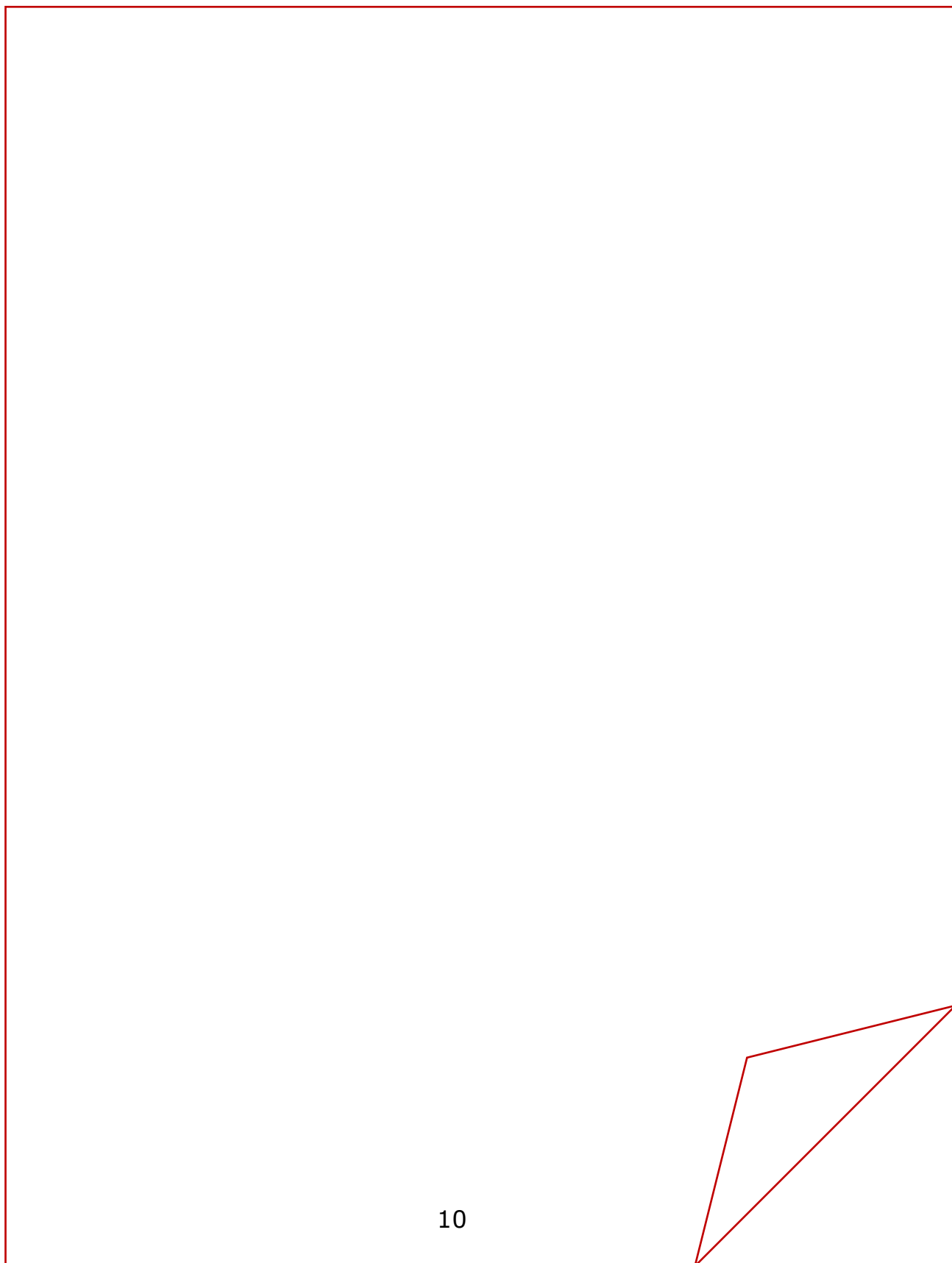
- ⇒ One or two things from the Christian tradition that you'd like to learn more about

- ⇒ Things that you'd find challenging about following a Rule of Life

- ⇒ Things you think you'd find rewarding

Take some time to offer your thoughts to God in prayer and think about where you want to start – perhaps picking up a new habit, or learning about a spiritual discipline you’re unfamiliar with.

Space for your own thoughts



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Glossary

Rule of Life: a structure consisting of different things to help you to develop your relationship with God.

Lectio Divina: a way of reading the Bible. Pick a short passage, read it through 2 or 3 times, slowly. Think about what words or phrases stand out to you and ponder them in prayer.

Retreat: a period of time spent away from the world, often at a specific retreat house or with a religious community of monks or nuns.

Quiet Day: as a retreat but over a shorter period, often with input from a group leader.

Pilgrimage: visiting a particularly holy place, e.g. Walsingham, for a time of prayer and worship. A pilgrimage can also be simpler and more local, such as a walk in a local place which is spent in prayer and reflection.

Daily Office: Morning and Evening Prayer. Some people also like to say Compline or 'Night Prayer'. You can get books to help with this, there's even an App! Search for 'Daily Prayer: from the CofE' in your App store.

Make a note of any terms you'd like explaining below:

Getting Started

You'd be very welcome to contact one of the clergy, if you would like to talk through some of your thinking or starting your own Rule of Life.

Fr Chris: revchrisjohnson.wbs@gmail.com (0116 278 2830)

Fr Trevor: trevor@thursmith.co.uk (0116 288 0985)

More generally, you can keep in touch with the Wigston Benefice in a number of ways in order to give you an idea of some of the things that are going on to help with this:

www.wigstonbenefice.org.uk

Search for: 'Wigston Benefice' on Facebook

Join our mailing list at: tinyletter.com/stthomas-sw

There's also a monthly notice sheet which should be available at the back of Church.