

A Spiritual MOT

Invest in your
spiritual
wellbeing

A six session journey



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LICHFIELD



Foreword

Chad of Mercia lived a distinctive life of commitment to Christ and to the Gospel. In the seventh century, he shared the Good News of Jesus widely around Mercia as the first Bishop of Lichfield. He was known for his passion for evangelism and his humility. The saints, and others who have walked the Christian way before us, can teach us so much about living as followers of Christ and the riches of the tradition we have inherited. The Community of St Chad, with its focus on prayer and rhythms of grace, seeks to follow the example of Chad and to offer a way of gathering those in modern day Mercia and beyond who are seeking to live a distinctive life of commitment to Christ and to the Gospel.

This six session journey provides an accessible way of refocussing our direction of travel, both individually and corporately as a community. It offers an opportunity to reflect afresh on our core values as followers of Christ and to work out patterns of living which reflect those underlying values. The material in this booklet is used alongside the Community of Saint Chad Booklets and there is an opportunity to continue the journey longer term by joining with others to form a small spiritual companion group. I hope you will find it a rewarding and life giving journey and that it may play its part in enabling us to 'Come follow Christ in the footsteps of St Chad'.

+Michael Lich:



If after using this resource you would like to travel with others seeking to live by God's grace, consider joining the Community of Saint Chad: and of making a commitment to living by the Rhythms of Grace with the encouragement and accountability of being in a small spiritual companion group. But remember – we are lifelong learners and the best is yet to be! Or as Jesus said to Nathaniel: 'You will see greater things than this' (John 1:50).

Visit www.lichfield.anglican.org/community_st_chad
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Compiled by Revd Philip Swan with special thanks to Dave Bruce, John Lloyd, Lindsey Hall and Barry Wilson for material which has been used in this course

A Spiritual MOT

Invest in your Spiritual Wellbeing

This journey, made up of six sessions, is based on material from the Community of Saint Chad (CSC). Each session will be incorporated into the daily prayer from the CSC Booklet and the Five Rhythms of Grace will be central.

The term 'Rhythms of Grace' is taken from Eugene Peterson's paraphrase (The Message) of Matthew 11:29 which provides a wonderful summary of what it means to be a disciple and what we hope to achieve through this MOT experience: *'Walk with me and work with me – watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace'*



Transformed into the likeness of Christ

Open to the presence, guidance and power of the Spirit



Set aside time for prayer, worship and spiritual reading

Gracious presence in the world, serving others and working for justice in human relationships and social structures



Sensitively share my faith with others and support God's mission both locally and globally

These five rhythms are not meant to be a set of rules to dictate how we behave or something to make us feel guilty if we don't live up to them each day. Instead they describe a series of aspirational statements that we seek, with God's help, to commit to. We ask that by God's grace and through God's Spirit that we will be transformed as we commit and open ourselves up to God in these different areas. As we do so, God will nurture spiritual growth in us as we grow as disciples of Christ.

Session 1, Rhythm 1: By God's grace, I will seek to be:



Transformed into the likeness of Christ

And we all... are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit. (2 Cor: 3:18)

Opening Prayer:

'Listen' and 'Reflect' in the CSC Booklet

**²³ Search me, God, and know my heart;
test me and know my anxious thoughts.**

**²⁴ See if there is any offensive way in me,
and lead me in the way everlasting (Psalm 139)**

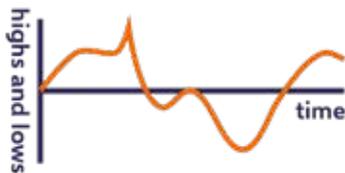
Keep a few moments of silent prayer

Looking back:

Draw a life line with highs and lows demonstrating your life journey. Include significant events in your life and also try to identify aspects of your faith journey.

a) What have you got to give thanks for over the years? Where have you known God's blessing, faithfulness and provision? What has been energising for you, and brought you joy and excitement? Stop and give thanks for these things.

b) What have been the most testing and challenging times over the years? How have they affected you? Is there anything you have particularly learnt through these times?



Study and discuss:

- How comfortable are you as describing yourself as a follower of Jesus, or as being a Christian? You might want renew your commitment to following Christ or to invite Him afresh into your life.

Each of the Rhythms of Grace expresses a personal aspiration. In that way they are not unlike New Year Resolutions. They signal a new start; they embody hope. But this first Rhythm of Grace goes far beyond the usual scope of a New Year Resolution. It feels more like learning to swim by jumping into a pool at the deep end. It is a bold statement, and one we might naturally draw back from, because it sounds grossly presumptuous. How dare we compare ourselves with Christ in this way? Is it right to hope that our lives might become like his?

Surprisingly the answer is yes. St Paul constantly expresses this longing for himself and those to whom he wrote. See 2 Cor 3: 18 above.

- Thinking back to situations over the last few weeks or months, where have you seen yourself respond in a Christ-like way and where have you struggled to do so?

Action points:

- Learning from Jesus. If we are to be transformed to be more like Jesus, we need to spend time with him, observing and learning from him. Choose one of the gospels to start reading through a chapter a day, taking time to 'walk with Jesus' and observing how he thinks, speaks and acts. Ask God each day to help you to learn to 'be what he is.'
- Reviewing your day (The Examen). This is a simple daily pattern of prayer (developed by St. Ignatius of Loyola) which helps individuals prayerfully reflect on the events of the day in order to detect God's presence, discern his direction, and grow in Christ-likeness. (See CSC Booklet p57-58).

Closing Prayer:

'Pray' and 'Conclude' in the CSC Booklets

Session 2, Rhythm 2: By God's grace, I will seek to be:



Open to the presence, guidance and power of the Spirit

'I will ask the father and he will give you another Counsellor to be with you forever – the Spirit of truth' (John 14:16)

Icebreaker: What comes into your mind when you think of the Holy Spirit?

Opening Prayer:

'Listen' and 'Reflect' in the CSC Booklet

Study and discuss:

Christians believe that there is only one God, but God is 'made up' of three persons: Father (or Creator), Son (Jesus) and Holy Spirit (Helper). God's nature is so rich, and frankly so far beyond our full understanding, that this three-fold picture of God (called The Trinity) is the best approximation we humans can hope to get. It may help to think of a musical chord of three notes. The chord has its own rich identity, but this can be heard as three distinct notes. Another parallel is the way we know that white light is made up of three primary colours.

a) *The Spirit dwells within us*

When Jesus tells his disciples that he must leave them, he directs them not to worry or be afraid because he is going to ask the Father to send the Spirit to be their advocate, their helper. Look up John 14:16-17,26-27 & John 16:7-15

b) *The Spirit empowers us for ministry*

After Jesus had risen from the dead, he promised the disciples the ability and the courage to speak and act for him. He said it would happen when the Holy Spirit came to them. In Acts 1:8 Jesus says to his disciples "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth." Look up Acts 2:1-11

c) *The Spirit gives us gifts for God's mission*

Read 1 Corinthians 12:4-7 The Holy Spirit gives us different gifts to enable us to do many of the things that Jesus himself did.

d) *The Spirit is expressed in various fruits of the Spirit*

One of the results of being open to the Spirit will be the steady growth of personal qualities that Saint Paul calls the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5: 22-23). He lists nine kinds of fruit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

- Do you recognize these fruits in yourself, or in other Christians you know?
- Which ones come most easily to you? Which ones do you find difficult?
- Which of the gifts of the Spirit would you like to have? Make it a focus for prayer.

Inviting the Spirit to fill us afresh

Paul encourages the Ephesians 'to be filled with the Spirit'. (Eph 5:18). You are invited to close your eyes and focus on God and to sing or say the following prayer:

**Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on me.
Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on me.
Melt me, mould me, fill me, use me,
Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on me.**

**Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on us.
Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on us.
Melt us, mould us, fill us, use us,
Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on us**

D. Iverson ©1935 Birdwing Music

You might like to hold your hands open as a sign of your openness to receive.

Action point:

- Read Galatians 5:22-26 about the fruits of the Holy Spirit. Try to memorise the fruits. How visible are these fruits in your life? Are there any of the fruits you might ask God to help you develop?

Closing Prayer:

'Pray' and 'Conclude' in the CSC Booklets

Session 3, Rhythm 3: By God's grace, I will seek to be:



Set aside time for prayer, worship and spiritual reading

"Very early in the morning...Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place where he prayed" (Mark 1:35)

The third Rhythm of Grace identifies three practices that will strengthen and give balance to our spiritual lives. They are not a menu from which we can choose; each is a necessary component. Together they feed and nourish us, in body, mind and spirit. Prayer, worship and reading the Bible and other spiritual books are an important part of discipleship, and the development of our relationship with God.

Opening Prayer:

You might want to sing or listen to some other music.

'Listen' and 'Reflect' in the CSC Booklet

Study and discuss:

- How do you pray? Do you have a regular time of prayer or does it tend to be in response to things that happen? What have you found has helped you pray?

Try to imagine how Jesus must have prayed (The Lord's Prayer gives us a starting point). What different types of prayer do you think he would have used? What different types should we (and do we) use?

Prayer is 'talking to God about what we are doing together.' (D. Willard)

'Prayer is not asking. Prayer is putting oneself in the hands of God, at His disposition, and listening to His voice in the depth of our hearts.' (Mother Teresa)

Read Mark 1:35-39 & John 5:19-20

Jesus was a person of prayer who had an intimate relationship with the Father. Not only did he make it a priority to take time out from the crowds to find a

quiet place to pray to his Father, he described how he could do nothing apart from God.

Bible Reading:

See 'Reading the Bible' CSC Booklet p59,60.

Knowing and understanding the Bible is important as it provides a firm basis for our Christian belief and practice. It also enables us to defend our faith when we are questioned about it. As Paul tells Timothy, knowing and understanding scripture is a means for us to be:

...thoroughly equipped for every good work. (2 Timothy 3: 17)

- Do you think it is important for Christians to be familiar with the Bible? Why?

The Bible is the principal focus of a commitment to spiritual reading, but not the only one. There is a wealth of reading matter, both contemporary and from earlier times, that can hugely inform and benefit us. You might find it helpful to read theology and Biblical commentary. It may be that fiction books are most meaningful for you. Many novels can give us glimpses of profound truth. Some of the best known are allegorical books such as John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress* and C. S. Lewis's *The Chronicles of Narnia*.

- Can you think of a book you have read that was spiritually uplifting or inspiring? What was it about it that made it so?

Action points:

- Try <https://www.pray-as-you-go.org/home/>
- Find bible reading notes which help you
- Try journaling
- Consider going away on a Quiet Day or Retreat
- Use the Diocesan Prayer Diary on a daily basis with the help of PrayerMate

Closing Prayer:

'Pray' and 'Conclude' in the CSC Booklets

Session 4, Rhythm 4: 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

"I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me" (Matt 25:40).

Opening Prayer:

'Listen' and 'Reflect' in the CSC Booklet

Study and Discuss

Rhythm Four reminds us to follow the example of Jesus, who showed compassion to all. He healed and cared for the sick, forgave the sinful, and shared meals with prostitutes and corrupt officials. Jesus believed that true compassion was motivated by love. When asked which commandment was the greatest, he said:

'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbour as yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets depend on these two commandments. (Luke 10:27)

To clarify this he told the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10: 29-37). Jesus also said that when we care for the hungry, the thirsty, the stranger, the naked, the sick, and those in prison, we are serving him (Matthew 25: 31-46).

- Who are the outcasts today? What would it look like if we cared for them as Jesus did for the outcasts of his day?

The following account by the Christian philosopher Aristides in AD 125 illustrates what this might look like in practice. He wrote:

"They walk in all humility and kindness, and falsehood is not found among them, and they love one another. They despise not the widow, and grieve not the orphan. He that has distributes liberally to him that has not. If they see a stranger, they bring him under

their roof, and rejoice over him as if he were their own brother: for they call themselves brothers, not after the flesh, but after the Spirit of God; but when one of their poor passes away from the world, and any of them see him, then he provides for his burial according to his ability; and if they hear that any of their number is imprisoned or oppressed for the name of their Messiah, all of them provide for his needs."

- Does this description applies to Christians, or the church today? Why?
- What specific challenges might this present to us?

Working for justice

Throughout the Bible, justice for the oppressed is an important issue. Jesus in setting out his 'manifesto' in Luke 4:18-19 declares that he came to bring release for the oppressed. Psalm 82:3 says, "give justice to the weak and the orphan; maintain the right of the lowly and the destitute."

Care for the poor and marginalised is not only about provision. Christians have to go beyond direct aid and join the struggle for justice. We may be called to oppose the structures and institutions that deny those in need access to certain occupations, job promotions, essential services, educational opportunities, adequate housing, and more.

- What steps can we as Christians, and as churches, take to work for justice in our community, region and further afield?
- Are any individuals in the group involved in particular initiatives? How could we as a group encourage and support them?

Action Points:

- **Look for an injustice and take a stand.** Ask God to show you this week where there is any injustice in your home, workplace, community or wider world that he wants you to graciously take a stand on.
- **Practicing Hospitality...** perhaps over a meal or a coffee, or a visit. Spend time with someone who is more of an 'outsider' or whom you might not normally socialise with.
- **Check out** Chad Living (www.lichfield.anglican.org/chad-living/).
- **See** helpful summary points in CSC Booklet p4.

Closing Prayer:

'Pray' and 'Conclude' in the CSC Booklets. Include the Prayer of Saint Francis: 'Lord, make me a channel of your peace' - (CSC Booklet p35)

Session 5, Rhythm 5: By God's grace, I will...



Sensitively share my faith with others and support God's mission both locally and globally

"You will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8)

Opening Prayer:

'Listen' and 'Reflect' in the CSC Booklet

Study and discuss:

Rhythm Five reminds us of the Great Commission that Jesus gave his followers just before he ascended into heaven:

"Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." (Matthew 28:19-20) and

"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8)

- In your group or else with a trusted friend briefly share who it was who first shared their faith with you? How did they do it?
- How do you feel about 'sharing your faith'?
- To what extent are both words and actions part of this witness?
- Imagine you are on trial for being a Christian. Would there be sufficient evidence from your life for you to be convicted?

'Jesus did not send us out into the world to make believers but to make disciples. You can worship him without doing the things he says. We can believe in him but still not follow him'. Shane Claiborne.

Note the wording in Matthew 28:19. This surely underlines the importance of going beyond words to being 'Followers of the Way' where our lives are

being formed and shaped by our faith. D T Niles described evangelism as 'one beggar telling another where to find bread'. If we wait until we are fully formed and perfect before we feel we can share our faith then we will be waiting a long time! It is helpful to remember that very often people respond to us when we share honestly with integrity, and are open about our own weakness and dependence upon God's grace.

The London Institute of Contemporary Christianity uses the term 'frontline' to help Christians see where God has placed them to join in God's Mission. It is helpful to reflect on where we spend most of our time and the contexts outside of our church or Christian fellowship, such as the workplace, the school gates or the community centre. What are the places of possibility and potential for you to share your faith? (www.licc.org.uk/ourresources/)

The Great Commission has inspired missionary initiatives globally over the centuries. However today there is an awareness that mission is 'From Everywhere to Everywhere'. So we rejoice in the work of God's Spirit globally as we receive missionaries from Africa and Asia and learn from them and share as partners in the Gospel. The links we have as a Diocese with S.E.Asia, South Africa, Canada and Northern Germany provide opportunities to experience this and to pray accordingly (www.lichfield.anglican.org/world_mission/)

Action Points:

Reflect on your 'frontline' and prayerfully identify someone or a group with whom you would like to share your faith

- Make connections with mission partners and mission agencies working locally and globally
- Participate in the annual 'Thy Kingdom Come' initiative
- Support God's mission financially

Closing Prayer:

'Pray' and 'Conclude' in the CSC Booklets. Consider playing some worship music from the world church. Say the Lord's Prayer together using a number of different languages).



Session 6:

Pilgrims progressing with the rhythms of grace

Opening Prayer:

'Listen' and 'Reflect' in the CSC Booklet

Reflection:

Look back and recall the journey you have made over these five weeks. Share any particular insights or moments of significance.

During these sessions you may have made commitments to focus on worship prayer and spiritual reading, work for justice, or even to recognise and acknowledge God's grace. However we all need to constantly commit ourselves to the rhythms of grace. Giving your life to Christ, becoming a Christian is not a one-off decision, but a constant choice, and following the rhythms of grace can help us to keep focussed on this choice.

The life of discipleship is an ongoing pattern of living out Christian faith, growing closer to God, and learning to be more and more like Christ. The early followers of Jesus knew that it was important to meet together each week: to worship (1 Corinthians 14: 26); to pray (Acts 12: 12); to learn (Acts 20: 9; 1 Corinthians 12: 23-34); to break bread (Acts 20: 7); and to encourage each other (Hebrews 10: 25).

Setting God's People Free

This is a programme of change being adopted and promoted by the Church of England and within this Diocese to enable the whole people of God to live out the Good News of Jesus confidently in all of life, Sunday to Saturday. It looks beyond and outside Church structures to the whole people of God at work in communities and wider society; it seeks to overcome the sacred / spiritual divide and not to limit vocation to church based roles; it affirms and seeks to enable the complementary roles and vocations of clergy and lay people and to encourage existing initiatives rather than instituting a top-down approach.

- What is your response to this initiative? What ways might the CSC might help in this process of setting God's people free?

Respond by joining a Small Spiritual Companion Group

Many people in our churches are strangely reluctant to talk about God. They might in extreme circumstances do so with their priest or vicar but all too often the combination of a misplaced sense that faith is something intensely private with a lack of teaching beyond the basic Sunday School level has meant that we have failed to go deeper in our faith as Christians.

The Small Spiritual Companion Groups (see CSC Booklet p6-7) are intended to address this. (Spend some time looking at the practical questions raised here). They consist of a small number of people (often 3 members) who commit themselves to meet regularly to encourage and support each other in their desire to become deeply rooted in God and to grow in spiritual maturity. For many this experience of sharing honestly and of finding words to express their faith journey has been a very important step in sharing their faith with others

- What do you think would be the best thing about being part of a small spiritual companion group? What would you find difficult about it?

If you wish to join a small group consider what next steps you might take. This might involve further discussions with potential members of the group but do take this forwards if you can. If you would like to become a member of the CSC consider coming to the next annual service of Commitment or speak with an existing member or one of the team (details in the Booklet).

Discipleship in the Diocese

The Diocese has developed this vision for our journey of discipleship together:

"As we follow Christ in the footsteps of St Chad, we pray that the two million people in our diocese encounter a church that is confident in the gospel, knows and loves its communities, and is excited to find God already at work in the world. We pray for a church that reflects the richness and variety of those communities. We pray for a church that partners with others in seeking the common good, working for justice as a people of hope."

How might you apply this vision locally and individually?

Closing Prayer:

'Pray' and 'Conclude' in the CSC Booklets

Mark the ending with something special eg cake!

Developing Discipleship

Jesus calls you and me, as he called Chad our first bishop, to walk with him as disciples, in trustful and joyful confidence; through that **discipleship**, to discover the particular **vocation** to which we are summoned; and as we walk along the way, to **invite others** to join us in our pilgrimage.

Discipleship, we might say, is a way to curate your heart, to be attentive to and intentional about what you love. Discipleship is more a matter of hungering and thirsting than of knowing and believing. Jesus' command to follow him is a command to align loves and longings with his - to want what God wants, to desire what God desires, to hunger and thirst after God and crave a world where God is all in all - a vision encapsulated by the shorthand 'the kingdom of God'. (Jamie K.A. Smith)



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Sensitively share my faith with others and support God's mission both locally and globally

discipleship vocation evangelism