

# SHARING GOD'S LIFE



King Canute and Queen Emma presenting the Winchester Cross, offering their lives to the Lordship of Christ.



DIOCESE of  
**WINCHESTER**

# Sharing God's Life

## Mission Spirituality and Rule of Life

Spirituality is another way of talking about the Christian life – life lived in response to Jesus Christ. This includes every dimension of our lives: individually, within our communities, and in the wider world. Our response to Jesus Christ means sharing God's life in all aspects of our personal, interpersonal and public lives.

The Diocese was founded by the Roman mission to Wessex (led by St Birinus) that was part of the outreach of the Benedictine movement across Europe. Through its Rule of Life and its Christian communities, this movement shaped the culture of the continent. King Canute represented this cultural shift in his personal response to Christ's life, death and resurrection. In giving the Winchester Cross he was offering his whole kingdom to the Lordship of Christ. Cranmer's masterpiece, the Book of Common Prayer, was itself a reworking of the Benedictine tradition of a prayerful, fruitful life.

Benedictine spirituality, encapsulated in the Benedictine Rule, presents a simple perspective which has influenced the whole shape of Western Christian spirituality. 'Sharing God's Life', offered as a way of interpreting this tradition for today, is designed as the foundation for everything else that the Diocese is committed to and as an expression of our values and purpose as Christians. The Diocesan Rule of Life provides a flexible framework in three dimensions of Sharing God's Life: personal (Loving), interpersonal (Living) and public (Serving). Each disciple is invited to make their own response to this three-fold invitation to Sharing God's Life, to be reviewed regularly with another disciple, and to be renewed annually.

# A Diocesan Rule of Life

## WHAT IS A RULE OF LIFE?

A Rule of Life can help us to respond to the love of God revealed in the Lord Jesus, in his life, death and resurrection. Individually and together, as we are led by the Spirit, a Rule can help us to become more like Christ.

A Rule of Life is a way of putting our relationship with God into practice, a way of balancing action and reflection. It isn't about 'keeping the rules'; it is about discovering how we can grow as Christ's disciples in the rhythms and relationships that make up our everyday lives.

We've chosen the 'three-fold cord' as a symbol of our calling to Passionate Personal Spirituality, Pioneering Faith Communities and Prophetic Global Citizenship, and the three areas of the Diocesan Rule of Life – Loving, Living & Serving – correspond to these '3 Ps'. It's also about sharing God's life in three dimensions: we are each invited to share in the life of God the Holy Trinity; we are all invited to share his life as we worship and grow together; and we are invited to share this 'life in all its fullness' with the world around us.

So rather just letting life happen, we can choose to live for God in every area of our lives. We can stop and listen to his invitation to receive and respond to his love in Christ, creating a Rule of Life which will support us in living out our own particular calling. It's a way of saying 'Yes' to the God who says 'Yes' to us.

Passionate Personal  
Spirituality / **Loving** /  
Sharing the Life of the Trinity



Pioneering Faith Communities  
/ **Living** / Sharing our lives  
as we worship and  
grow together

Prophetic Global  
Citizenship / **Serving** /  
Sharing life in all its fullness  
with the world around us

# How do I create my own Rule of Life?

**Take the following three steps:**



For each heading, think about what you are already doing and then think about what else you could do.



Now think about one or two goals which you will commit yourself to in the coming year. Use the Review Form on the back page to record what you decide to do.



**Finally, plan to review this rule on a regular basis.  
Think about who you could discuss it with.**

To remind you what you believe God has called you to focus on this year, keep the commitments you've made in your Bible or somewhere else close to hand. And let us know how you get on – it would be great to hear how you have found using this rule.

# Loving

## **Loving God: Taking time to develop my relationship with God**

How am I already doing this?

*What might I commit to do this year?*

For example, use 'Reflections for Daily Prayer' each day; spend 5 minutes in silence with God every weekday evening.

## **Loving others: Developing relationships with my family & friends**

How am I already doing this?

*What might I commit to do this year?*

For example, phone my sister/brother at least once a fortnight; initiate a social with my friend at least once a month.

## **Loving myself: Looking after myself by committing to work, rest and leisure**

How am I already doing this?

*What might I commit to do this year?*

For example, sign up for another art course; take at least one weekend away this year to walk the South Downs Way.

## **Loving life: Living simply and giving generously**

How am I already doing this?

*What might I commit to do this year?*

For example, give 5% of my net income through the Parish Giving Scheme; give an evening a month to work for a charity.

# Living

## **Living a rooted life: Being taught from the Word of God, fed by the Body of Christ and equipped by the Holy Spirit**

Who am I already doing this with?

*What might I commit to do this year?*

For example, start a prayer triplet with two of my friends; go along to a regional celebration event with another church member.

## **Living an open life: Being ready to explore new ways of being church**

Who am I already doing this with?

*What might I commit to do this year?*

For example, attend a Fresh Expressions day on new ways of being church; regularly read and respond to my friend's faith blog.

## **Living a generous life: Giving my time, experience, gifts and talents to serve God in the community**

Who am I already doing this with?

*What might I commit to do this year?*

For example, use my gift of hospitality to host a meal for those who live alone; offer my skill advising those with financial needs.

## **Living a shared life: Sharing worship, food and resources**

Who am I already doing this with?

*What might I commit to do this year?*

For example, join the Bible-reading rota for 10am service; give regularly to a food bank; find out about being a street pastor.

# Serving

## **Serving and stewarding the world God has given us**

Where am I doing this already?

*What might I commit to do this year?*

For example, write to the editor about the environmental issues raised in my local newspaper; organize a village litter-pick.

## **Serving the downtrodden: Acting against injustice**

Where am I doing this already?

*What might I commit to do this year?*

For example, support my Turkish neighbour in getting her child's school to tackle bullying; write to my MP about mental health.

## **Serving at home & work for the common good**

Where am I doing this already?

*What might I commit to do this year?*

For example, keep some special times for just the family; pray daily for my boss and for my work to be a blessing to others.

## **Serving the community through social and cultural mission**

Where am I doing this already?

*What might I commit to do this year?*

For example, speak up at governors' meetings for single parents; read up on reproductive technologies.

## **Serving others: Listening to others and telling God's story**

Where am I doing this already?      *What might I commit to do this year?*

For example, invite two colleagues to the next enquirers' course; invite my neighbour round who I know is angry with God/church.

# Review

Having thought of a number of things which you could focus on, decide which **two** things you will commit to do this year in each of the three sections.

*Loving: I will...*

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*Living: I will...*

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*Serving: I will...*

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*To whom will I be accountable?*

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*How often will we meet up?*

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