**Developing the Hazelnut Rhythm of Life – Six Sessions**

**Session 1 - Introduction**

**What is a rhythm / rule of life**

Historically, Christianity in the UK grew up around monastic communities. These were hubs of mission, worship and service. Monks and nuns committed their lives to living out their faith through their work, worship, simple living and obedience. Different orders developed rules of life – practical ways of putting their beliefs into action. In the last decade there has been renewed interest in these ancient monastic patterns of living. A number of groups have founded ‘New Monastic Communities’. These are not usually residential, like the original monastic communities, but networks of ordinary people, with a holistic view of faith, and rhythm / rule of life which helps shape their daily lives. Individuals too have been using rhythms / rules of life as a tool to help them live faithfully and develop a sense of balance in the complex times we live in. The term rhythm of life has increasingly been used as something more flexible and adaptable to individual needs and life circumstances.

Questions:

* Have you ever come across or used a rhythm of life?
* How might a rhythm of life help us to live well?
* How do you feel about developing a rhythm of life for our community?

**Exploring your values**

What are the values of our church / community? You may already have written values – in which case this is a good opportunity to discuss them. If you haven’t already got a value statement this could be a good time to develop this together.

Questions:

* Do our values reflect the life of our community in practice?
* Are any changes needed to our values?
* How does having written values help us as a community?

**Why have a rhythm of life?**

Values remind us of what we believe and what is important to us. A rhythm of life helps us to think about our priorities and how we put our beliefs into practice. Hopefully it will help us to focus on what really matters and to keep things in balance. Looking forward, we plan to explore different aspects of our rhythm of life, so we can think about how we are putting them into practice, share our experiences and give us opportunities to try new ways of living. It will help us celebrate what we are doing well and encourage us to work on things we find difficult. Because each one of us is different, we will do it in a way that is very flexible and allows you to find ways that will work for you, will fit your personality and circumstances. It is something we hope everyone will want to participate in, as much as they are able.

Finish the session by outlining the process you will follow and introducing the sections of your rhythm of life (if you have a working document). Followed by any questions or feedback

**Sessions 2 – 6**

We used the same structure and questions for weeks 2 - 6, looking at each section of the rhythm of life in turn. Our discussions groups were about 4 – 5 people. One group discussed in Cantonese to encourage participation from those in our community for whom English isn’t their first language. We were a bit unsure about the section titles so tried out a few, before settling on the ones used in our final document.

Structure

* Bible verse
* Section is read out loud
* Time of silence, to reflect and remember God is with us.
* Discussion Questions in small groups (the same questions were asked of each section). Group leader takes notes.
* Feedback to whole group
* Closing prayer

**Hazelnut Rhythm of Life Sections**

**1) BREATH DEEPLY / DEEPLY ROOTED**

Prayer & Silence

* Discovering ways of praying which work for us and draw us closer to God.
* Enjoying silence and making time to encounter God in creation, the Bible and one another.
* Developing patterns of prayer and taking time to reflect and ponder.

Balance & Rest

* Trying to live balanced and sustainable lives in a word that tends to be driven and achievement-focused.
* Making sure we get enough rest and relaxation. Encouraging others to do likewise.
* Discerning our calling – what is ours to do. Being content to let go of the rest.

**2) TREAD LIGHTLY / TENDING EARTH / LOVING EARTH**

Living sustainably

* Being content with what we have.
* Reducing our impact on the earth and finding gentler ways of living.
* Encouraging each other in the hard task of change.

Caring for Earth

* Caring for our land, creating places that are beautiful and productive and helping others to do likewise.
* Making connections with those of different faiths, cultures and backgrounds who share our love of earth.

Seeking Justice & Peace

* Working with others to campaign for action in addressing the climate emergency locally, nationally and globally.
* Concern for those most impacted by ecological breakdown, and for those who are vulnerable or marginalized in our own community.

**3) JOURNEY TOGETHER / GROWING COMMUNITY**

Practicing Community

* Investing in our relationships at Hazelnut, offering kindness, support and care.
* Being ourselves – being willing to be real, honest and vulnerable. Accepting other people for who they are and being open to the gifts the bring.

Hospitality & Welcome

* Welcoming everyone who uses the garden. Being inclusive, gentle, curious and non-judgmental.
* Recognising the power of eating together.

Using our Gifts

* Investing our skills, time, energy and money in our community. Remembering that everyone has something to offer.

Connection & Collaboration

* Connecting with others beyond Hazelnut, sharing our stories and understandings of faith, our resources, learning, hopes and dreams together.

**4) WALK JOYFULLY / LIVING JOYFULLY**

Gratitude & Wonder

* Practice gratitude, noticing the small blessings we take for granted.
* Being attentive, noticing the world around us and sensing ourselves as part of nature.

Cultivating Hope

* Finding the things that grow hope, motivation and resilience; moving away from the things that reinforce hopelessness, fear and anxiety.
* Encouraging each other to develop a deep sense of hope that is not eroded by circumstances or setbacks.

Being Creative

* Be creative in whatever ways you enjoy, sharing your gifts and skills with others.
* Share in the creative task of making a beautiful garden.

Having fun

* Take time to enjoy friendship, play, laughter and each other’s company.

**5) BE OPEN TO LEARN / LEARNING TOGETHER**

Learning

* Exploring Scripture and learning from other Christians.
* Learning from each other – being open to those who see things differently from us.
* Learning widely – from other cultures, faiths, disciplines and the arts.
* Learning to live faithful lives in a complex, changing world.

**Hazelnut Rhythm of Life Questions**

**Open to Learn**

From Scripture; From others;

Learning to be faithful in complex times.

These questions were used each week to discuss the five sections of the Rhythm of Life

* What, for you, are the most important things in this section?
* Is there anything important from this section that has been missed out?
* Any words or phrases used that you particularly like or suggestions of words or phrases we might use in this section?
* What might it look like for Hazelnut to be rooted in living out this section?

**Hazelnut Rhythm of Life prayer**

God of our daily lives,

of our working, our resting, our struggles and dreams.

Inspire in us a vision of who you would have us be.

Lead us towards a pattern of life

that is joyful, balanced and rooted in you.

Guide us on the paths of loving you, loving earth,

loving others and loving ourselves.

Grow our community in friendship, welcome and kindness.

Fire our imaginations with creativity and compassion.

Draw us close to you, so that we can live faithfully

in these times of great challenge and change.

Sow in us seeds of hope, and place your peace within our hearts.

**Amen**