

We want to thank you all for the tremendous work you continue to do in keeping schools open and our children safe. On a weekly basis, across the diocese, we continue to be impressed by the resilience, courage and optimism shown by staff and governors. We are holding your schools and communities in our thoughts and prayers as we journey with you. - The Education Team

## Pause for thought: Preparing for Christmas?

The Christmas lights are up and shining in parts of the Diocese (and it is only November). As we approach Advent, many of us are turning our heads to an approaching, possibly unusual, Christmas, concerned over who we will share it with and how the pandemic may change the shape of our normal celebrations. But current circumstances don't change the hope that comes with the 'blessed babe' we sing about each year. The Nativity story is one of light shining in the darkness. In these dark times, that light will shine even brighter. The 'comfort and joy' we bring to each other may be different, but it can also be stronger and last longer. As you plan for Christmas in 2020, how can you reflect that sense of hope and bring a deeper sense of comfort and joy?

## Rhythm of Life

Our daily lives have changed. Whether it is in the differing patterns of the school day or the sanitising and facemasks we encounter in the supermarket, at times our lives can feel 'out of kilter'. Whilst this period continues to be a time of anxiety and concern, it has also provided the opportunity to stop and reflect inwardly.

The Diocese of Leeds is inviting you, through its Rhythm of Life initiative, to take stock of the rhythm of your own life. To ask where in your days, or weeks, are the elements of **prayer, encouragement, sharing, celebration, rest, reflection and creativity** and then how these elements can help you flourish, even in these difficult times?

Christians believe Jesus should be at the heart of the rhythm of their lives, as Jesus said in Matthew 11:28 (The Message) '*Walk with me and work with me - watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace*'. Christian, or not, faith or none, paying special attention to some or each of these elements will not only be of benefit to our work, family and community, it can most importantly benefit our own mental health and wellbeing.

This Advent we are offering schools a resource to encourage school communities to think about these habits and the part they can play in renewing a rhythm to their lives.

Advent marks the beginning of the church year. It is a time for reflection, including about ourselves and then looking forward with Hope to the coming of Jesus at Christmas. Perhaps this Advent we can make time to look afresh at the rhythm of our own lives?

If so, these questions may help you make a start:

**Praying:** How will I explore or nurture my relationship with God through regular prayer, reading the Bible and other people's insights?

**Encouraging:** How will I build up those around me, so that we 'spur one another on to love and good deeds' (Hebrews 10:24)?

**Sharing:** How will God's abundant generosity be evident in my words and actions in my workplace, church, neighbourhood and the wider world?

**Celebrating:** How will I cultivate thankfulness and celebrate the joys and difficulties of everyday life?

**Resting:** How will I restore myself through rest and which ways of resting work best for me?

**Reflecting:** How will I become the person God wants me to be? How can I be the best version of myself?

**Creating:** How will I make the most of my God-given creativity?

## Digging Deeper:

- [Rhythm of Life: An invitation from Bishop Nick](#)
- [Rhythm of Life: Quick Start Guide](#)
- [Ted Talk: How to gain control of your free time.](#)