



# Celtic

## Rhythms of Life

Daily prayer from the Community  
of Aidan and Hilda

Graham Booth,  
David Cole, Simon Reed,  
Ray Simpson and  
Penny Warren

‘*Celtic Rhythms of Life* is a most welcome addition to the precious storehouse of prayer books drawing on the Celtic tradition... It is a practical and inspirational resource for both personal and communal use, diving deep into streams of ancient prayer and rooted robustly in the context of contemporary life.’

Ian Adams, poet, priest and photographer, and author of *Cave Refectory Road*

‘Here are patterns of prayer for each day, to be revisited week by week, and long-loved by the dispersed and diverse Community of Aidan and Hilda. *Celtic Rhythms of Life* is flexible in its approach, inviting us to explore and reflect until the repeated words become familiar yet challenge us still more deeply. “May the Christ who loves with wounded heart open our hearts to love.”’

Andy Raine, Northumbria Community

‘All who wish to pattern our spiritual lives after the earliest Celtic saints’ wisdom and faith will be blessed by this beautiful handbook of daily prayer, which brings the ancient Celtic tradition into our age with a dash of poetry and grace.’

Carl McColman, author of *Invitation to Celtic Wisdom* and *The New Big Book of Christian Mysticism*

‘The authors have provided us with a wonderful worship resource. The liturgies are warm, original, creative, thoughtful and inspiring. Thank you!’

Revd Canon Michael Mitton, writer, spiritual director, speaker and canon emeritus of Derby Cathedral



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Ministries

With special thanks to Ray Simpson,  
founding Guardian of the Community  
of Aidan and Hilda, whose vision and  
writings form the basis of these prayers.



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# Introduction



To stay alive physically, we need to breathe. To stay alive spiritually, we need to pray. We pray in our own words, without words, or using the words of others. The Old Testament gives us the psalms; the New Testament gives us the Lord's Prayer; and after that we have the Spirit-inspired prayers of Christians down the ages. Praying words composed by others is not only biblical but it also helps us in so many ways: sometimes we cannot find the words to pray; sometimes others express things better than we can; and sometimes we need to be drawn out beyond our own personal concerns.

The Celtic Christians of the first millennium have often been a great source of inspiration. This vibrant expression of Christianity planted the good news of Jesus across the British Isles and beyond. It somehow wove together a Catholic spirituality of sacrament and incarnation, an Evangelical spirituality of scripture and mission, a Pentecostal-charismatic spirituality of the

presence and power of God, an Orthodox spirituality of the Trinity, time and eternity, a closeness to the natural world and a robust commitment to social justice. Daily rhythms of prayer were at the heart of this movement of God. Centuries later, a different expression of Celtic spirituality lived on in the prayers of the Hebridean islanders collected by Alexander Carmichael in the *Carmina Gadelica*. These prayers weave together the unseen world and everyday life in simple, vivid poetry. They join hard hands and warm hearts.

For over 25 years the international Community of Aidan and Hilda ([aidanandhilda.org.uk](http://aidanandhilda.org.uk)) has been reconnecting with this Celtic spiritual heritage and seeking to re-express it for today. A daily rhythm of prayer is one of the foundations of our community life. Ray Simpson, one of the Community's founders, has written widely on Celtic spirituality and is the author of many prayer resources. Over time, the Community has revised and added to this material, resulting in this new publication providing four daily prayer stops for the seven days of the week. These prayer patterns contain material written and compiled by Graham Booth, Brother Cassian (David Cole), Simon Reed, Ray Simpson and Penny Warren, with help from Alison Price in compiling the Bible readings.

Our hope is that this book helps breathe the life of God afresh into your prayers, and that as we pray together we reconnect the Spirit and the scriptures, the saints and the streets, the seasons and the soil.

## How to use this book

- There are four prayer stops each day (morning, midday, evening and night). Use as many as are right for you. Building a regular pattern helps, but don't worry if you miss one.
- The prayer patterns are laid out for more than one voice, but they work just as well on your own.
- For morning and evening prayer, there is a choice of four psalms (one of them printed in the text) and four Bible readings from both the Old and the New Testament. These may be used in any combination or followed as a monthly cycle. The psalms and readings are linked to the theme of the day, but any other psalms or reading scheme may be used instead.

- Each day has its own theme:
  - Sunday: resurrection
  - Monday: creation
  - Tuesday: incarnation
  - Wednesday: Holy Spirit
  - Thursday: unity and community
  - Friday: the cross
  - Saturday: the kingdom
  
- In special seasons you might like to use the same theme every day, e.g. Sunday/resurrection during Easter, Tuesday/incarnation during Christmas or Friday/the cross during Lent or Holy Week, if you observe this.
  
- Praying the psalms is an ancient Jewish/Christian practice. Sometimes they express exactly what we are feeling, but not always. It can be helpful to imagine that we are praying on behalf of others who are in a different situation. Instead of just reading a psalm, we could try alternating voices (if in a group), pausing briefly between verses or pausing briefly in the middle of each verse.

- What happens between the words is as important as what we say. Feel free to leave spaces, miss things out or add things in, if that is how the Spirit seems to be leading you.
- In churches with a liturgical tradition, these prayer patterns may be used in Daily Prayer. In the Church of England, the inclusion of a collect and the Lord's Prayer is all that is required.

## Acknowledgements

All psalms are taken from the New Living Translation (NLT) of the Bible or paraphrased by Ray Simpson, apart from Tuesday evening prayer and Thursday morning prayer from the *USA Book Of Common Prayer*.

All Bible readings are taken from the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV), unless otherwise noted, or paraphrased by the authors of this book.

**Simon Reed**

# Sunday

## morning prayer



Rising from death, today Christ greets his people.  
**Rising with all creation, we greet you as  
our King.**

*There may be singing.*

### ***Either***

*Psalm 24 is said as follows:*

The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it.  
The world and all its people belong to him.

**For he laid the earth's foundation on the seas  
and built it on the ocean depths.**

Who may climb the mountain of the Lord?  
Who may stand in his holy place?

**Only those whose hands and hearts are pure,  
who do not worship idols  
and never tell lies.**

They will receive the Lord's blessing  
and have a right relationship with God  
their Saviour.

**Such people may seek you  
and worship in your presence, O God of Jacob.**

Open up, ancient gates!  
Open up, ancient doors,  
and let the King of glory enter.

**Who is the King of glory?  
The Lord, strong and mighty;  
the Lord, invincible in battle.**

Open up, ancient gates!  
Open up, ancient doors,  
and let the King of glory enter.

**Who is the King of glory?  
The Lord of Heaven's Armies –  
he is the King of glory.**

**Or**

*Psalm 57, Psalm 95:1–7, Psalm 100 or the psalm of the day from a lectionary or reading scheme; or any other psalm.*

Let us recollect the presence of the risen Christ  
with us now.

*Short silence.*

Christ Jesus, in the light of your risen presence,  
and in union with your first frail apostles,  
we say sorry for the times when we have failed to  
follow you:

**for not weighing your words,  
for not sharing your trials,  
for not believing your promises.**

*Things for which we are sorry may be recalled aloud  
or in silence.*

Risen Christ, disperse the sin from our souls as  
the mist departs from the hills.

**Be in what we do, inform what we say, redeem  
who we are. Amen.**



*Isaiah 25:6–9, Isaiah 35:1–10, Hosea 6:1–6, Micah 6:6–8 or the reading of the day from a lectionary or reading scheme; or another Old Testament reading.*

*There may be singing, silence or the following:*

We believe, O God of all gods,  
that you are the eternal God of life.

**We believe, O God of all peoples,  
that you are the eternal God of love.**

We believe that you create earth and seas  
and skies,

**we believe that you create us in your image  
and give us eternal worth.**

*Luke 24:1–12, Philippians 3:7–16, Colossians 3:12–17,  
Revelation 1:12–20 or the reading of the day from  
a lectionary or reading scheme; or another New  
Testament reading.*

Jesus says:

I am the resurrection and the life.

**You break the power of sin and death.**

I am the bread of life.

**You feed and fill the hungry.**

I am the true vine.

**You make empty lives bear fruit.**

*There may be silence or singing.*

***Either***

*Use the following set of prayers, pausing after each to invite the risen Christ into specific situations, perhaps visualising his response.*

Risen Christ,  
you appeared to Mary in the garden at dawn;  
**Make yourself known to us in the dawns of  
our lives.**

You appeared to the fishermen as they toiled  
in vain;  
**Make yourself known to us in the long hours of  
our weekly work.**

You appeared to the walkers as they welcomed  
you to their table;  
**Make yourself known to us in our life's journey  
and make welcoming our homes.**

You appeared to Thomas when he touched the  
scars in your body;  
**Make yourself known when we touch the  
wounds of the world.**

You appeared to many as they met beneath  
the skies;  
**Make yourself known to us in the wonder of  
your creation.**

*Or*

*Use the following set of prayers in which each of the  
themes may be used as a starting point for more  
extended intercessions.*

We pray for believers;  
**may their lives be signs of joyful service.**

We pray that our churches may bring honour  
to you;  
**and healing to the people.**

We pray for people in authority;  
**may they strive for justice and peace.**

We pray for our communities;  
**may refreshment be found by all who work.**

We pray for our homes;  
**may they be places of hospitality and hope.**

*There may be singing or the Lord's Prayer.*

**The Father of life go with us.**

**The risen Christ beside us.**

**The vibrant Spirit within us.**



# Sunday

## midday prayer



Alleluia. Christ is risen.

**Alleluia. Christ is risen.**

### *Either*

*Psalm 30:1–5 is said as follows.*

I will exalt you, Lord, for you rescued me,  
You refused to let my enemies triumph over me.

**O Lord my God, I cried to you for help,  
and you restored my health.**

You brought me up from the grave, O Lord.  
You kept me from falling into the pit of death.

**Sing to the Lord, all you godly ones!  
Praise his holy name.**

For his anger lasts only a moment,  
but his favor lasts a lifetime!

**Weeping may last through the night,  
but joy comes with the morning.**

*Or*

*Alleluias may be sung.*

We welcome your presence in the midst of  
the day;  
**a day for rest and renewal,  
a day for worship and well-being  
a day for sharing food and friendship.**

*A candle may be lit.*

*Before food one of the following prayers may be said.*

***Either***

I would prepare a feast  
and be host to the great High King,  
with all the company of heaven.  
The nourishment of pure love be in my house,  
and the roots of repentance.

May we have baskets of love to give,  
with cups of mercy for everybody.  
**Sweet Jesus, be here for us,  
with all the company of heaven.**  
May this meal be full of cheerfulness,  
for this is a feast of the great High King,  
who is our host for all eternity.<sup>1</sup>

*Or*

May the abundance and joy of creation be with  
us as we eat.  
**May the abundance and joy of Christ be with us  
as we meet.**

*Or*

The food which we are to eat  
is earth, water and sun,  
coming to us through pleasing plants.  
**The food which we are to eat  
is the fruit of much labour.**  
**We are thankful for it.**  
May it give us health, strength and joy,  
and may it increase our love.

Risen Christ of the miraculous catching of fish  
and the perfect lakeside meal,  
**be with us as we share this meal.**

Generous God, as once you multiplied the five  
loaves and two fishes,  
**multiply the gifts each of us brings  
that from our sharing together blessings  
may flow.**

I know what it is to have little, and I know what  
it is to have plenty. In any and all circumstances  
I have learned the secret of being well-fed and  
of going hungry, of having plenty and of being  
in need. I can do all things through him who  
strengthens me.

PHILIPPIANS 4:12–13

*There may be meditation and singing.*

Rejoicing in your new creation,  
let us pray as you have taught us.

*The Lord's Prayer.*



Keep us in the beautiful attitudes,  
**simple, joyful and gentle.**

Let us bless the Lord.  
**Thanks be to God.**





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## A daily rhythm of prayer...

To stay alive physically, we need to breathe. To stay alive spiritually, we need to pray. We pray in our own words, sometimes we pray without words, and often we use the words of others.

From the Community of Aidan and Hilda, here is a resource to create a daily rhythm of prayer, inspired by both historical and contemporary Celtic Christian spirituality and earthed in the activities of everyday living. *Celtic Rhythms of Life* contains ready-to-use forms of prayer for morning, midday, evening and night, seven days a week. Morning and evening prayer have a choice of four psalms and scripture readings from the Old and New Testaments. Midday and night prayer have short scripture readings printed in the text. Each day also has its own theme, from resurrection on Sundays to the kingdom on Saturdays.

May these prayers breathe the life of God afresh into your prayers.

