

Sunday 27 July 2025

Dear brothers and sisters,

There is a *lot* to share, communicate and ask so I thought it would be better to write it all down in a letter so it is easy to find when the Sunday notices are long-forgotten! I realise there is a lot, but please take time to look through what is below. To whet your appetite there is a summary at the top of page 2...

I would like to begin though with a prayer from Ephesians. Don't give in to the temptation to skip ahead to the information... allow the Spirit to speak to your spirit through Paul's words...

*For this reason I kneel before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name. I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge – that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.*

***Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen. (Ephesians 3.14-21, NIV)***

As I shared at the APCM this year (<https://go.ccsp.uk/5531>) God is already at work in us in all sorts of ways, bringing gifts of hospitality, generosity and service. I am grateful that so many of you give so much of your time, talents and treasure to serve God in this place and in our church family. Thank you! There is and has been much faithful service over many years at Christ Church.

Yet as Paul says in his prayer there is always *more*; and at the APCM I also acknowledged that the last thing some of you want is a vicar going on about *more*! However, this passage is *not* about God asking us to do more. Look at the words from the passage above highlighted in **bold**: who does the asking, and who does the doing? This is not about *God* asking *us* to do more – but precisely the opposite! *God* is able to do more – immeasurably more – than all we ask or imagine, within us, for his glory... so let's ask him!

As you read through this letter, please keep that in mind. There is a lot to share, a lot of new things, a lot of changing things, and yes some needs and requests for additional help and service. I recognise that it may feel overwhelming. All this comes from various different groups at Christ Church – some of them have been in discussion for a long time (for example, the signage!) and others are the result of changing circumstances. Rather than share these things bit by bit it felt better to get it all out at once – even at the risk of overwhelming you with information. Apart from the immediate pastoral care bits, none of this starts until September at the earliest so there is plenty of time to digest, ask questions and discuss further.

**In all this my prayer is *not* 'God enable us to do more' but 'God please do *your* immeasurably more in us'. That is one of the reasons for calling a week of prayer: as we enter a season of change and new things, we need *God* to continue to lead, equip and inspire us – as he has over many years.**

As ever, if you would like to know more, have any concerns, or would simply like to discuss any of this, please get in touch – my contact details are at the top of this letter.



## Summary & Contents

The key bits of the letter are summarised here – but there is further information about each item in the rest of the letter if you want to know more.

1. **Page 3 | 7/7/7 Prayer Sunday 31 August to Sunday 7 September**  
*A wave of prayer from 7am to 7pm for 7 days... Starting 12.00pm on Sunday 31 August and ending 10.30am on Sunday 7 September, in the Prayer Room. Resources will be provided for different ways and styles of praying, for all ages, and for praying at home for those who can't make it.*
2. **Page 3 | Engage Together – Monthly Prayer Gatherings from 3 September**  
*7.30pm to 8.30pm on Wednesdays 3 September, 1 October, 5 November and 3 December (with refreshments from 7pm) – reflective Evening Prayer service with Taizé songs and prayer in groups.*
3. **Page 3 | Pastoral Care Update**  
*Caring for one another is central to our Vision & Mission, and extends beyond health issues to include spiritual and emotional support. It is an area we are strong in, so let us continue praying for and supporting one another through the current period of change. Allan Bartlam will manage the pastoral care phone over the summer, but we encourage church members to seek help from family, friends, or Life Groups first. The PCC standing committee is considering further proposals over the summer, including regarding staffing.*
4. **Page 4 | Lunch Club Update – Help Requested from September**  
*Would you like to serve in one of the various roles to support this ministry? From setup to set down, cutting vegetables and preparing food, to help with the trips – in September and October we are inviting people to come and try out the roles they might be interested in, to see which (if any) they would like to serve in. Speak to Amanda or Dee for more information.*
5. **Page 4 | Thursday Toddlers – Help Requested from September**  
*Are you able to serve either in the kitchen or getting to know guests, Thursdays 10am-12pm in term time? Please speak to Cath if you can serve at least once a month as part of a team.*
6. **Page 5 | Early Service – Weekly from Sunday 7 September**  
*From September the 8.30am service will be every Sunday: Holy Communion 1<sup>st</sup> / 2<sup>nd</sup> / 3<sup>rd</sup> / 5<sup>th</sup> Sundays, and Morning Prayer on 4<sup>th</sup> Sundays. It is spoken (i.e. no hymns / songs), has a short reflection on the readings, and takes about half an hour. It also uses the same service booklet every week.*
7. **Page 5 | Midweek Holy Communion – New Service from Wednesday 24 September**  
*From 24 September for a six-month trial we are holding a weekly service of Holy Communion on Wednesdays at 11am (i.e. before Lunch Club – but not only for Lunch Club members to attend).*
8. **Page 5 | Cross and Signage**  
*The cross on the grass at the front of church appears to be rotting and needs to be taken down for inspection. It will be repaired or replaced. At the same time we are seeking permission to install new signs, and the PCC is looking at options for where and how to install the cross once all that is done.*
9. **Page 6 | Vision for Groups**  
*What does our Vision & Mission 'making, growing, sending disciples of Jesus' look like in all our ministries? How can we all serve God together most effectively and faithfully? I am going to be working alongside our groups in the coming months to help us discern God's vision for each individual ministry.*
10. **Page 7 | Immeasurably More Intentional Discipleship Group**  
*Meeting monthly over 18 months to read and discuss Cris Rogers' book Immeasurably More. The aim is for us as individuals to grow as disciples, and to discern together what God might be saying to us as a church through the book and Paul's prayer at the end of Ephesians 3 (see page 1).*

## 1. 7/7/7 Prayer

You may have heard of 24/7 prayer... well we have just invented (I think!) 7/7/7 Prayer!

Starting after the morning service on 31 August (noon) I am calling us to a week of prayer: 7am to 7pm for 7 days, hence 7/7/7 Prayer. It will end at the start of the morning service on 7 (!) September (10.30am), which will also be a Vision Sunday. There will be no specific focus, simply us praying and seeking God together, interceding and listening. I have wanted to do something like this since I arrived, and to be honest I'm not sure why we haven't. It's a big commitment, but it will be wonderful to have a wave of prayer carrying us through the week and into the new term.

There will be resources provided for all ages, which people can use at home if you wish, but the aim is to have at least one person praying in-person in the Prayer Room throughout the week – ideally more.

We will also provide ways of sharing what we believe God is saying – words, pictures, encouragements – and different ways of praying, from Scripture and formal liturgy to art and movement.

## 2. Engage Together

On the theme of prayer, our Prayer Team has been discussing how best to gather us together in prayer. We have various regular prayer gatherings and 'Whole Church Prayer Meetings' roughly once a term – but attendance has not been great so the Prayer Team is interpreting that as people voting with their feet and saying, 'We need to try something different.'

From September we are trialling a gathering called 'Engage Together' on the first Wednesday of the month (3 September, 1 October, 5 November, 3 December), from 7.30pm to 8.30pm with refreshments available from 7pm. (The timing is deliberately chosen to fit in with Renew, so parents can drop young people off, stay for prayers, and finish at the same time.)

The first half of the gathering will be quiet and reflective, using *Common Worship* Evening Prayer and some Taizé music. The second half will be open prayer in groups, with suggestions to help us pray. We recognise not everyone is happy to pray out loud – but that's ok! Please come and add your presence and silent prayer; God knows the desires of our hearts.

It is called 'Engage Together' because prayer is one of the ways in which we *engage* in spiritual warfare, standing side-by-side, supporting one another, contending for the gospel and the kingdom in the name of Jesus *together*. As I said in Vicar Writes #22 (<https://go.ccsp.uk/5530>), prayer is hard because of the spiritual battle – but in Jesus we have the victory so let's not give up the fight!

This will potentially impact Life Groups – not least the ones that meet on a Wednesday. What I am asking is that Life Groups – including those that meet on other evenings – consider *not* meeting in the weeks that Engage Together is on, so you come together as a group. As it is only for a term at this stage, it would only affect four sessions. In December the Prayer Team will review how it's gone and decide whether to carry on with this model.

## 3. Pastoral Care

Thank you to everyone who has shared their thoughts and ideas with me about what we do in the pastoral care space. Thank you as well to all those who are involved in pastoral care – those in the Pastoral Care Team and those who are not – who help us ensure that we care for one another.

One of the statements in our Vision & Mission is that we grow as disciples of Jesus by ‘serving the Lord our Father and one another in love every day.’ This is the heart of pastoral care.

And the truth is Christ Church is extremely good at pastoral care, which includes but is far more than looking out and caring for people with health problems; in Vicar Writes #21 I shared five ‘one another’ verses from the New Testament which help us see this wider picture (<https://go.ccsp.uk/5517>).

As a church we are good at this – so let’s keep going! If you feel you need permission to offer someone help or support, you have it – along with a request to be gracious if someone says, ‘No thank you’! I also encourage us to keep contending in prayer for one another. The *first* thing we should do when we hear about a need – whether it is physical, emotional, spiritual – is to pray.

In practical terms, Allan Bartlam has kindly agreed to look after the pastoral care phone over the summer. He will check it for messages and I will receive any voicemails directly. However, the reality is that without an employed pastoral care co-ordinator things will change. For example, if you need help with a lift, please contact your family first and friends, then your Life Group (if you are in one), or book a taxi or as a last resort contact the pastoral care phone and we will see if we can help.

If you have a specific prayer request to go out with our weekly news sheet, please call the office and leave a message (0121 471 2379) or email Amanda ([info@christchurchb29.org](mailto:info@christchurchb29.org)) by 9am that Friday morning.

Also over the summer the PCC standing committee is looking at some options for employed roles that best serve our Vision & Mission and the needs of the church. We hope to present these to PCC on 2 September. From the feedback I’ve received from PCC and the wider congregation there is recognition that a ‘like-for-like’ role wouldn’t be the right thing, so we are praying and thinking creatively about how to make the most of this opportunity. Please continue to pray for God’s leading in this space – and as I have said, let us continue to love one another as we already are, only *more*.

## 4. Lunch Club

We continue to pray for Bobbie and Peter and their whole family. It is no secret that Bobbie has been a huge part of Lunch Club for a number of years now, and with Joanne stepping down from her employed role we have needed to think quite carefully about how we continue this important ministry. We are hugely blessed that Dee Lucking has been well trained by Bobbie and is willing to lead the kitchen team of cooks and helpers. I am so grateful to her for this, and for all those who work so hard (and it is *hard* work) in the kitchen to provide such high quality meals week by week, to set up beforehand and to clean up afterwards.

With these and other recent changes we invite you to consider the following opportunities to serve at Lunch Club – all on Wednesdays during term-time:

- Prayer team – committed to pray for this ministry
- Setup – to get the Main Hall ready, putting out tables and chairs, tea / coffee / urn
- Kitchen – both in preparing vegetables and as an assistant cook (or ‘sous chef’ if you prefer!)
- Host / announcements – leading through the session, announcements, notices, birthdays etc.
- Serving – we provide table service to members
- Set down – putting things away, clearing and cleaning up
- Washing up – come to have lunch first, or as the meal is ending
- Trips – when we go ‘off-site’ it’s helpful to have a few people on hand

If you’d like to know more about these roles (including timings – mostly around lunch!) please speak to Amanda or Dee (though she is away for some of August, she is happy to receive and respond to messages).

Ideally we'd like to avoid having a complicated rota of people, so we are asking for people who can serve ideally **every week** (or **every other week** if that's not possible) so we can get a good balance between consistency and having enough people to make the ministry happen.

If you think you'd like to serve but aren't sure in which role, we are going to have a **taster half term** for people to come along and try different roles in September and October, to see which they would like to do. Of course, if you'd like to come every week but alternate between roles that's possible too!

## 5. Thursday Toddlers

From September there is an opportunity to serve at our Thursday Toddler group – you can either meet all the guests by helping serve drinks from the kitchen (including washing up afterwards) or by mingling with them during the session. I am keen that all our groups have people available to get to know visitors / guests and build relationships with them, to help us make the most of the opportunities we have to share the gospel and introduce people to Jesus.

If you are able to serve (10am to 12pm during term-time) that would be wonderful. If you are unable to commit to being there every week, Cath is prepared to arrange a rota of people to ensure every week is covered. Please contact her for more information or if you are keen to help.

## 6. Early Service

From 7 September our early service (8.30am on Sundays) will become weekly instead of twice a month. Most weeks it will be Holy Communion, and Morning Prayer on the fourth Sunday (when the 10.30am is Holy Communion). This makes it much easier to remember when it is (!) but more importantly it means we offer a service of Holy Communion every week. Numbers have grown since we increased the frequency from once a month – it is a lovely quiet service without any hymns or songs – why not give it a go one week?

This will run initially until the end of February (six months) and PCC will review it in its January meeting.

## 7. Midweek Holy Communion

From 24 September we are starting a midweek service of Holy Communion – again something I have thought we should offer for a long time. It will be at 11am every Wednesday, deliberately timed to work (we hope!) alongside Lunch Club – though it is not only for Lunch Club regulars; anyone is welcome to attend, whether you stay on for lunch or not.

That said, we hope that many of the Lunch Club regulars will want to come earlier than normal for the service and then stay on for lunch. It will replace the 'Thought for the Day' segment, though we hope some of the contributors will be able to share a thought on the day's Bible passage during the service itself.

This will run initially until the end of February (six months) and PCC will review it in its January meeting.

## 8. Cross & Signage

At Easter we noticed that the cross at the front of church is rotting. In order to investigate it further the PCC has applied for permission to take it down, so at some point in the coming months it will be removed. Once down, we will either repair or replace it.

At the same time we are applying for permission to install new signs on the grass at the front of church (facing traffic driving into town), by the driveway entrance (double-sided so it can be seen from both directions), and above the main door. (See below for designs.)

Once the signs are in place and the cross is repaired or replaced, the PCC will explore the following options for re-installing the cross:

1. Permanently in the ground, but closer to the church building (so it doesn't obstruct the sign).
2. Temporarily in the ground where it is currently (so it can be put out at Christmas and Easter).
3. Brackets to fix it to the wall by the steps (so it can be put out at Christmas and Easter).

This process is likely to take a long time (several months) to get the necessary permissions for installing new signage. If you have a preference for the above options, or another idea we haven't thought of, please speak to me or someone on the PCC.

Designs (not to scale!):



## 9. Vision for Groups

'Where there is no prophetic vision the people cast off restraint' (Proverbs 29.18, ESV). 'Surely the Sovereign LORD does nothing without revealing his plan to his servants the prophets' (Amos 3.7, NIV).

It is so important that we seek God's vision for our life as individuals and together as a church – and so easy to end up 'getting on with things' and miss where God is leading us. This is even more important when it comes to discerning what to *stop* as well as what to *start*; just because God called us to do this or that in the past doesn't mean it's the right thing for us to continue, *even if it's a good thing*.

When we did our Review of Ministries in 2022, the intention was that I would meet with the leaders of each group to discuss their vision and purpose within the wider vision of the church. For various reasons, not least my health problems at the time and then my Sabbatical, that hasn't happened yet – but that process is now starting. Over the coming months, please expect me to be in touch if you lead and / or serve in different ministries. One of the aims is simply to check-in with our teams of volunteers, to see how you are getting on, but hopefully by the end of the process we will all have more confidence in why we do what we are doing, and know even more that we are working together, pulling in the same direction. This will help us hold one another accountable so we aren't doing our own thing, but together doing God's thing.

The process is beginning with our creche and FLAG ministries, youth and young adults. The Discipleship Team is also in the process of working on a vision for Life Groups – once completed, individual Life Groups will be invited to sign up to it if they wish.

In the meantime please be praying – not only for the process as a whole, but for the groups in which you serve. My prayer is that together we can all discern not *my* vision for each ministry, not *your* vision, nor even *our* vision – but *God's* vision for how we can serve him more and more faithfully in this place.

## 10. *Immeasurably More*

As a follow-up to the Lent Course and my reflection at the Annual Meetings, I am forming a group to explore Cris Rogers' book *Immeasurably More* in more detail, as an exercise both in intentional discipleship *and* discerning what God is saying to us as a church through the book.

The plan is for a group to commit to meeting monthly (most likely on Monday evenings) for 18 months. We will read the book a chapter at a time, discuss it and ask one another the following questions:

- What is God saying to me?
- What am I going to do about it?

The intention of the group is to be transformed and grow as disciples of Jesus, and to support each other in that by holding one another accountable. You need to come prepared to be open and honest, and to be challenged both by the book and one another. The group requires a high level of commitment and confidentiality to work, and a desire to grow – even if that is painful at times.

If you are interested or would like to know more, please speak to me. It is likely to start in October, and dates will be agreed once the group has been formed. All members of the group will need a copy of the book, and there are some available in church to borrow.

## Thank you!

Well done for making it to the end of the letter!

Let me remind you what I wrote on page 1: God is able to do more – *immeasurably* more – than all we ask or imagine, within us, for his glory... so let's ask him! Let us continue in prayer for all these people, situations and ministries, let us continue to love and support one another – and let us do those things *more* by the strength and power of God. So we pray, 'Come Holy Spirit.'

With every blessing,



Revd Ben Green  
Vicar, Christ Church Selly Park