

a Sabbath to the Lord

a call to

fellowship,
prayer, rest
& listening

from 26 April 2026

In repentance and rest
is your salvation,
in quietness and trust
is your strength.

Isaiah 30.15 (NIV)

Why are we doing this?

For many years, Christ Church has been busy and active. Much good has been done and for that we are thankful. But busyness is not always the same as fruitfulness.

The Bible has much to say about Sabbath: from God resting on the seventh day, to the final vision of God's people resting in his presence forever, and much in between.

Sabbath is an opportunity to stop, rest and listen to what God is saying. It is an act of faith, as we learn to rely on God. It is an act of worship and sacrifice, as we put him first.

When farmers leave land fallow, it is not abandoned. Nutrients are restored. Life gathers beneath the surface. And in time, it becomes even more fruitful than before.

The PCC believes God is calling us to a fallow time of Sabbath and prayer, for an indefinite period (several months).

A Sabbath prayer

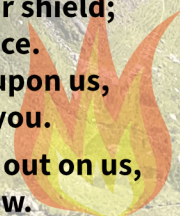
**Jesus, Lord of the Sabbath,
we come to you with open hands:
releasing the busyness we've known
and trusting you with what we cannot see.**

**With thanks for all who've gone before,
now we let the ground lie fallow.
Teach us to wait on you in faith,
and help us listen in the stillness.**

**For you are our help and our shield;
in you our hearts rejoice.**

**Let your steadfast love be upon us,
as we rest together in you.**

**Come, Holy Spirit: be poured out on us,
fill us and make us new.**



How can I engage?



Group conversations
in Life Groups, and in church for anyone to book, with Ben + a PCC member



Holy Week reflections
reflect on the theme of waiting on God in prayer, faith and sacrifice



Individual conversations
informal or formal – if you'd like a visit, please get in touch!



Teaching after Easter
why is Sabbath time still important for Christians anyway?



Vicar Writes
exploring Sabbath – why not reply with ideas, questions and prayers?

most importantly...
be devoted to PRAYER!!

How can I find out more?

On our website you will find key bits of information from Ben's pastoral letters and reports to the PCC in recent months:

- **Immeasurably More**
Pastoral letter (July 2025)
- **A Bigger Yes**
Pastoral letter (December 2025)
- **Vicar's Report: Sabbath Time?**
PCC Meeting (February 2026)
- **Proposal: A Sabbath to the Lord**
PCC Meeting (March 2026)



Plus some additional resources that were shared with the PCC.

<https://ccsp.uk/sabbath>



What will it look like?

Fellowship



We will continue to have some points of contact with people midweek:

- One or two Warm Welcome sessions with refreshments every week,
- A weekly service of Holy Communion,
- Monthly socials for us to (re)connect and grow in friendship.

Pastoral care will continue as we support one another day-to-day, and love those in particular need at particular times.

(Plus our Sunday ministries will continue.)

Jesus said, 'Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest.'

Mark 6.31 (NIV)

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.

Acts 2.42 (NIV)

Rest



Most midweek ministries will stop:

- Bereavement Group (may continue to meet but informally),
- Lunch Club,
- Walking Group,
- Coffee Mates and Knit & Natter,
- Warm Welcome Friday will not restart at the end of October.

Life Groups (plus Afternoon Fellowship and Renew) will be invited to stop if they wish.

(Toddlers is being looked at separately.)

Case Study: St Aldate's Oxford

In the 1990s David MacInnes felt God calling his church to a 'laying down of ministry'.

*They stopped **everything** except Sunday ministries, student work and a weekly all-in prayer gathering.*

It wasn't easy for everyone, but it proved an intense and fruitful season, a spiritual reordering, preparing them for future service, faithful mission and fruitfulness.

Case Study:

New Opportunities

Two missionaries loved the church they had founded and their English-speaking community. But when it closed, God opened another door.

They started connecting with neighbours, other parents at their children's school, meeting one-to-one, holding Bible studies - reaching people they had never met before.

They write: 'Sometimes God closes doors to teach us, or remind us, that he is sovereign and uses us, though he does not need us.'

Prayer



Instead of gathering to 'do ministry' during the week we will meet to pray:

- Giving thanks and praise to God,
- Asking for healing and wholeness,
- Entrusting one another into his care,
- Seeking his leading for the future.

We will do this in a variety of ways, e.g.:

- 777 (booking slots in the Prayer Room).
- Large gatherings at church.
- Resources to pray alone and in groups.

Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful.

Colossians 4.2 (NIV)

This is what the Lord says: 'Stand at the crossroads and look; ask for the ancient paths, ask where the good way is, and walk in it, and you will find rest for your souls.'

Jeremiah 6.16 (NIV)

Listening



Through praying, research, sharing, discussing ideas, we will listen to how God might answer these and other questions:

- Building on all that's gone before, how is God calling us to serve him today?
- What does it look like for us to show God's love and share God's gospel with the people who live in our parish and our neighbourhoods?
- What is God's *Immeasurably More*, his *Bigger Yes* for us at Christ Church?