



Summary

This document contains edited extracts from a pastoral letter shared by Ben with the church in July 2025. The full text is available here: <https://christchurchb29.org/resources/leadership/pastoral-letter-4/>.

Letter

On Sunday I spoke on Habakkuk 2 – my second sermon on Habakkuk in three months, having preached on it only once before in over 25 years! The chapter begins with these words:

I will stand at my watch
and station myself on the ramparts;
I will look to see what he will say to me. ...

For the revelation awaits an appointed time;
it speaks of the end and will not prove false.
Though it linger, wait for it;
it will certainly come
and will not delay. (Habakkuk 2.1 & 3, NIV)

And I made a promise to you all: to do what Habakkuk did, to ‘stand at my watch and look to see what God will say to us.’ And I invited you all to join me in doing that. God has called *me* here to do that as the leader of this church – but Jesus tells *all* of us to ‘Keep watch’ (Matthew 25.13). At the end of the letter I include a prayer I shared in my Vicar Writes email and podcast this week – please keep praying it over the coming weeks. My hope is that it will help us stand, watch and wait for what God is saying and calling us into.

This last term as we’ve learned about *The Heart of Hospitality*, we’ve seen that hospitality is first an invitation, an invitation from God to us, which he in turn invites us to share with others. That invitation is a critical bit that churches – including Christ Church – often struggle with. We are great at helping people belong, but find it harder to invite them to explore what it might mean to believe – *both* are vital. Doing one without the other leaves us lopsided, but doing both together is tremendously powerful.

That has to be at the heart of our vision for the future of our ministries at Christ Church, and as I’ve said before I believe God is calling us to lay things down and make space – to make space for prayer, to make space for him to work a new thing in and through us. There are so many possibilities and potential ways we could serve him in our parish as it is today. **I would love us to have the space to pray through such options and really seek what God’s immeasurably more is for us in the next season.**

Sisters and brothers, I am genuinely excited about what could be! I see a vision for our ministries that is creative and open to God, and where we are willing to keep going faithfully or to change. I see a church family that is willing to be shaped and moulded by God as we respond to the changing needs in our parish. That is my agenda: that we are a church led by the Father to share Jesus with all (by showing and sharing his love, and speaking his gospel), and in all things to be energised by the Holy Spirit: ‘Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit,’ says the Lord Almighty (Zechariah 4.6, NIV).

It is within that context of a positive vision for our ministries that we are having serious conversations about what we do. It's hard to disagree that we are trying to do too much. We have regular calls for volunteers across almost every ministry and rota, because few of them have enough people to run as they should. And, most recognise we need to broaden the mix of what we do to reach a wider range of people.

I have had so many conversations about this since the day I arrived four and a half years ago – at some point we need to move beyond simply recognising or diagnosing the problem.

The truth is: the busier we are the harder it is to hear God, as individuals *and* as a church; the more we fill our space, even with very good things, the harder it is to imagine what *else* we could be doing in that space; every time we say 'Yes' to one thing we say 'No' to something else. So the extremely difficult question is: **what do we stop doing in order to make the space for us to hear what God is saying to us?**

Things are not easy right now but I would love us to step forward positively, following the vision God has for us as a church family. We may face struggles, difficulties and changes, and God may use some of those to 'shuffle' things – but the bottom line is: God is good, we can trust him, and if we have the courage and faith to follow him, we will see his name honoured, his kingdom come, and lives transformed.

I end with David's final words to his son Solomon, through which God spoke powerfully to me last week. Let us build: with courage, on the foundation of the Word, in the power of the Spirit – for God is with us.

'Be strong and courageous, and do the work. Do not be afraid or discouraged, for the Lord God, my God, is with you. He will not fail you or forsake you until all the work for the service of the temple of the Lord is finished.' (1 Chronicles 28.20, NIV)