



Immeasurably More

Vicar's APCM Report – 11 May 2025 (v1)

Summary

This document contains Ben's report to the APCM on 11 May 2025 in full.

Report

I hope by now it's no secret that I think Cris Rogers' book *Immeasurably More* is significant for us. It is an exploration of Paul's prayer in Ephesians 3. Here's how the prayer ends:

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 3.17b-21 (NIV)

I'd like to do two things in these brief remarks. First, I hope to **affirm** who we are and how we're doing as a church. Second, I would like to invite us into the immeasurably more that is ours in Jesus.

Affirm

First, it's no secret that Christ Church has a gift for hospitality – not only making cake whenever there is a call for it! Lots of churches think they are welcoming but I think we actually are. People feel genuinely welcomed when they come, valued and loved. That's true on Sundays but it's even more true during the week. Hospitality is a wonderful gift.

Second, we have a gift for generosity, and not only in providing cake! Some research this week estimated the average evangelical church in the UK benefits from almost 20,000 volunteer hours per year, equivalent to about £250,000 if that time were paid at the rate of the real living wage. I would be amazed if for us those numbers weren't even higher. Annual Meetings and reports can be very dull, but I hope that today is giving you a flavour of the amazing generosity of so many, and that you are hearing the heartfelt thanks that is for *you*!

Third, we have a gift for service. Some of that is behind the scenes practical stuff: in the kitchen, in the office, setting things up or putting things away, and so much more. I am so grateful for the teams of people who serve us by planning services, running groups for people of all ages, hosting Life Groups – the list goes on. But probably most of the service happens *out there* as we love and serve and support one another, friends, family, neighbours and communities in our Monday to Saturday lives.

Those three things – hospitality, generosity and service – are a powerful combination of gifts which have borne much fruit over many years. They provide us with many opportunities and mean we are well positioned to make the most of the so-called 'Quiet Revival' among young people and young adults. If you don't know what I mean by that, please come and ask me!

As a church we have other gifts too, but this morning I hope to **affirm** us in those three: hospitality, generosity and service.

I also want to **invite** us, invite us not to settle for what we already have, but ask God for *more*. He can do immeasurably more – more than all we can ask *or imagine*. I don't know about you but I am desperate for *more* of his Spirit, to see him at work *more* in *more* people's lives. I don't want to be limited by my imagination!

Stuck

Friends, it's so easy to settle. One of the most difficult parts of the book *Immeasurably More* is where Cris invites us to ask why our view of God has shrunk, sometimes even shrivelled. There are many reasons for this, but I'd like to share two with you now.

Sometimes we can get stuck on the things God *hasn't done* instead of focusing on the things he *has*. When prayers go unanswered, when we face disappointment, often our reaction is to start asking God for less and less. We shrink our imagination and our prayers so we aren't disappointed. Sometimes we even stop praying.

Friends, this is not uncommon. But if this is you, please don't keep it to yourself: tell someone. Let us hold you in our prayers. And if you can, ask God to help you lift your eyes to focus on what he *has* done rather than what he *hasn't*.

Another reason we settle is because we're tired, emotionally and spiritually. The last thing you want right now is a vicar standing at the front of church going on about *more*... 'More, *more*?! I can barely cope with what I'm doing *now* let alone *more*!'

I get that! Sometimes we think and act as though God has a clipboard and a list, asking *us* to do things for *him*.

But that's not what I mean. And it's not what Paul means. Take a look with me at the verse on the screen – and answer me this: who does the asking, and who does the doing?

Friends, this is *not* about God – or even me! – asking us to do *more*. This is about *us* asking *God* to do more – immeasurably more than all we can ask or imagine – within us, for his glory.

Invite

Let me finish with three invitations.

First, I invite us to be open to God. Over time our spiritual arms can become folded and our reaction to new things or change is, 'No thanks.' I invite us all – spiritual arms folded or not – to be open, open to the immeasurably more God has for us, to his transforming power at work within us for his glory and our good.

Second, I invite us to pray. When we read the book of Acts we sometimes skip to chapter 2: God sending the Spirit at Pentecost. But doing that means we miss what the disciples were doing between Easter and Pentecost: waiting; and as they waited, they all joined together constantly in prayer (Acts 1.14). As Cris says, God is just as interested in the prayer that happened during the forty days of waiting (155) as in the day of Pentecost.

So, I invite us to pray, to pray without ceasing – which means not giving up. Let's be persistent God-botherers, always asking him for *more*, not because we are greedy but because he *promised*.

Third, I invite us to live out God's Word in the power of the Spirit.

Let me read this quote from the introduction to the book:

The Word without the Spirit, **you dry up.**
The Spirit without the Word, **you blow up.**
But the Word and Spirit together – **you grow up.**

David Watson, quoted in Immeasurably More, 14

God has given the Bible to us as the firm foundation of life. It is entirely trustworthy and true. Through these words God speaks and helps us know him in our heads and our hearts, shows us the depths of his love and grace, invites us to live as his children.

But we can't do that in our own strength so he gives us his Holy Spirit. The Spirit reveals God to us, brings faith, transforms our character, brings supernatural gifts, equips us for ministry and works of service, and so much *more* besides. God gives his Spirit not in a trickle: he *pours* him out on those who ask. So let's ask!

Friends, I invite us (1) to be open to God, (2) to pray without giving up, (3) to live out God's Word in the power of his Spirit.

They didn't stay there

I'd like to bring us back to the disciples in the upper room, after Easter when Jesus was raised from the dead but before the day of Pentecost when the Spirit came. They were doing alright. They were constantly in prayer, reading the Scriptures, eating together. To be quite honest, it sounds great... I'd be delighted if as a church we grow in prayer, reading Scripture and fellowship!

It was a good time... But thank goodness they didn't stay there.

For God had *more*. He gave them *more* of himself, made them *more* who they were created to be, filled them with *more* life, *more* power – bringing *more* people into his family. It wasn't plain sailing – they got *more* persecution too – but God kept giving them *more* grace to keep going. All that *more* can be ours, too.

Thank goodness they didn't stay huddled together, but went *out* in God's *more*: confident in the Word, empowered by the Spirit. For because they didn't stay in their room we are here today.

God gave them immeasurably more than all they could ask or imagine – and he has more for us, 2,000 years later.

I long to see the immeasurably more that God has for us, today. Amen?