



The Vicarage,
44 Kenilworth Gardens.
Staines.
TW18 1DR.

Monday 20th July 2026

Re: July Pastoral Letter 2026

'I always thank my God as I remember you in my prayers, because I hear about your love for all his holy people and your faith in the Lord Jesus. I pray that your partnership with us in the faith may be effective in deepening your understanding of every good thing we share for the sake of Christ. Your love has given me great joy and encouragement, because you, brother, have refreshed the hearts of the Lord's people.'

Philemon 4-7

Dear Church Family,

It has been a great joy to hear our two-part series on the book of Philemon preached to us in July. This short letter is brimming full of Paul's love for his church family, even as he asks his friend Philemon to do the big and challenging thing of forgiving Onesimus. It is a letter that makes us think of our own church family, of the faces we see week in and week out, and of all the people who are from all kinds of backgrounds but have in common their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ who gives us 'grace and peace' through his death and resurrection. I am very grateful for the church family that God is bringing together in our part of Staines.

Welcoming one another; forgiving one another

As we enter the school summer holidays (which will mean more to some than to others!), it can give a bit more space for reflection & rest. Something that has struck me this year is how much the theme of church family has been prominent in our services and Bible readings. We explored our unity as Christians in Philippians, we saw in the Spring term God's big plan to bring together a people throughout the Old Testament and we returned again and again in the summer term to the Fatherhood of God in the Sermon on the Mount. The Bible's teaching on this is clear and rich; if we are Christians, we are united into one family together, whether we like it or not!

Over my first year here, we have seen this practiced so well within Christ Church Staines. We have welcomed many new folk, we spend plenty of time together around services and we draw near to people who are very different from us. Time and again, people tell me that the community is one of the best things about our church. Let's never lose this! Let's continue to grow in all this, to bear with one another in love (Ephesians 4:2), forgive one another (Colossians 3:13) and bear one another's burdens (Galatians 6:2). It won't always be easy; but it's not optional for the Christian church.



Staffing update

As the end of the year approaches, there is a little bit of change in the CCS staff team. In particular, we said a big thank you to **Rob MacQueen** this Sunday, his last as a Ministry Trainee. Since September, Rob has added a lot to our life as a church. In particular, I have hugely appreciated his contagious love of Jesus and passion to speak of him, his cheerfulness at weekly staff meetings and his patience in the midst of a challenging and rewarding year. Rob is marrying Tally on 12th September at St Michael's Fulwell, so is staying at CCS until then. We plan on saying a big, emotional goodbye on their last Sunday, 6th September. Bring your flowers to throw then.

Whilst we say goodbye to Rob from the staff team this July, **Alice Sherwood** has agreed to stay on for a second year as Ministry Trainee, where she will continue to invest in our youth & kids provision, gain experience by working alongside the team at Christ Church and St Michael's Fulwell and continue to study at CornHill Ministry Training Course. We are delighted to have Alice stay for another year.

In addition, we are welcoming someone else to the staff team. **Julie Fuller** has agreed to come on board as a volunteer church administrator, working 2 midweek days a week. Julie has been a member of our church family for around a year now and, having recently retired, has a wealth of experience in administration, particularly within the NHS. All churches have administrative needs and we are hugely excited about the difference having Julie's skills & cheerfulness will make to the staff team and the running of Christ Church Staines. Julie will be line-managed by the vicar and will not be 'on-duty' on Sundays, so feel free to channel any admin questions via me on a Sunday or via email.

The Year Ahead

I'm hugely excited for the year ahead. We're going to be digging into the Psalms over the summer holidays, while our young people are looking at the book of Jonah. Many of us are serving on Christian youth camps. In the Autumn term, we will be starting a series called '*Why we do...*', all about our church services and why we do what we do each week. All of the questions you've ever had about church will be answered then 'or your money back.'

For those exploring the big questions of life and church, or wanting to be refreshed on the basics, our **One Life** course will be running again for 4 weeks from the first week of September (email me to book in- james@christchurchstaines.co.uk). We have baptisms, harvest lunches and the countdown to Christmas all planned (158 sleeps as of writing).

In all of this, our prayer is that we would refresh one another, that we would appreciate more and more all we have been given in Jesus. He really is wonderful.

It's a privilege to be your vicar,

Yours,

James