

22 July 2026

Dear Sisters and Brothers

We just wanted to write to you to give thanks for all you continue to give and do within your church families and the life of your communities. Thank you! As people face the highs and the lows of summer heatwaves; sporting challenges; and the end of exam season with the prospect of holidays to come; we know that you will have been seeking to share something of what the good news of God's love means, with those around you. Inevitably there will have been moments of tension and heartache too.

Some of us have just returned from General Synod in York. There has been some deep and challenging debate about issues on which people hold strong opinions and which can often divide us. Discussions about Palestine and Israel; how we value the gift of our neurodivergent and LGBTQIA+ siblings; the attention we give to safeguarding, racial justice, and to the care of creation, all figured within this last session of the current quinquennium. As compromises were found and decisions made, many were left with frustrations and hurt alongside those who felt the outcomes were fair.

Such conversation reminds us of the need to focus once again on our passage in Colossians which serves to remind us of how we should live together. In a world where so often the desire to win becomes more significant than how we achieve equality where each and every one of us is valued and loved, these words shape our aspiration to be family.

As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

The opening words are those reflected on in the episcopal Charges shared with our ordinands and churchwardens during this past month. They are a reminder of how God sees us. **Chosen, holy, beloved.** And it is those words that we want to share once again with us all.

Chosen, not because of anything we have achieved, but because God loves us. As we recall at confirmation: *"God has called you by name and made you His own."* You are called, chosen, known, and part of the family of God.

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Holy, not because we follow the rules, but because of Christ's righteousness. This isn't about being perfect. None of us are! And yet the death of Christ on the cross has opened up the possibility of taking on the likeness of Christ, becoming more like Jesus, offering forgiveness from sins and the possibility of fresh starts.

Beloved, not just by our family and friends, but by a Father who invites us to 'be loved'. 'Beloved' isn't just a term of endearment but one which invites us actively to allow ourselves to 'be loved'.

In his letter to the Christians in Colossae, Paul speaks about the need to clothe themselves with love. It is an act of will at times because we do not always feel it!

Bearing with each other, forgiving one another, making peace with one another, would have been as necessary then as now. But reminding ourselves of God's forgiveness for us and clothing ourselves in the knowledge that we are **Beloved** will help us to receive the peace of Christ, stilling our own anxieties, and giving us the presence of His power to transform. At those moments, when we feel life is unfair, people have hurt us, the weight of responsibility lies heavy, that is the very moment we seek the presence of God who calls us **Beloved**.

Experience suggests that as we clothe ourselves in the love with which Christ has loved us, that we discover the way of peace.

Brothers, sisters, can we encourage you to be an encouragement to one another. Be mindful of those around you who may be struggling, feeling unloved, or unrecognised. Let us witness to God's love by loving one another, listening and seeking to understand. As a leadership team we pray regularly for you and your communities so please know that we are each available to listen to you as we pray for and with you. And do pray for us as we seek God's guidance for all that is to come.

With love and blessings

+ Lisa

+ Simon

Sharon

Dean Sue

Pete Spier

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