



Claire and I moved to Yateley in June, in the middle of Covid. The first few months services were all online and then it was that time when people had to sit (wearing a mask, obviously) as far away from each other as possible. Added to that, bringing two congregations together mean that by the end of 2020, it really felt like we were starting a church from scratch. It was a time of great disruption and the need, above all else, was to find out what God's Vision was for the future – something to unite behind and become the DNA of the Church that was emerging as the underlying reason and purpose behind all that would happen. Over the period of a few months, all the small groups were asked to contribute reflections and thoughts as to what God was saying to us and the following Vision Statement emerged ...

**Our Vision is for St Peter's to be a Church that is Rooted, Seeking and Reaching:**

- **Rooted in Word and Spirit**
- **Seeking God in Prayer and Worship**
- **Reaching Out in the Presence and Love of Jesus**

A "Vision Statement" is a picture that describes an aspiration, an image of what we would like to see and, in terms of the Church, is where we seek to understand what God would like St Peter's to look like in the future. It paints an image of what someone walking into the Church would see so, in our case, a Church that is "Rooted, Seeking and Reaching." Whilst we may be doing something of this at the moment (and we most certainly are!), we want to be a Church where this is clearly obvious to all around us.

St Peter's Vision Statement is now five years old and, guess what, we haven't got there yet! There is absolutely no doubt that in the past five years, we have striven to work towards the fulfilment of the Vision but we can always do more. We don't need a new Vision, but we do need to refresh the one we have, to recommit ourselves to it and actively pursue all aspects of our Church life in seeking to bring it to fruition.

When I look round St Peter's, I see many faces who were not part of the Church in 2020 and, therefore, people who were not a part of the original Vision-seeking process. People who may look at all of this and go "Oh! That's what it's about!" So this may be a new experience for some and, if this is you, I would love to hear what God has said to you about all of this!

So, 2026 is a year of Re-Vision. Not a year when we look backwards, although we want to learn from what has and hasn't worked. Not a year when we change or do things differently. Not a year when we seek a new Vision. But a year of Re-Vision, when we seek to be Re-Rooted, Re-Seeking and Re-Reaching.

**Re-Rooted in Word and Spirit – Spring Term 2026 – Revelation and the Letters to the Churches**

Roots are important! In gardening terms, they provide the conduit for the goodness and the water that the plants need, and they provide the strength for the plant to grow upwards. In human ancestry, roots give a sense of who we are and how we got here. In our faith, ensuring all that we do is embedded in the Bible, the Word of God and informed, shaped and inspired by the Holy Spirit, ensures our growth is healthy and real. In the letters of Jesus to the Churches in Revelation, John relays challenges and warnings, as well as encouragements and reassurances, to churches grappling with the realities of the world. In the coming term, we will ask what God might be saying to us as a Church through these letters, ensuring our roots in Word and Spirit are strong.

## **Re-Seeking God in Prayer and Worship – Summer Term 2026 – Psalms of Life**

In John 4, Jesus said that those who worship God must do so in Spirit and in Truth. We cannot expect to grow as a Church, either in our relationships or in numbers, if we are not prepared to take God seriously. For any relationship to develop and grow we need to be vulnerable, to be open and ready to take on challenges – and this is especially true in our relationship with God. The Psalms are not just wonderful poetry but the honest and raw thoughts of the writers, laying bare before God their frustrations, their hopes, their pain and their longings. In the term after Easter, we will dive into a dozen of them and identify with the reality of the relationships of the writers, with the desire that we will experience and embrace their passion in our own relationships with God, Re-Seeking him.

## **Re-Reaching Out in the Presence and Love of Jesus – Autumn 2026 – Shining like Stars in Philippians**

Having sought to Go Deeper and Seek God, we shall build on the lessons, fuelling our desire to Reach Out. Over the past couple of years, it has been truly wonderful to see the natural way in which St Peter's relates to the community around it, expressed in so many ways! The letter of Paul to the Philippians contains the encouragement to "Shine like Stars" as they reflect the attitudes of Jesus in their relationships with God and others. It is an honest and real letter, written by someone who never holds back in his challenge to live the life God has called us to – whatever the cost. Ultimately, we are called to build up the Church and to live lives that are infectious with the Gospel. Studying Philippians will challenge and encourage us in this!

There is a often moment when we are about halfway through a task when we look back and see where we have come, whilst looking forward and seeing that there is still a long way to go. It can be tempting to give up, or perhaps to take it easy, even though we know that to do so will result in a loss of momentum.

In verses we shall encounter, in Philippians 3:12-16, Paul sums this up perfectly ...

*"Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. Let those of us who are mature think this way, and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal that also to you. Only let us hold true to what we have attained."*

The past five years have been tough, challenging, exhilarating, exhausting and exciting – sometimes. all at the same time! Only God knows what lies ahead, but my suspicion is that it will be more of the same. The verse on the wall of St Peter's above the band (John 10:10) talks of Jesus' Vision to bring life in all its fulness to those who follow him. To experience this means to embrace the challenge of working towards the Vision he has put before us. My prayer for all of us in 2026 is that we will do just that, in every way imaginable.

Your brother, friend and Vicar

Tim