



Christ Episcopal Church
(252) 338-1686
200 S McMorine Street
Elizabeth City, NC 27909

New Rector Announcement

Dear fellow Christ Church parishioners,

We are delighted to be able to announce, on behalf of the search committee and the vestry, that The Very Reverend Justin Ivatts has accepted the call to be Christ Episcopal Church's next rector! The call to Fr. Justin followed the unanimous and enthusiastic decisions of both the search committee and the vestry. His first Sunday with Christ Church will be March 22, 2026. Fr. Justin comes to us from Clarke Parish, Berryville, VA where he has been serving since 2018. Born and educated in the United Kingdom, Fr. Justin earned his Bachelors of Theology with Honors at Westminster College (Oxford, UK), before matriculating to Virginia Theological Seminary, where he obtained his Masters of Divinity.

As we came to know Fr. Justin throughout the discernment process, it became apparent to us that our paths were guided so that they would cross at this time in this place. Clarke Parish consists of two churches: Grace Church and St. Mary's Church, one historically African American. Fr. Justin was able to serve both communities using different worship styles that remained faithful to their cultural heritage. We were particularly drawn to Fr. Justin's sermons and leadership style and think he is the right person at the right time to lead Christ Church; his sermons can be found on YouTube and Facebook if you are interested. While leading Clarke Parish, he was actively involved with the Diocese of Virginia, and in his Region V Deanery, all while progressing towards his PhD in Practical Theology which he hopes to complete in 2028.

During the discernment process, Fr. Justin vividly shared his passion for pilgrimage, describing many trips to his native United Kingdom and its many cathedrals. He expressed a desire to bring this important ministry to Christ Church. An avid sailor, Fr. Justin, admits he was drawn to our waterfront community. We are delighted to welcome Fr. Justin and his wife Heather to Elizabeth City in March. They have one son, Miles, who has recently graduated high school, and hopes to study in his father's native Great Britain, where his grandmother continues to reside. We ask that you hold them and the members of Clarke Parish in your prayers, as they are just beginning the season of transition and saying goodbyes, that we are now concluding.

Please see below a letter from Fr. Justin to the congregation.

Anna Stevens
Senior Warden

Phillip Hornthal
Search Committee Chair

Dear Christ Church friends and family:

I am excited to have been called to be your next rector! From my first zoom conversation with Stephanie Allen, your Canon for Leadership, to conversations with the search committee, both over zoom and in person, to conversations in the final stages of discernment with your senior warden, I could hear God's call getting stronger and stronger. Watching your worship online, I was taken by your traditional and yet innovative Anglican approach to worship and liturgy. You are clearly an energetic congregation who love Jesus and love to shine the light in the part of God's kingdom, that is Elizabeth City.

A little about my family and me. I am originally from England, growing up in central London. Christ Church seems kind of a coming home since the church I spent my teenage and young adult years in was also a Christ Church in Kensington in London. I first sensed the call to ordained ministry around the time of my confirmation at the age of fourteen, but following my mother's advice to go get life experience, I read theology at Oxford but then had a twelve-year career in sales and marketing.

I hold an Masters-in-Divinity from Virginia Theological Seminary in Alexandria, VA, where I wrote my thesis on pilgrimage in the Anglican tradition. I was ordained in 2015 through the Diocese of Virginia and served for three years as an Assistant Rector at St. John's in McLean, VA. I then moved to the Shenandoah Valley (think John Denver), where I have served as Priest in Charge and then Rector at Clarke Parish in Berryville, VA since 2018. Clarke Parish is made up of two churches, one which is historically African American. I have also served since 2022 as Dean of the Northern Shenandoah Region of the Diocese of Virginia. I am currently pursuing a PhD at Palm Beach Atlantic University in Practical Theology, which once I reach the candidacy stage, I will be furthering my research into pilgrimage. I am a keen leader of overseas pilgrimages and am planning to build a pilgrimage program at Christ Church.

I will be joined in Elizabeth City by my wife Heather, whom I married in 2023, and is an RN. I also have a seventeen-year-old son, Miles, who is currently applying to universities, some in the UK and wants to study cybersecurity.

I can't wait to be with you and start getting to work on our shared ministry. However, until March, my focus must be on saying goodbye to Clarke Parish. I ask that you hold them in prayer as they get ready to commence the process that you have just completed. Please also pray for Heather, Miles and me, as we say our goodbyes and know that we hold you in prayer.

Until March I wish you every blessing,

Fr. Justin

